

Intellectual Autonomy – Meta-Component in Descriptors Defining Levels in the European Qualification Framework

Scientific article

UDC 159.955:378(4)

KEY WORDS: *intellectual autonomy, meta-components of European Qualification Framework*

ABSTRACT - *Descriptors of the European Qualifications Framework expect from higher education didactics to develop models oriented towards critical thinking, i.e. intellectual autonomy, or critical and scientific education, whereas its theoretical frame involves emancipatory didactics grounded on conceptual changes of pluralistic concepts in contemporary philosophy of science and knowledge. The intentions of the paper are in line with the aforementioned, and it is an attempt to consider the reaches of implementation of the elements of the Bologna process from the standpoint of the autonomy of a university according to a special aspect – the freedom and responsibilities of the university in the function of the development of critical reasoning of students. Structures of meta-cognitive abilities of students are observed, as well as the strategies of learning and critical thinking, as significant indicators of the intellectual autonomy of students. It is an explorative research, aiming at testing the thesis on poor intellectual autonomy of students.*

Znanstveni prispevek

UDK 159.955:378(4)

KLJUČNE BESEDE: *intelektualna avtonomija, kvalifikacije*

POVZETEK - *Deskriptorji Evropskega okvira kvalifikacij pričakujejo od visokošolske pedagoške didaktike razvoj modelov, usmerjenih v kritično mišljenje, tj. v intelektualno avtonomijo oz. v kritično in znanstveno izobraževanje, a teoretični okvir tega naredi emancipacijska didaktika, ki temelji na konceptualnih spremembah pluralističnih konceptov v sodobni filozofiji znanosti in znanja. V skladu s tem so tudi nameni tega prispevka, ki predstavlja poskus pregleda dosežkov dosedanjega izvajanja elementov bolonjskega procesa z vidika avtonomnosti univerze, in sicer s posebnega vidika - svobode in odgovornosti univerz v službi razvoja kritičnega mišljenja študentov. Opazovali smo strukturo metakognitivnih sposobnosti študentov, strategije učenja in kritičnega razmišljanja kot pomembnih kazalnikov intelektualne avtonomije študentov. Študija je bila raziskovalnega značaja in njen cilj je testiranje teze o šibki intelektualni avtonomiji študentov.*

1 Intellectual Autonomy

The term “intellectual autonomy” implies the interplay of several aspects. One of them should be emphasised, given that it forms the basis of all the other aspects: it is its philosophical meaning, which is thought to be the foundation of moral (comprehensive) understanding of autonomy and stems from the philosophy of Immanuel Kant, who believes that modern moral norms cannot be derived from a particular experience, a cultural and religious purpose, i.e. from the world as it is. The Kantian moral norm is deontological in nature – it is not related to any kind of facticity and arises from the pure practical mind that is empirically and ontologically unconditioned. Here, autonomy is understood as the value of a comprehensive moral doctrine that should apply in any sphere of life. Today, the concept of autonomy, especially intellectual autonomy, which is the subject of this work, is related to the concept

of lifelong learning, particularly to the competence of “learning how to learn.” The need for developing key competencies, which refers to managing own learning in a more effective way, to approach to learning, to the ability of managing own learning, to social and interpersonal relations and communication, motivation, etc., has led to changed practice in higher education. One of the regularly encountered definitions of autonomy in learning is given by Henri Holec (1981), defining autonomy as the ability to control one’s own learning, suggesting that this ability “is not inborn, but must be acquired by formal learning, i.e. in a systematic way,” and noting that “to take charge of one’s learning is to have the responsibility for all the decisions concerning all aspects of this learning” (ibid.). In the Council of Europe, Holec sought to promote the learner’s freedom “by developing those abilities which will enable him to act responsibly in running the affairs of society in which he lives” (Holec, 1981). He believed that if learner autonomy is one of the defining goals, education becomes an instrument for arousing an increasing sense of awareness and liberation in man, and, in some cases, an instrument for changing the environment itself. From the idea of a man as “a product of his society”, one moves to the idea of the man as “producer of his society” (Janne, 1977, cit. Holec, 1981).

In addition to the above, other conceptions of autonomy in learning can also be found in the literature. Thus, Little (Little, 2000) believes that autonomy is essentially a matter of the learner’s psychological relation to the process and content of learning, whereas Dickinson (Dickinson, cit. Lalović et al, 2011) understands autonomy as a situation in which the learner is totally responsible for all the decisions concerned with his learning and the implementation of those decisions. For Benson, autonomy is the recognition of the rights of learners within education systems (Benson, 2001). One key principle of learner autonomy is the emphasis on the role of the learner rather than the role of the teacher. The focus is on the process rather than on its effects. Their role is to encourage learners to develop their own learning needs and understand learning as a lifelong process (Jacobs and Farrell, 2001). It is believed that one of the key principles of learner autonomy is shifting the focus from teaching to learning. Thus, the focus is on the learner, so that (Little, 2000) effective learning involves the growth of learner autonomy in terms of both the process and content of learning, whereas the common conclusion is the road towards autonomy for most students frequently involves the necessary insight, incentives and guidance of a good teacher (ibid.).

