

More than half of the respondents have a need and would be confident to participate in organized qualification forms related to the approach, with priority given to short-term training and vocational specializations. There are many who prefer to acquire new knowledge and skills through self-study;

Teachers are convinced that the student portfolio should be implemented at the school level by all teachers in order to have a positive effect on learning outcomes.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be said that understanding the approach to portfolio assessment in training is extremely important and its application will contribute to the realization of learning objectives and will help improve the quality of the educational process.

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KOVAČ ŠEBART Mojca

University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Arts, Department of Educational Sciences

KOVAČ Miha

University of Ljubljana,

Faculty of Arts, Department of Library and Information Science and Book Studies

MAŽGON Jasna

University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Arts, Department of Educational Sciences

STUDY HABITS OF STUDENTS IN RELATION TO UNIVERSITY TEACHERS' EXPECTATIONS

Abstract: The paper addresses some general questions about study habits: How students acquire knowledge in general education programmes, and what are the expectations of university teachers in this regard in terms of assessment? In their productive focus on the processes of learning, do university teachers neglect the importance and necessity of the transmission and acquisition of historically accumulated knowledge, studying of the literature, without which quality study in the humanities and social sciences is inconceivable?

The questions were answered by interpreting the survey results we conducted with a sample of 429 students from various study programmes at the Faculty of Arts and the Faculty of Education at the University of Ljubljana. Students answered questions about their study habits in relation to their exam performance. The hypothesis that when studying for exam requirements, students clearly adhere to their teachers' requirements and expectations, therefore studying just enough to meet these expectations was confirmed. Based on their responses, the conclusion was

derived that the assessment criteria for a particular subject are an important determinant of the knowledge that students acquire. And this is to a significantly greater extent than their interest in the subject content. We argue, therefore, that it is not justified for university teachers to complain that students are no longer studying and are only interested in fulfilling the obligation and obtaining a certificate, but rather to question their expectations and consistency regarding the study of literature and the criteria for assessing knowledge, which are concerned with quality knowledge.

Keywords: University teachers' expectations, Bologna reform, Assessment criteria, Study habits

Introduction

One of the key assumptions of the implementation of the Bologna reform in 2004 was the expectation that the university paradigm would change in Slovenia too, in order to “make study programmes and their course units or modules student-centered/output-oriented” (Tuning General Brochure, 2007, p. 11). As we pointed out in an article in *Sodobna pedagogika/Journal of Contemporary Educational Studies* (Kovač, 2006), this expectation was based on the prediction that within the new study programmes studying would no longer be based on the “traditional paradigm of ‘sitting time’, but on a new paradigm of earned credits that combine effectively invested student study time [...] with verification of learning outcomes” (Zgaga, 2004, p. 123). In other words, post-Bologna study programmes and their modules built on the expectation that students would invest the “envisaged amount of personal study of adequate quality” into achieving the required standards of knowledge (ibid., p. 96).

The thesis was based on an attempt to reduce the importance of core/compulsory subjects in favor of optionality and an approach that “claims to take into account differentiated needs” (Furedi, 2016, p. 158), where the content of study (and study programmes) should to a large extent correspond to the interests of students and the needs of the labor market. Reflections on the importance of transmitting accumulated knowledge that is not necessarily directly applicable but should nevertheless be an inherent part of university study remained in the background when this paradigm was being designed.

The Bologna paradigm was also accompanied by the expectation that students would devote more time to the preparation of seminar papers, independent projects and, consequently, autonomous reading and study, and less time listening to *ex cathedra* lectures, which the proponents of the reform apparently believed to be less effective than autonomous work by students, since otherwise it would not be necessary to increase the amount of the latter at the expense of the former (Zgaga, 2004, p. 123). In substantive assessments the requirement for effectiveness appears to have outweighed the requirement that the knowledge acquired should be of good quality. Even in university study programmes, knowledge understood as a useful tool has become more important than knowledge as a value in itself (Gauchet, 2011; Kovač et al., 2020; Kovač Šebart, & Kovač, 2019).

