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## **THE QUALITY OF TEACHING AND ITS IMPACT ON UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' MOTIVATION**

### **Abstract:**

The goal of the paper is to discuss the impact of the quality of teaching on university students' motivation to learn and study at university. The paper is based on the analysis of available scientific literature and the results of the authors' questionnaire survey among students of the College of Regional Development in Prague, the Masaryk Institute of Advanced Studies of the Czech Technical University in Prague and the School Management Centre of the Faculty of Education of Charles University in Prague that was focused on students' motivation to study at university and their ideas about future career. The survey was conducted from February to May 2016. The relevant data were obtained from 416 students. The results show some interesting tendencies in students' attitudes to learning and studying at university. Students often complain of the quality of teaching, particularly of theoretical subjects without obvious connections and practical applications. This dissatisfaction significantly reduces students' motivation to learn and study at university. Many students go to work rather than to school to earn money and get experience.

### **Keywords:**

higher education, quality of teaching, motivation of students

**JEL Classification:** J24, I29, A14

## Introduction

At present days, there are many different public and private universities in the Czech Republic that provide different programmes for specialists (bachelors, engineers, doctors) of various economic, humanities, social and technical professions. The increasing quantity of university students and graduates raises questions about their professional qualities, especially in relation to the needs of the labour market and the requirements of employers.

In today's business environment, people with higher education and appropriate technical and personal competencies are valued as the most important source and the greatest wealth of any country or organization (Kucharčíková, Koňušíková & Tokarčíková, 2016). In most developed countries, the higher education is focused on the formation and development of technical and personal competencies of young specialists in various economic, humanities, social and technical professions (Prisacariu & Shah, 2016).

Through the higher education system, young people are systematically prepared for a successful life and a professional career in the society (Schendel & McCowan, 2016). The quality of higher education affects the employability and competitiveness of university students and graduates on the labour market (Chong & Ahmed, 2015). Well educated and motivated young people determine the future prosperity and competitiveness of the society (Sekuloska, 2014).

Young people with higher education significantly increase their chances on the labour market to reach a satisfying and rewarding career (Marginson, 2016), but university students must be motivated to learn and study at university to acquire and develop necessary technical and personal competencies (Wach et al., 2016). The authors' research results and teaching experience show that the motivation of students to learn and study at university is determined by the quality of teaching and that the university should be able to provide students with both theoretical knowledge and practical applications for their future career.

## Goal and method

The goal of the paper is to discuss the impact of the quality of teaching on university students' motivation to learn and study at university.

Achieving the goal of the paper is based on the analysis of available scientific literature and the results of the authors' questionnaire survey focused on students' motivation to study at university and their expectations about future career. The survey was conducted from February to May 2016. The respondents were students of the Masaryk Institute of Advanced Studies of the Czech Technical University in Prague (Personnel Management in Industrial Enterprises and Management and Economy of an Industrial Enterprise), the Education Management Centre of the Faculty of Education of the Charles University in Prague (Education Management) and the

College of Regional Development in Prague (Urban and Regional Development Management and Security and Safety Management in Regions).

The questionnaire included twenty two multiple choice questions focused on factors of students' motivation to study at university and their expectations about future career. The questionnaire was distributed to bachelor's and master's students. The relevant data were obtained from 415 students. The respondents were characterized by gender (28% male, 72% female), age (6% less than 20 years, 68% 20-24 years, 6% 25-29 years, 4% 30-34 years, 13% 35-49 years, 3% more than 50 years), years of work experience (43% less than 1 year, 21% 1-2 years, 12% 3-5 years, 7% 6-10 years, 5% 11-15 years, 3% 16-19 years, 9% more than 20 years), form of study (72% full-time, 28% combined), and year of study (45% first year, 28% second year, 17% third year, 10% fifth year).

The data analysis was based on the calculation of relative frequencies and the evaluation of the dependence of responses on gender and year of study using contingency tables, chi-square tests of independence and sign schemes.

## **Results and discussion**

The quality of the educational process in the university educational system attests to the quality or poor-quality of the teaching process and has an influence on the possibilities of graduates on the labour market. The continuous improvement of the teaching process must become a permanent part of the educational process, which implies increased demands on students and teachers, systematic information, explanation of benefits of changes for both training teachers and methodological assistance, including the use of feedback mechanisms, such as the evaluation of teaching or satisfaction surveys of teachers and students.

Europe and the world move towards a knowledge-based society in which an effective system of higher education becomes necessary and important for the society and the economy. University graduates occupy key positions in the knowledge society. Required competencies of these workers are associated with advanced specialized knowledge, skills and abilities, but also often assume high degree of flexibility, adaptability and the ability to change. Knowledge society needs a new quality of the worker, simply put, a flexible professional.