The notions of emancipation, self-determination and plurality are closely related to the concept of autonomy in general, as well as to intellectual autonomy, but here due to space limitations these will not be considered in more detail (for more, see: Gojkov, 2013). It is important to note that the essence of pluralist concepts, their theoretical and philosophical foundations, as well as their importance in strengthening the emancipatory potential of learners as subjects in the learning process is related to changes in the social arena and the world of work, now global in their scale, which promote the ideas of a pluralistic concept of society, which raises many questions further in the field of pedagogy and didactics. Thus, didactics becomes aware of the fact that the existing theories fail to provide acceptable answers, while it did insufficient to raise its own

potentials and seek for theories that are closer to life in the classroom (Gojkov, 2011). Pluralistic concepts with their basics being in critical philosophy were established in emancipatory pedagogy and didactics through the attitudes of Habermas, particularly his warning on “the danger of an exclusively technical civilisation, which declines from interconnection between theory and praxis, since it is threatened by splitting its consciousness, as well as human beings into two classes – the social engineers and the inmates of closed institutions” (Habermas, 1988, cit. Gojkov, 2011). The critical theory as applied in pedagogy has sought to emancipate through critical self-reflection, which was supposed to terminate the inadequate communication, for which Habermas believes to promote technocratic domination, and provide individuals with assistance to identify and pursue their own development needs.

2 The Role of Students in the Concept of Autonomy

The role of students in the concept of autonomy is characterised by the fact that students are focused on the process rather than the product, and there is a need for encouraging students to develop their own learning needs and see learning as a lifelong process. Thus, it follows that autonomy is attributable to students who understand why they are learning certain subjects, accept responsibility for their learning, take the initiative in planning and implementing (Lalović et al, 2011), who are willing to evaluate their own learning (Little, 2000), and act independently and in collaboration with others as socially responsible people (Dam, 1995), with the first step in the development of autonomy in accepting responsibility for one’s own learning. Accepting responsibility is a matter of conscious intention. Therefore, students should be given a room for developing autonomy by allowing them to participate in the formulation of learning objectives, the implementation of tasks and activities, either individually or in groups. They should also be allowed to implement self-evaluation and reflect on their experiences in the learning process because autonomy involves developing skills of reflecting and analysing, i.e. metacognitive skills, enabling students to plan, monitor and evaluate their progress. In addition to referring to independent and individual learning with minimum control by teachers, autonomy also refers to a process whose main stages are planning, monitoring and evaluation of learning. The factor of adoption of self-evaluation skills is essential for the development of learner autonomy. The learner needs to build his own criteria for evaluating the quality of his work independently of his teacher. Acquiring or learning these skills helps students make informed decisions about further steps in the learning process and reduce their dependence on the teacher. However, the teacher is still the person with the most knowledge and experience in the classroom, so he often provides suggestions and guidance. Autonomy in learning is as important as in all the other aspects of life as one of the basic human needs. Likewise, its values are considered through motivational values, which are manifested by the fact that accepting responsibility for one’s own learning involves and leads to the development of metacognition, whereas success is the driver of intrinsic motivation. The theoretical basis for the above claims can be found in the self-determinati-

on theory (Vučelić-Lalić, 2009). The basic assumptions of this theory are autonomy, competence and relatedness with others. As indicated by research findings, respecting learner autonomy makes an incentive for higher achievements during the study, conceptual understanding, developing creativity, strengthening self-confidence; it facilitates the students' adaption to the system of studying, they achieve higher levels of internalisation of the rules of studying and intrinsic motivation. The degree of student autonomy is largely determined by the teacher's behavioural style. Various strategies can be encountered in literature that teachers can use in working with students (*ibid.*), which contribute to the development of student autonomy. Particularly encouraging is the fact that "respecting learner autonomy" as the teacher's interpersonal style can be learned and developed (Vučelić-Lalić et al. 2009), whereas in students, as will be demonstrated later in this work based on the findings of an exploratory research, meta-components of intellectual autonomy are found only in traces.

