

Should the Scientific Field of the Division Head Correspond to the Division Chair Profile?

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Raising such a question on the head of a research laboratory, for example, at the Academy of Sciences, would seem of place. It could not be otherwise: the head of a scientific laboratory is usually the scientific leader. Meanwhile, in our higher educational institutes, we often come up against situations when division heads are specialists in some other field, even if not in-depth. We have observed this situation many times, and we see it now in certain analytical chemistry departments.

For example, the well-known expert in solid-state chemistry V.M. Zhukovskii headed the Department of Analytical Chemistry at Ural State University. In the same position, in Yekaterinburg, the Head of the Division of Analytical Chemistry at Ural Federal University (named after first President of the Russian Federation B.N. Yeltsin) is the good organic chemist and administrator V.N. Matern. A leading expert in ion exchange and membrane technologies, V.F. Seleznev heads the Department of Analytical Chemistry of Voronezh State University. Opposite cases are also known: the widely known researcher of electrochemical analysis methods A.G. Stromberg had long headed the Department of Physical Chemistry at the Tomsk Polytechnical Institute (University).

The point is not higher schools, in particular, or esteemed individuals; I am talking about the principle of the practice established in higher-learning institutions. A strong, young doctor of sciences, a professor occupying a high position in the dean's office or administration of a higher-learning institution emerges; he or she needs a department. The department of his or her profile is occupied; another department is selected for this person, although of a different profile.

How should we feel about such situations? It seems to me that our reaction should basically be negative. Of course, there could be unavoidable circumstances. Of course, it sometimes happens, though rarely, that the new head changes his own field of scientific research or approximates the department profile whenever possible. However, as a whole, it would be better to avoid such appointments.

A fundamentally different case is when a new department is created for a promising expert, as happened, for example, at Irkutsk State University, when a second analytics department was organized for Rector of the University N.F. Losev; it was given the name of the Chair of Physical Methods of Analysis.

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