On these issues in a comprehensive approach point declaration aimed at harmonizing the construction of the European higher education system. Already in the Sorbonne declaration in 1999 it states that "... Europe must be a Europe of knowledge. It is necessary to strengthen and expand the intellectual, cultural, social and technical dimensions of our continent. It must be a university that will be this dimension largely created and will be in its development play a major role ... we are heading into a period in which the conditions of education and employment will undergo major changes, to diversify vocational education, where lifelong learning becomes clear obligations. We owe our students and our society higher education system in which

they are given the best opportunities to seek and to find their areas where they can excel" (European Higher Education, 1999). At the European Council meetings in Bologna and Lisbon and other permanently it notes that European universities must contribute to the creation of a Europe of knowledge. "Ways of life and work are changing rapidly. This not only means that individuals must adapt to change, but also that they must change the established way of working ... to accompany a successful transition to an economy and society based on knowledge" (European Higher Education, 1999).

These long-term approach is also reflected in the amendment to the Law on Higher Education, approved in 2016. It states that university provides quality educational, creative and related activities, and internal evaluation of the quality of these activities and that "university is required to establish and maintain a system of quality assurance of educational activities and cooperation and mutual relations of universities with other universities, public research institutions and other legal entities engaged in research, experimental development and innovation, with employers of university graduates, with business operating in the industrial and commercial sector, with business associations and other persons or bodies carrying out, supporting or using educational or creative activities at universities or their results" (The amendment to the Law on Higher Education, 2016).

Universities prepare their students to their best possible use in practice. Their preparation is not dependent only on the quality of studies and teachers at universities and even not only on the quality of study programs. It also depends on the student interest in studying at university. For this reason, it is important to know the students' motivation to learn and study at different universities. Students are not only the object, but mostly currently the subject of the educational process. Therefore, it is desirable to know the students' interest in learning and a subject studied. For these reasons, each university should have information on the opinions and attitudes of students on issues related to the teaching and learning process. General feedback and necessary information may provide some sociological methods and techniques. One important issue is to motivate students to learn and study.

The motivation of students to learn and study at university is definitely the important condition for successful and beneficial graduation. The students themselves must want to learn and develop necessary technical and personal competencies, including relevant professional knowledge, skills and abilities as well as proper work and social habits.

According to the authors' survey results, 69% of students stated that they are motivated to study at university by an effort to increase their chances on the labour market. In this context, 92% of students agreed that higher education gives them more chances to succeed on the labour market. On the other hand, 74% of students stated that they see their chances on the labour market as medium. They are afraid of the strong competition and the lack of work experience. The data analysis showed a significant difference between male and female students ( $p < 0.05$ ). The male

students estimated their chances on the labour market as much higher than the female students.

The feeling of the lack of work experience affects the interest of students in studying. 54% of students stated that they are interested in the selected field of study, but it does not meet their expectations. Students complain of theoretical subjects without obvious connections and practical applications. 68% of students stated that the quality of teaching at the university is so-so and 53% of students stated that the quality of graduates decreases. The data analysis showed a significant difference among students from different year of study ( $p < 0.05$ ). The third year students evaluated the quality of teaching at the university as much worse than the other students. They evaluated the knowledge from the university as less usable than the other students and they would change the field of study more frequently than the other students. The potential problem is that students usually share their experiences with each other (especially through social networks), which can significantly influence their attitudes to the study.

The general dissatisfaction with the quality of teaching can reduce the motivation of students to study. The attendance of students is generally poor. Students do not attend the university to learn something new, but to take the test or pass the exam. Many students go to work rather than to school. 85% of students stated that they work during the academic year to earn money and get experience, but only 25% of them stated that they work in the field of study. The data analysis showed no significant difference between male and female students. Of course, every work is good to get needed work and social habits, but it is often not easy for students to study and work at the same time. Students do not focus on their study because of their work. This is a big challenge for universities to change the attitude of students. The universities should be able to persuade students that the adoption of theoretical knowledge is important, but at the same time they should be able to provide students with enough practical applications, ideally in collaboration with potential employers. The higher education should be directed to the development of professional and personal qualities of students, who must gain relevant theoretical knowledge, practical skills and social habits.

60% of students stated that they want to work in the field of study and 80% of students stated that they are ready for further education in the field of study. The data analysis showed a significant difference between male and female students ( $p < 0.05$ ). The female students wanted to work in the field of study more frequently than the male students.

The expectations of students about their jobs included meaningful work (80%), self-fulfilment (70%), friendly team (66%), fair wages (63%), favourable environment (61%), job security (54%), professional management (43%), personal development (43%), employee benefits (33%) or career prospects (32%). It is obvious that expectations of students are great and that it is relatively difficult to fulfil all these expectations in one job or at one company.

Despite all the expectations, students are aware of the fact that the success on the labour market is determined by their abilities. According to students, the most important abilities necessary for the success on the labour market include the ability to communicate with people (80%), the ability to solve problems (77%), the ability to apply own knowledge (59%), the ability to acquire new knowledge (57%) or the ability of team work (57%). Generally, students should continually improve their knowledge of foreign languages, their computer skills or their knowledge of management, economics, psychology, sociology, marketing, informatics or law.