Reviewing the above viewpoints could certainly not cast doubt on any of them nor it would challenge the requirements of the Descriptors defining levels in the European Qualifications Framework; however, it is still important to note the emergence of a concept which tends to become a pedagogical mainstream in the Serbian higher education arena, and according to which teachers should be didactically instructed to pamper the current student interests instead of teaching. Pressures come from different sides. For example, commissions on accreditation, monitoring and evaluating the quality of higher education institutions, underscoring the importance of high exam results; the policy documents of the Ministry of Education and Science, such as the Strategy in Education, etc. are based on the idea that one of two secondary school learners should complete secondary school and continue to study and complete his study. Funding is based on the number of students, which makes room for attempts where schools fight for students, and it is clearly expressed in increasing exam results. Education standards are established, which, as the current approach to education quality, introduce the culture of testing the outcomes based on external control, which in turn has its foundation in mechanistic and technicistic values and practice, normativistic philosophy and pedagogy, and ultimately in economic logic. The standards and methods of accreditation based on which higher education institutions are provided with the license need a more elaborate discussion. At this point, it is necessary to provide at least a few notes. First, Serbia requires a clearly defined philosophy of education, since the pluralism of long-conflicting streams significantly complicates programming the work of higher education institutions, which also affects the profiles they create. Institutions, which are burdened by accreditation standards, make curricula for teachers, their references, which is frequently at odds with competencies that students are expected to have. Therefore, instead of being created based on the candidates' future professional profile, the curriculum is aimed at providing the conditions required for it to "pass" the accreditation. On the other hand, the accreditation is provided based on the opinions of two reviewers who may be exceptional experts, but they may also belong to different theoretical streams and beliefs, and look at things differently, with the final suggestion for acceptance or rejection of the application for accreditation of certain programmes being proposed by a subcommission with no edu-

cators whatsoever in its membership. Often from the perspective of its individual members, this subcommission imposes subjects and teachers who are not necessarily required for the profile being created based on a particular programme. The Members of the subcommission and the commission, each from its own perspective, consider the documentation without having proper knowledge of the particular professional profile related to the specific curriculum, and provide the final opinion, which is then “put” on the “pillar of shame”, i.e. the site of the accreditation commission, through which the institution learns about its shortcomings, and what is necessary to correct in a specific period of time, etc. There is no one to consider the other side of the coin, the one that is not of a structural nature: monitoring and evaluating the quality of institutions and programmes, i.e. the essential criteria or meta-criteria quality, which otherwise should be in the scope of the accreditation committee, at least its name suggests so. Well, this is where the real problems emerge, some of which will be mentioned here. As previously mentioned, teachers are required to let a large number of students pass the exams, despite their lack of expected levels of competencies, especially those listed in the European Qualifications Framework; the mismatch between the time load implied by the ECTS (Credit Transfer and Accumulation System) and the expected competencies; the inadequately defined number of credits required for being allowed to take the exam; the uncertainties about the obligation of taking the exam and the extrinsic motivation of students focused on adding up the credits required for taking the exam; the poorly developed metacognitive capabilities, learning strategies and critical thinking etc., all these factors make no contribution to achieving the Descriptors of the European Qualifications Framework. We have made an attempt to test some elements of the above descriptors through an explorative research, with only a part of findings being presented here to illustrate the quality of higher education and argument in favour of creating a different concept of “quality” that should be contextualised, and which requires all actors to have a common understanding regarding quality and seek for more adequate ways of reaching it. This is directly related to quality management in higher education, which now bears the clear signs of subjecting the university and research and teaching activity conducted at university to economic logic, the law of capital, and it is in the core of current discussions in the today’s Serbian academic community. These discussions are moving towards the positions of Plinio Prado (2012), who believes that the spiritual work in general is submitted to the laws of trade, which he further sees as an attempt of annexation which relies on neo-liberalism, which he in turn considers to be in crisis at a global scale. Discussions in Serbia agree with the views of the same author that the freedom and responsibility of university in reforming the Bologna process are characterised by financial and managerial considerations, as well as that the process will result in knowledge which is being created and transferred in a controlled manner, so that it could be subjected to the global, economic competition and imperative of maximising its competitiveness and financial profits, with its critical potentials being neutralised. From the perspective of the situation in Serbia, this raises the following questions: What principles are fostered at today’s universities in Serbia and to what extent? Which of them have the priority? Is the principle of unconditional autonomy and the right to research and teaching ma-