At the same time, those of us who teach at university also encounter students who cannot see reasons why they should acquire knowledge, since the (only) important thing is that they are able to find it; who believe that the point of studying is to learn how to find and apply recipes that will facilitate their responsiveness in the profession or occupation they pursue in the future (see also the survey results below regarding resources and students' motivation for study). The question that concerns us here is “how to connect a person's inner orientation to an external apparatus” (Gauchet, 2011, p. 72). It is precisely in this development that we can also look for the “root of a supremely paradoxical phenomenon, namely the hidden yet persistent *intellectual decline* we are encountering in the knowledge society. This phenomenon is actually less surprising than it seems, if we consider that, while the social role of knowledge is growing, it has nevertheless become degraded in the subjective sense. Why should someone immerse themselves in knowledge at all if knowledge is no longer something that one needs to acquire as an end in itself, in order

to better understand the world, but is instead merely an external and functional factor for which it is enough that we learn to use it?" (ibid.).

In the light of the findings of our study, which identifies the views of students on how they have acquired knowledge or prepared themselves for exams, the question that raises itself is whether many university professors are already acting in accordance with the explanations described above, at least in terms of the requirements that students must satisfy in order to complete a course unit, at least as regards undergraduate students.

The ambition of the study that forms the core of this article is a modest one, although it fits entirely within the broader context of seeking an answer to the question of what is happening in university studies today: we wanted to find out, in the case of students enrolled in various programmes at the Faculty of Arts and the Faculty of Education at the University of Ljubljana, how and what they studied in the 2018/19 academic year, in other words: what resources did they rely on and what (judging from their responses) was the quality of the work (i.e. study) they invested in achieving the expected knowledge that, in their judgement, was sufficient to pass their exams?

Research Methodology

We carried out the study in the 2017/18 and 2018/19 academic years. Our random sample included 429 students from the Faculty of Arts and the Faculty of Education, 305 (71.1%) of whom were enrolled in first-cycle programmes and 124 (28.9%) of whom were enrolled in second-cycle (master's) programmes. With regard to the total number of students enrolled at the two faculties (6,689 students in the 2018/19 academic year – figures from *Univerza v številkah* [University in Numbers], 2020), our sample represents 6.4% of the basic population, which ensures that it is sufficiently representative.

We collected data by means of a paper-and-pencil questionnaire containing 34 closed-ended questions and one assessment scale. The questionnaires were completed during lectures and seminars in the presence of professors. We processed the data using descriptive and inferential statistics. In order to present the data, we used structural tables (f, f%) and checked our hypotheses using the chi-square test.

Research Findings

An interesting starting point for further reflection is the fact that the average grade of the students included in the study is 8.0 for first-cycle (bachelor's) students and 8.3 for second-cycle (master's) students. Taken alongside the information on the average grades of the students included in the study, students' answers to the question of how they prepare for exams are all the more interesting (see Table 1).

Table 1

Students' answers regarding exam preparation

Claims	In practically no subjects	In less than a quarter of subjects	In approx. half of all subjects	In most subjects	As a rule in all subjects	Total
When preparing for an exam I study assigned reading material that I know the professor will test me on.	10 2.3	35 8.2	60 14.1	150 35.2	171 40.1	426 100.0

Claims	In practically no subjects	In less than a quarter of subjects	In approx. half of all subjects	In most subjects	As a rule in all subjects	Total
I study from notes alone if the professor only tests on material taught in lectures.	37 8.7	63 14.8	74 17.4	151 35.5	100 23.5	425 100.0
I study the reading material regardless of the professor's requirements.	98 23.2	173 40.9	83 19.6	59 13.9	10 2.4	423 100.0
I study the reading material in subjects that interest me regardless of the professor's requirements.	76 18.0	137 32.5	91 21.6	59 14.0	59 14.0	422 100.0
I study the reading material for all subjects because education requires knowledge that is not always tied to my interest.	138 32.6	141 33.3	76 18.0	61 14.4	7 1.7	423 100.0
I study reading material related to directly applicable knowledge that I will need for the performance of a job.	44 10.4	107 25.2	110 25.9	123 29.0	40 9.4	424 100.0
I also study reading material that does not give direct answers for the performance of a job.	177 41.7	129 30.4	63 14.9	33 7.8	22 5.2	424 100.0