## **Implications and recommendations**

From the perspective of needs of the current labour market, a common problem of employing university students and graduates is that their professional and personal qualities often do not meet the requirements of employers. Many university students and graduates do not meet the requirements for professional skills and experience, as well as social behaviour and professional motivation. Coming to work, most of them do not have any real idea about their profession. They often do not know the main duties or primary responsibilities of the work. Even if they worked during their studies, they usually have no understanding of how to perform daily work tasks and how to solve real professional problems. They do not know how to use their theoretical knowledge in practice. They also do not have the teamwork skills. They lack the ability to collaborate and communicate with colleagues, managers and clients. They are not able to analyse the available information, identify key issues, express their views and discuss alternative solutions. They lack relevant professional skills and social habits, but they want great earnings and rapid career. This leads to the fact that employers usually employ experienced workers than university students and graduates with no relevant experience and unreal expectations.

From the perspective of employability of university students and graduates, the most important condition needed to succeed on the current labour market is the capability and motivation to learn and develop necessary technical and personal competencies, including relevant professional knowledge, skills and abilities as well as proper work and social habits. Many university students and graduates have a good chance to succeed on the labour market due to their broader knowledge, skills and abilities, but they should change their attitude to the future career. They should be ready to start from scratch. They should not overestimate themselves and require positions that do not match their abilities. They should be ready for the hard work at the beginning of their career and for the systematic development of their professional knowledge, skills and abilities, including knowledge of foreign languages, computer skills or leadership abilities.

On the other hand, the universities should be able to provide students with relevant theoretical knowledge and practical applications, ideally in collaboration with potential employers. The higher education should be directed to the development of qualities of

students, who must gain relevant theoretical knowledge, practical skills and social habits.

From the perspective of the educational process, the educational programs must be flexible enough to reflect permanent changes in various fields and meet the changing requirements of employers and the needs of the labour market. It is important to efficiently and effectively apply modern interactive teaching methods (discussions, simulations, demonstrations, case studies, role plays) that develop the ability to analyse, discuss, argue, communicate and collaborate. It is necessary to improve presentation, communication and practical skills of university teachers who must learn how to attractively apply their theoretical knowledge through practical examples and applications. It is needed to establish and maintain effective relationships with suitable employers to get to know their requirements as well as the needs of the labour market. It is a good idea to create educational programs in collaboration with key employers.

Possible adjustments in education based on the findings arising from the research results are as follows:

- Follow maintain the quality of theoretical training, it means theoretically oriented subjects in the study plans. In the long term high quality theoretical and professional studies from the perspective of practice (graduate, employer) is evaluated very positively.
- Lower ratings is mainly associated with the link between theory and practice, ie. is likely to focus more on highlighting connections when teaching the individual, fits tightly and loosely related subjects (monitoring connectivity and links to all faculties), at this point the possibility of improving processes.
- Survey results confirmed both the shortcomings in the abilities of fresh graduates are currently in high need practice management, labor organization, people, presentation skills, teamwork skills, etc.
- Objective: flexible pro - wide professional and social competencies
- The teamwork that is not currently in education at universities received sufficient attention. The project teaching students on a semester divided into teams have split roles, tasks and responsibilities which are based on goals specified at the beginning of the semester and that everyone must meet. Students bear collective responsibility for the task and must work on the basis of a system that encourages project management and evaluation for the completed project.

## Conclusion

The paper summarizes the current results of the authors' research focused on students' motivation to learn and study at university and their expectations about future career. The results confirm main findings of earlier studies cited above and show some interesting tendencies in the students' motivation to learn and study at

university that should be well analysed and discussed. These tendencies lie in the fact that students are motivated to learn and study at university by an effort to increase their chances on the labour market, but in this connection they complain of theoretical subjects without obvious connections and practical applications. This dissatisfaction can reduce the motivation of students to learn and study at university. The attendance of students is generally poor. Students do not attend the university to learn something new, but to take the test or pass the exam. Many students go to work rather than to school to earn money and get experience. This seems to be a big challenge for many universities to deal with similar problems.

The results support the assumption that many university students and graduates have a good chance to succeed on the labour market due to their broader knowledge, skills and abilities, but they should change their attitude to the future career. The students and graduates are afraid of the strong competition and the lack of work experience. These fears may be justified, but the way is not to replace the study by the work during the academic year that has no added value. Instead, the way is to focus on the systematic development of necessary professional knowledge, skills and abilities, including knowledge of foreign languages, computer skills or leadership abilities.

On the other hand, the universities should be able to provide students with relevant theoretical knowledge and practical applications, ideally in collaboration with potential employers. The university teachers must improve their presentation, communication and practical skills and must learn how to attractively apply their theoretical knowledge through practical examples and applications.

The quality of the educational process in the university educational system attests to the quality or poor-quality of the teaching process and has an influence on the possibilities of graduates on the labour market. To improve the quality and efficiency of education is important across the board implanted into the pedagogical process methods used by some teachers, such as team work of students, solving specific problems in depth, independent creative and analytical work is like. These features and capabilities are indeed largely due to the characteristic personality traits individuals, but they are possible to further develop and cultivate forms of education and training and are now part of the so-called social competencies. Surface implantation implies increased demands on students and teachers, systematic information, explanation of benefits changes for both training teachers and methodological assistance, including the use of feedback mechanisms, such as the evaluation of teaching or satisfaction surveys of teachers and students.

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