nifested? From the perspectives of teaching and learning, the following question could be raised: How does the didactic aspects of pluralism and intellectual autonomy in higher education look like? This means the essence of autonomy, which in addition to the total independence of university also includes the principle of independence of thinking, the freedom of spirit, which is called 'autonomy'. In relation to these issues, Michelle believes that universities in France are overwhelmed by a pedagogical stream that refuses to require "intellectual effort of young people as well". There are arguments that students primarily need to be interested in and entertained. They should be allowed to change perspectives frequently. In this interactive exchange, the angle of discussion should be continuously altered by holding that "democratic" principles and allowing them to share the stories of their lives, and thus, showing them that the achievements of logic are actually based on the abuse of power. It is also believed that it is necessary to demonstrate to students that there is nothing worthy of consideration and that no subject is submissive to intellectual processes – it all comes down to self-affirmation and the defence of one's ego in relationships between equal individuals (Michel, cit. Gojkov, 2005). DuFour believes that this is an example of how neoliberalism has twisted the free reform ideas from the late 1960s to the present in his own favour, so that he considers schools and universities as misguided irresolute individuals whose relationship to knowledge has become a rather incidental, secondary thing. This has led to a new, limp and compliant education system whose secrets, as he believes, are known only to postmodernism. DuFour takes into account the fact that creative and educational forces are provided by universities with a strict critical pattern and a classic model of knowledge acquisition, where there is no room for batch fabrication of individuals without strong identity and power of judgment (ibid.).

In the same sense, critics of extreme pluralistic attitudes in postmodern philosophy of education believe that self-determination is turning into the dominance of sympathy. They believe that the arena is governed by joy instead of obligation, pushing self-determination into the area of absolute popularity, which still remains the only criterion. Furthermore, "self-determination" in the sense of Kuhn's imperative is seen as the individual's alienation from everything related to obligations, leading to demands for a new "pedagogical autonomy" from which the "open curriculum" also derives. Thus, risen to the dogmatic pedestal by those entering the arena of didactics and pedagogy without any knowledge about basic pedagogical theories and their scopes and limitations, nowadays, the open curriculum suffers increasing criticism. There is an ongoing discussion about the extent of individual action at the expense of sociability from the perspective of didactics and its themes (such as the open curriculum, self-determination, etc.), and its outlines increasingly point towards the danger of individualism becoming the prevailing feature of our times, as its full-swing swagger is already observed as a threat to the social nature of human beings (Kostić, 1997). Thus, present discussions highly agree with standpoints saying that curriculum issues are often answered by the conclusion that the culture of a specific era, reduced to the ideas, is expressed through its sciences, the system of which should not to be maintained for its own sake, but related to the acting capacity of a person who is able to make decisions, so that certain educational content is often presented from the afo-

rementioned double dimension (Gojkov, op. cit.). All of the above leads to the effect of postmodernism on the meta-theoretical conceptions of pedagogy. Therefore, three basic streams are manifested on the map of theory of science, whereby the main fields of science are arranged in these three streams: dialectic, dialectical-materialist starting points; hermeneutically oriented position (pedagogy as a social science); empirical-analytical starting points of the science of cognition. For each of the three main streams, it is possible to specify pedagogical theories and didactic models; the theoretical frameworks refer to these basic positions. Here it is impossible to provide thorough consideration on this matter (for more, see: Gojkov, 2007), but it is important to emphasise the close relatedness of these attitudes with didactics for better understanding of contemporary pluralistic tendencies and their effect on strengthening students' emancipatory potentials, i.e. intellectual autonomy. As indicated by research findings, in the pedagogical context, the experience of autonomy and competence is considered an important prerequisite for positive psychological development. Research findings have confirmed that students are more successful, more involved in campus activities, more consistent and persistent in meeting obligations, better adapted to the system of studies, showing higher levels of internalisation of the rules of studying and intrinsic motivation, as well as establishing better peer relations (Ryan, Mims and Koestner 1983; Grolnik and Ryan, 1986; Koestner and McClelland, 1990; Goodenow, 1993, Ryan et al, 1994.; Miserandino 1996; Children and Ryan, 2000; Levesque et al., 2004; Children et al. 2006, Ommundsen et al., 2007, cit. Lalic-Vučelić). In contrast, the lack of students' autonomy and insufficient development of their competencies are related to their low participation in study activities, decreased persistence, avoiding and ignoring obligations, dissatisfaction with their learning outcomes, a sense of boredom, a lack of curiosity, as well as the presence of anger and anxiety (Miserandino, 1996; Assor et al., 2005, cit. Vučelić-Lalic).

3 Methodological Framework of the Research

The purpose of this explorative research is to analyse the scopes of the current implementation of elements of the Bologna process from the perspective of components of the European Qualifications Framework. The following was taken into consideration: some structural elements of metacognitive skills of students, strategies of learning and critical thinking as significant indicators of intellectual autonomy of students, which is emphasised by the Qualifications Framework as an important aspect of learning. Therefore, the immediate goal of the research is to test the thesis of weak intellectual autonomy of students. The sample is without probability (pre-pense-N-136 students of the Teacher Training College for Educating Preschool Teachers "M. Palov", Vršac, and the academic department of the Teachers' Training Faculty, University of Belgrade). Method: non-experimental systematic observation. The aforementioned meta-components of intellectual autonomy are tested using questionnaires relating to the phenomena under consideration; their coefficient of reliability ranged between .65 and .71.