The answers of the students included in the study reveal that a relatively low share of students (16.1%) **study the assigned reading material** in all subjects or at least in most subjects **because they believe that education requires knowledge that is not always related to their interests**. Just over a quarter (28%) of students answered that in most subjects or (as a rule) in **all subjects that interest them, they study the assigned reading material regardless of the professor's requirements**, which indicates that interest in the content of an exam had a slightly greater influence on their study of the related literature, although in the light of their answers this share is still low. The mere fact that a student is interested in specific content does not in itself guarantee that the student will also study the assigned reading material and absorb knowledge from it. On the other hand, a statistically significantly higher percentage of students with higher average grades (33%) answered that in most subjects or (as a rule) in all subjects that interest them they study the assigned reading material because the subject interests them, regardless of the professor's requirements. Among students with lower average grades, the percentage who gave this answer was under 15% (See Table 2).

Table 2

Average grade and study of assigned reading material in subjects that interest students

Average grade		I study the reading material in subjects that interest me regardless of the professor's requirements.					Total
		In practically no subjects	In less than a quarter of subjects	In approx. half of all subjects	In most subjects	As a rule in all subjects	
average grade up to 7.9	f	29	36	33	11	6	115
	f%	25.2%	31.3%	28.7%	9.6%	5.2%	100.0%
average grade at least 8	f	44	100	53	46	52	295
	f%	14.9%	33.9%	18.0%	15.6%	17.6%	100.0%
Total	f	73	136	86	57	58	410
	f%	17.8%	33.2%	21.0%	13.9%	14.1%	100.0%

$(\bar{X} = 20.812; g = 4, p = 0.000)$

The answer that in most subjects or (as a rule) in all subjects they also study assigned reading material related to directly applicable knowledge that they will need for the performance of a job was selected by 38.4% of the students (Table 1). This share draws attention to expectations that clearly relate to university education understood primarily as a means of acquiring knowledge as a tool that is needed for the labor market and for responding to it. This thesis is confirmed by the fact that only 13% of students answered that in most subjects or almost all subjects they studied reading material that does not give answers directly related to doing a job (Table 1), which is close to the percentage of students who answered that in all subjects or at least in most subjects they study the assigned reading material because they believe that education requires knowledge that is not always related to their interests, i.e. including reading material that does not give answers directly related to the performance of a job.

Significantly, three quarters (75.3%) of the students included in the study (Table 1) answered that in most or all subjects they prepared for exams by studying assigned reading material that they know the professor will test them on (the share of such students is slightly higher in the first cycle (78%) than in the second cycle (69%)). This means that, regardless of their interest or of the fact that knowledge was directly or indirectly applicable, they studied reading material if they expected it to come up in the exam or if their professor included the requirement to study specific reading material literature in the assessment criteria. Not only that, but 59% of students studied in most subjects or (as a rule) in all subjects from notes alone if they knew that their professor was only going to test them on material taught in lectures. When preparing for exams, only just over 16.3% of students also study reading material regardless of the professor's requirements in most or almost all subjects (Table 1), which is practically identical to the percentage of students who believe that education requires knowledge that is not always related to their interests.

Table 3 reveals that the answer most frequently selected by students was that when preparing for an exam they use their own lecture notes (77.1%). Around half also use their own notes on reading material (54.7%) and literature in Slovene from the list of compulsory reading material (50.2%). Those who answered that they most frequently use their fellow students' notes on reading material or notes they find online accounted for 36.5% of those included in the study. Just over a fifth (20.6%) chose the answer that they study using photocopied lecture notes.