4 Findings and their Interpretation

As previously mentioned, only part of the research results will be presented here, meaning those directly relating to the Descriptors of the European Qualifications Framework, which require from higher education to develop didactic models oriented towards critical thinking, i.e. intellectual autonomy, and critical and scientific education. The theoretical framework consists of emancipatory didactics, which is based on the conceptual changes in pluralistic concepts in contemporary philosophy of science and knowledge. In line with this are the above outlined changes in the understanding of functions of higher education, which were designated to indicate the context in which learning takes a different meaning and different purpose. Thus, emphasising the capabilities implied by the complexity of the concept of competence, which implies the presence of autonomy, that in turn cannot exist without advanced metacognition, reflective conduct in learning and effective learning strategies, whereas intrinsic motivation is driven by success, leads to a framework that imposes the question forming the basis of this work: what is the level of development of indicators of the quality of education, such as metacognition, critical thinking and learning strategy. This was the basis for drawing conclusions with regard to the student's learning autonomy as an essential element of the quality of studying.

We present the findings relating to the knowledge and competence of 6-8 degrees of the bachelor, masters, and doctoral degree in the European Qualifications Framework (www.jointquality.org, European Council (2008)), with a specific focus on those that allow for drawing conclusions with regard to the level of development of critical awareness, the capacity for understanding innovations, the ability to resolve complex, unpredictable problems in a specific work area or area of learning, the use of critical reasoning about theories and their basic postulates, innovative approaches to reasoning in research, etc. and which basically explain the meta-components of intellectual autonomy (metacognition, learning strategies and critical thinking).

4.1 Metacognitive Strategies and the Student's Success

The relation between metacognitive strategies and the success of study has been examined using a series of one-way analyses of variance. The following tables show the relations that proved to be statistically significant.

Table 1: The results of one-way analysis of variance with the average study grade as the dependent variable and the elements of metacognition as the independent variable

	<i>Sum of squares</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean square</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Among groups	20.002	9	2.222	3.349	.001
Within groups	124.750	188	.664		
<i>Total</i>	144.753	197			

Table 2: The average study success (M) in groups of respondents in terms of the elements of metacognition

<i>Elements of metacognition – approaches to learn specific contents</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>
Without answer	79	2.09
Depends on the subject	48	1.73
Depends on the volume and type of content	18	2.28
Depends on the clarity of content	6	2.00
Some content requires learning by heart	22	1.77
Depends on the way lecture is presented	1	2.00
Depends on previous knowledge and interest	12	2.83
Depends on professor's demands	4	1.50
Depends on whether learning from notes or textbooks	4	3.00
Depends on whether he acquires theoretical knowledge or skills	4	2.25
<i>Total</i>	198	2.04

Study grades are presented on a scale of 1-4, where 1 stands for the range of 6-6, 9; 2 for 7-7, 9 etc.

As indicated by Table 1 and 2, the highest study success is that of the respondents who learn from notes and textbooks, whereas the lowest is that of those who adopted the strategy of rote learning.

Table 3: The results of one-way analysis of variance with the average study grade as the dependent variable and the questions asked when faced with difficulties as the independent variable

	<i>Sum of squares</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean square</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Among groups	14.554	7	2.079	3.034	.005
Within groups	130.198	190	.685		
<i>Total</i>	144.753	197			

Table 4: The average study success (M) in groups of respondents in terms of the questions asked when faced with difficulties

<i>Questions asked when faced with difficulties</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>
Without answer	57	1.95
Another way of resolving the problem	35	1.86
Does not ask questions	38	2.00
Where to find info on solving the problem	16	1.81
Why fails to understand	14	2.14
Why fails to listen in lectures	5	1.40
What is needed for resolving the problem	32	2.59
Starts from the beginning, item by item	1	2.00
<i>Total</i>	198	2.04

Table 5: The results of one-way analysis of variance with the average study grade as the dependent variable and if making a plan, of which it consists as the independent variable

	<i>Sum of squares</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean square</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Among groups	19.200	9	2.133	3.194	.001
Within groups	125.553	188	.668		
<i>Total</i>	144.753	197			

Table 6: The average study success (M) in groups of respondents in terms of what a plan consists of if making it

<i>What is planning related to</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>
Without answer	93	1.90
The most difficult items	4	1.25
Reads, underlines, learns aloud	6	1.17
Plans learning on a regular basis	3	2.00
Schedules learning and pauses	10	2.50
The most important items, seeks the meaning of concepts	7	2.43
Splits up the material and assigns time for each of its parts	19	2.42
Underlines and learns what is important	8	1.50
Assigns time for, underlining, taking notes and learning	27	2.26
Plans the time, literature and the way of learning	21	2.24
<i>Total</i>	198	2.04

4.2 Metacognitive Strategies and the Year of Study

Relations between the variables related to metacognitive strategies and the year of study were examined using a series of chi-square tests. The following tables show the relations that prove to be statistically significant.

Table 7: The results of the chi-square testing of relations between the year of study and the approach to learning new content

	<i>Value</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
Pearson's chi-square	96.148	33	.000
N valid cases	198		

Table 8: Cross tabulation of the year of study and the approach to learning new content

<i>Approach to learning new content</i>		<i>Year of study</i>				<i>Total</i>
		<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	
<i>Approach to learning new content</i>	Without answer	11	12	8	2	33
	Analysing the text, recognising the essence, reorganising, relating to the previous content	7	15	11	11	44
	Underlines what is important, takes notes	20	14	21	2	57
	Reads and splits up the text, repeats it item by item	3	3	3	0	9
	Uses the Internet and additional literature	0	1	2	5	8
	Finds the meaning of unknown words	1	0	1	0	2
	Learns by heart	1	0	1	0	2
	Takes notes in lectures and learns from them	6	4	1	0	11
	Learns with understanding, finds the best way to learn	1	3	3	10	17
	Reads the text several times	5	1	2	0	8
	Schedules the learning plan	0	0	0	6	6
	Shares views with colleagues	1	0	0	0	1
<i>Total</i>		56	53	53	36	198

Table 8 indicates the nature of the relationship between the year of study and the approach to learning new content. For example, the number of those who underline what is important and take notes for learning is the largest in the group of first-year students. In contrast, the number of those who analyse the text and distinguish the essence, reorganise it, relate to previous knowledge, as well as learn with understanding and think about the best ways of learning, is the largest in the group of students of the fourth year.

Table 9: The results of the chi-square testing of relations between the year of study and the focus when learning

	<i>Value</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
Pearson's chi-square	53.360	21	.000
N valid cases	198		

Table 10: Cross tabulation of the year of study and the focus of learning

<i>The focus of learning</i>		<i>Year of study</i>				<i>Total</i>
		<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	
<i>The focus of learning</i>	Without answer	4	6	2	1	13
	What is not understood	3	1	2	0	6
	Underlines the most important	29	22	17	5	73
	The important ideas, makes schemes	7	6	15	20	48
	Learns item by item	3	6	3	1	13
	Understands what has been read	2	3	3	6	14
	Understands totally unfamiliar content	1	0	1	2	4
	Takes notes during lectures	7	9	10	1	27
	<i>Total</i>		56	53	53	36

The data reported in the tables above clearly indicate that the majority of the respondents show low levels of development of the elements of metacognitive abilities, meaning that weaker students learn from notes which are shortened versions of texts, learn by heart, have trouble understanding texts, have little previous knowledge and cannot cope with tests – cannot adopt ideas and incorporate them in previous conceptual entities or frameworks. This, among other things, testifies about underdeveloped metacognition, as well as about the effectiveness of learning strategies and, finally, about the weak structure of critical thinking. As clearly indicated by the findings, both the aforementioned and the other weaknesses of metacomponents of intellectual autonomy visible from the table are closely related to the student's success. The findings also indicate that studying drives the development of metacomponents of intellectual autonomy. It seems that the above facts need no specific comments; however, note that the findings suggest that the quality of higher education, from the perspective of metacomponents of Descriptors of the European Qualifications Framework, requires activities aimed at stimulating essential measures because the current structural changes and ways of external quality control will not create critical thinkers to whom the Descriptors of the European Qualifications would provide legitimacy. The aforementioned findings clearly point to the fact that intellectual autonomy is not fostered to a sufficient degree at the primary level of education, whereas during the years of study it has seen development. This further means that situations where studies should be places dominated by critical and scientific education are hard to get. Therefore, we can almost agree with the observation of Kruse (2011) that for many students critical thinking is a challenging task which is readily resisted if they can supplement their success by rote learning and recounting. If it is any consolation, this not seems to be specific only for the surveyed students, and although the findings do not allow for generalisation, they are still in accordance with the criticism of the state of higher education in Serbia today.