Table 3

Sources most frequently used by students when preparing for an exam

When preparing for exams, I most frequently use:	f	f % (of n= 428)
my own lecture notes	330	77.1
my own notes on assigned reading material	234	54.7
photocopied lecture notes	88	20.6
notes on reading material made by my fellow students or notes I find online	156	36.5
reading material from the list of compulsory reading material in Slovene	215	50.2
reading material from the list of compulsory reading material in a foreign language	60	14.0
reading material from the list of additional (non-compulsory) reading material	4	0.9

Almost 65% of the students included in the study selected both answers simultaneously, i.e. that they study from their own notes on reading material and from notes on reading material made by other students or found online. Over 60% of students (59.3% in the first cycle and 63.4% in the second cycle) answered that they most frequently study from their own lecture notes and at the same time from their own notes on reading material. Almost 48% of students (41.3% in the first cycle and 64% in the second cycle) answered that they most frequently study from photocopied lecture notes and notes on reading material prepared by fellow students or notes found online. This figure is particularly interesting in the light of the considerations mentioned in the introduction that there are too many students enrolled in first-cycle study programmes and that it is only possible to expect and demand more of them in second-cycle study programmes; the figure is also interesting in light of the findings of the study with regard to students' average grades, which are higher in the second cycle than in the first cycle. All of this points to a need in the future to study the assessment criteria employed by professors in the programmes under consideration and, in this way, answer questions about their expectations regarding the type and quality of knowledge acquired by students. It will also be necessary to verify how many students work for a living despite being enrolled in full-time courses of study, and whether there is a significant difference in this regard between first-cycle students and second-cycle students. It would be useful to ascertain how many students are present at lectures and other prescribed activities at the faculty and, again, whether there is a significant difference here between first-cycle and second-cycle students. Finally, it will also be necessary to understand how it is possible that, even in second-cycle teacher education programmes in the humanities and social sciences, a significant proportion of students respond that they do not study the compulsory reading material but instead study from notes on the material made by their fellow students. Does the post-Bologna university environment thus differ from the expectations presented in the introduction? Are second-cycle study programmes perhaps even more oriented towards directly applicable knowledge and job-related competences that require the "mastering of recipes" more than the analytical and critical study of literature?

Conclusion

The assumptions of the Bologna reform, which introduced new practices with the implementation of the reform, promoted an increase in student motivation. The results of the study, however,

show that motivation alone is not enough to ensure that students read compulsory reading material and thus acquire the knowledge that only this type of study can bring. It will therefore be necessary in the future to permit a reflection on the thesis advanced by Furedi (2016, p. 185) that practices that build primarily on motivation and a focus on the student are doomed to failure – when it is good-quality knowledge and not merely knowledge oriented towards direct applicability that we have in mind – for the simple reason that it is practically not possible to believe that the majority of students would be motivated to engage with, say, abstract knowledge and would therefore study texts of this type. It will therefore be necessary to consider whether calling for motivation that is tied to interest might not actually have the effect of putting students off reading material that is not related to their direct interest.

The figures from our study warn us that it is not realistic to expect that all students will be motivated to study the contents of every subject within a study programme, but this should not be allowed to exonerate professors from insisting that students should acquire knowledge of the contents in all subjects. Interest and motivation are not, in fact, merely the consequence of an autonomous desire of the student, and therefore it is not right to automatically equate the internal (natural) positive orientation of a student with interest. It also describes an orientation towards specific content that is conditioned by external factors (professor, grades, success, etc.), including the desire for knowledge, which is mediated by these external factors (more on this in Kovač Šebart, & Krek, 2001; Štefanc, & Kovač Šebart, 2020). As the answers of those included in the study show, students in most cases adapt to the requirements and expectations of an individual professor. It should not be forgotten that students know what an individual professor requires and what they need to know in order to pass that professor's exam. This is something they learn quickly, while information about this is also passed on from generation to generation of students. In short: when students are preparing for an exam, as a rule they also take into account the professor's implicit and explicit expectations and typical approach to assessment. Studying or learning is, in fact, always studying or learning for a concrete assessment of knowledge that takes place in specific circumstances and in a specific manner – which is something that necessarily affects the student's approach to studying. The average grades of the students included in the study warn us that university professors do not reflect this to a sufficient extent, or that they do not have the power to insist that their students at least read and master the required reading material.

It should not be forgotten that students enrolled in a university course, even though this is built on motivation and interest and student-centeredness, must nevertheless confront the issue of acquiring knowledge that does not interest them. University professors must confront the same issue, and also their expectations towards students, in that they cannot expect students to be driven to study and acquire knowledge merely by a thirst for knowledge. This is something that is also indicated by the findings of our study. Not only that, but the findings tell us that students can even have an interest in knowledge but – perhaps because acquiring knowledge also requires an investment of energy and work, while at the same time they are unable to see its directly applicable value – they will not study for an exam directly from the sources simply out of an existing desire for knowledge. They will only do this when the knowledge acquired through the study of the assigned reading material is seen as a requirement or an obligation.