5 Conclusion

Critical thinking is the element which primarily facilitates intellectual autonomy and achieves permanence in education. It is a meta-competence, which provides specific competencies with direction and sense. In the first step, it implies high levels of informativeness of students, which means reading and disputing where the students' openness to what is new and their willingness to reflect on their own thoughts in an open dialogue are manifested. All this requires a different structural arrangement of studies, which involves, first of all, working with small groups of students, which ensures more mentoring and makes the possibility of mentoring a prerequisite. There are also the other aspects discussed in the paper. Therefore, critical thinking assumes competence in a particular field or topic; it is part of the attitude to life rather than merely a set of intellectual competencies, and it is expressed by going beyond the usual framework, examining what is argued and providing direction. The findings of this research, which is only exploratory, suggest that critical thinking and other

components of intellectual autonomy develop during the years of study. It prevents studies from achieving a real momentum in terms of self-defined, self-responsible and self-organised learning, constituting knowledge and critical testing, critical thinking which indicates the preponderance of reproductive learning strategies. Great contribution to this is also provided by the current approaches to the quality of education, introducing a culture of testing the outcomes based on external controls, which in turn has its foundation in mechanistic and technicistic values and practice, normativistic philosophy and pedagogy and, ultimately, in economic logic. It is necessary to create a different concept of "quality" that should be contextualised and which requires a common understanding regarding quality and seeks more adequate ways of reaching it. The argumentation for alternative understanding and defending positions is in favour of the fact that the autonomy of learning and development cannot be standardised and that the unique diversity of the individual is not susceptible to the criteria of achievement, at least not defined in this way. What is nowadays expected of the new view oriented towards competence, and a clearer explanation of capabilities to be acquired, could be positively viewed from the perspective of didactic contribution to encouraging the intellectual autonomy of learning, but this is annulled by narrowing the autonomy in the process of studying. Due to the instrumentally oriented factography of test requirements, considerable competencies of survival are trained, whereas critical and independent thinking is almost neglected. The methods of scoring the students' pre-examination and examination achievements in Serbia are one of the examples illustrating this rather well. While actual developments in higher education are inclined towards scholarisation, the European development policies consider critical thinking as a focal point. By formulating descriptor systems, an educational framework has been created with the purpose of defining unique quality requirements throughout Europe. The higher education didactics is equipped with elaborate strategies that can effectively promote intellectual autonomy, but commissions and bodies deciding on this matter unfortunately lack people in their ranks who might be able to help in this.

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Intelektualna avtonomija - okvirna meta-komponenta deskriptorjev evropskih kvalifikacij

Opisovalci evropskega okvira kvalifikacij pričakujejo od visokošolske didaktike, da razvije modele, usmerjene v kritično mišljenje, tj. v intelektualno avtonomijo oz. v kritično in znanstveno izobraževanje, teoretični okvir tega pa naredi emancipacijska didaktika, ki temelji na zasnovanih spremembah pluralističnih konceptov v sodobni filozofiji znanosti in znanja. V skladu s tem je tudi namen tega prispevka, ki je poskus pregleda dosežkov dosedanjega izvajanja elementov bolonjskega procesa s stališča avtonomnosti univerz in to s posebnega vidika - svobode in odgovornosti univerz v službi razvoja kritičnega uma študentov. Opazovali smo strukturo metakognitivnih

spretnosti študentov, strategije učenja in kritičnega razmišljanja kot pomembnih kazalnikov intelektualne avtonomije študentov, na ta način pa smo ugotavljali tudi dosežke v okviru evropskih kvalifikacij, ki je uvedel novo didaktično smer z bolonjsko reformo visokega šolstva, vključujoč tudi retorično figuro spremembe perspektive - od učitelja do učenca in usposobljenost, ki jo je treba pridobiti.

Študija je bila raziskovalnega značaja, narejena po metodi sistematičnega neeksperimentalnega opazovanja, njen cilj pa je testiranje hipoteze o šibki intelektualni avtonomiji študentov. Manipulacije s spremenljivkami, zaradi njihove namerne spremembe nismo storili, so pa s statistično analizo opravljene statistične zamenjave za eksperimentalno kontrolo. Poleg empiričnih metod se je tudi količina poskušala pretvoriti v kakovost, da bi našli povezavo teh podatkov s teoretičnim okvirom. Zato je s sintezo podatkov v študiji v določenem smislu uporabljen sistematični pristop. Osnovno usmeritev za tak pristop smo našli v pojavu, ki se preiskuje, torej v zahtevnosti izobraževanja in odnosa opazovanih metakomponent samostojnosti učenja, pa tudi širše v filozofiji izobraževanja in konceptualnih spremembah pedagogike in didaktike kot okviru pluralističnih konceptov in intelektualne avtonomije v emancipirani didaktiki, in v osnovi za razumevanje pomena le-tega za krepitev emancipacijskega potenciala in osebne avtonomije v učnem procesu kot družbenim kontekstom - emancipacijo je mogoče doseči s pomočjo kritične samorefleksije.