For this reason, if studies are to realize their fundamental objectives, they must also contain an element of obligation: this means that the study of assigned reading material and, consequently, students' knowledge will be dependent on assessment criteria, in other words on the professor's definition of a “good” grade. If students are required to demonstrate knowledge acquired through the autonomous study of assigned reading material in order to achieve a passing grade, they will have to demonstrate, for example, analytical and critical knowledge of the texts concerned during their assessment. On the other hand, if the professor expects no more than the kind of “superficial” knowledge that can also be obtained by studying from notes made by other students, and

expects no more than a reproduction of his or her own lectures, then students will respond accordingly as they acquire the knowledge. If, then, in order to obtain a grade – and not only the highest grades – it is necessary to demonstrate the attainment of objectives that are tied not only to lectures but also to assimilation of the assigned reading material, this is precisely the type of knowledge (more in-depth, analytical, etc.) that students will endeavour to acquire, since, as is also demonstrated by the answers to the survey questions, students in most cases adapt to the requirements and expectations of the individual professor. In short, when students are preparing for an exam, they generally take into account their professor's implicit and explicit expectations and typical approach to assessment and grading. Studying or learning is, in fact, always studying or learning for a concrete assessment of knowledge that takes place in specific circumstances and in a specific manner – which is something that necessarily affects the student's approach to studying.

The data from the study also warn us that we will have to think about the implications for university study programmes of an obsession with the kind of “practical” knowledge that is deemed to be necessary for graduates' future professional activity and, consequently, consider how such an obsession might affect students' requirements and knowledge. How are we to cultivate interest in any of the fundamental intellectual questions of a discipline if at first glance these appear to have no direct connection with the situation in the labor market? (Furedi, 2016, p. 58).

From a historical point of view, an important component of high-quality formal study at social sciences and humanities faculties consisted of providing students with the kind of knowledge that was not accessible to them via their direct experience of everyday life. The value of such knowledge is that it enables those who acquire it to transcend their own experience and gain a certain understanding of the social and natural world to which they belong. Today it seems that, even at university level, knowledge has lost this meaning and has been “dumbed down” to a skill that helps people work. The focus on work and activity enables us to avoid questions regarding the meaning of knowledge: by focusing on the application of knowledge in unfamiliar situations, we avoid having to think about what the content of the knowledge applied should actually be. From this point of view, concern for knowledge that is not directly applicable is also seen as an obstacle to the ability to adapt to change. That is why even the educational establishment frequently shows indifference if not outright contempt for abstract theoretical thinking and knowledge developed in the past. Both are frequently criticized as irrelevant or outdated; only new knowledge that can be applied and acted upon is deemed suitable for the age of learning (*ibid.*, pp. 52–54).

Students' exam preparation therefore depends significantly on what kind of knowledge university professors expect from them and how they assess it. In the context of university study that primarily encourages the acquisition of directly applicable knowledge related to an occupation, where any abstract and general knowledge will be viewed with suspicion on the grounds that it places an unnecessary burden on students and even represents an obstacle on their path towards what actually counts as meaningful and useful for the occupation they are studying for, it is difficult to expect students to study core reading material that is not related to directly applicable knowledge. The answers to the survey questions would appear to indicate that even in university study programmes in the humanities and social sciences, students of which are included in the survey, knowledge is seen as an “externalized” tool that helps us solve particular everyday “problems” and must therefore also be directly applicable (Gauchet, 2011, pp. 66–77). For this reason, reflections on why students do not read compulsory reading material cannot be satisfied with answers about mass enrolment in undergraduate study programmes. Instead, we must focus more intensively on the knowledge that those of us in various specialized fields and society in general would wish graduates of first- and second-cycle university study programmes to possess. Reflection will also be necessary on the demands and expectations placed on students by university professors, including with regard to criteria for assessing their knowledge.

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