Informacije za opazovanje predvidenih odnosov meta-komponent intelektualne avtonomije, so bile pridobljene z vprašalniki MUSI- metakognitivne sposobnosti, SUSI- učne strategije, izdelanimi za te raziskave. Spremenljivke so bile: spol, uspeh pri študiju, kraj in vrsta študija (prediktorji), meta-komponente pa avtonomija študentovega učenja (merilo). Vzorec (ni verjetnostni, namerni - N) predstavlja 136 študentov Univerze v Beogradu, Učiteljske fakultete - Oddelka za poučevanje v Vršču in Visoke učiteljske šole »M. Palov« v Vršču. Upoštevani standardi izobraževanja, kompetence, kvalifikacijski okvir in drugo, ki kot sedanji pristopi h kakovostnemu izobraževanju predstavil uvajajo kulturo preverjanja, ki temelji na zunanjem nadzoru končnih izidov, ki ima podlago v mehanicistično-tehnicističnih orientacijskih vrednostih in postopkih, normativistični filozofiji in pedagogiki in na koncu v ekonomski logiki, kakor tudi pomen tega za ožjenje avtonomije učenja in razvoja kritičnega mišljenja. Prav tako se preučuje didaktični prispevek k spodbujanju intelektualne avtonomije učenja.

Evropski okvir kvalifikacij je uvedel novo didaktično smer z bolonjsko reformo visokega šolstva, ki vključuje tudi retorično figuro »spremembo perspektive - od učitelja do učenca in sposobnosti, ki jih mora ta pridobiti« (Zervakis, Wahler 2007, povzeto po: Kruse, op. cit.). Ta sprememba v perspektivi predvideva predavanja, ki so usmerjena na študente in ki natančno preučujejo njihove perspektive in izkoristek pri učenju. Namesto »vhoda izobraževanje« morajo natančneje določiti »produktivnost«. Namen »kompetenc« je, da se spodbuja ne samo znanje, ampak da so tudi vse spretnosti - če obstajajo ustrezne metode usposabljanja - razvojno usmerjene. Vendar Kruse (op. cit.) meni, da se takšnim pogledom lahko očita le ta pomanjkljivost, da se trudi spodbujati nekaj, kar je že dolgo tam, ker je prepričan, da se v Humboldtovi tradiciji že od začetka prakticira poučevanje, ki je usmerjeno h kompetencam in ki je, le veliko bolj

kot to, kar se danes dogaja v okviru bolonjske reforme, razumela študij kot področje izobraževanja in treninga intelektualnih in metodoloških sposobnosti. Samo izraz „pristojnost“ je, kot pravi omenjeni avtor, nov in spodbuja intenzivno didaktizacija akademskega učenja. Zato izginja to, kar je pri Humboldtju bistvo študija: da se študenti obravnavajo kot partnerji v skupnem učenju in raziskovanju. Študenti postajajo predmet didaktike in izginjajo kot akterji in osebnosti s področja učenja (Ibid.).

Poleg poudarjanja kompetenc so v reformi izobraževanja najbolj očitni standardi izobraževanja (Klieme et al., 2007, povzeto po Kruse), ki, kot sedanji pristopi do kakovostnega izobraževanja, uvajajo kulturo preverjanja na podlagi zunanjega nadzora rezultatov, ki ki izhaja iz mehanicistično oz. tehnicistično usmerjenih vrednot in postopkov, normativistične filozofije in pedagogike in na koncu iz ekonomske logike, in da je nujno treba ustvariti drugačen koncept »kakovosti«, ki mora biti v kontekstu, kar pomeni, da vsi akterji ustvarjajo skupno razumevanje kakovosti in iščejo ustrežnejše načine, da bi jo dosegli.

Razlog za alternativno razumevanje zagovora teh stališč je v prid dejstvu, da avtonomija učenja in razvoja ne more biti standardizirana; edinstvena raznolikost posameznikov ne trpi meril dosežkov, vsaj ne na ta način definiranih. Kar se danes pričakuje od novega stališča, ki je usmerjeno h kompetentnosti, je jasnejša razlaga sposobnosti, ki bodo pridobljene, bi bilo mogoče obravnavati pozitivno z vidika didaktičnega prispevka k spodbujanju intelektualne avtonomije učenja, vendar se to izbriše z omejevanjem avtonomije procesa študija. Usposabljanje precejšnje pristojnosti namjenja preživljanju zaradi instrumentalno usmerjene faktografije izpitnih zahtev, komaj kaj pa kritičnemu in samostojnemu razmišljanju (Kruse, op. cit.).

Medtem ko pravi razvoj tudi na področju visokega šolstva teži k »šolarizaciji« v okviru evropske razvojne politike, se kritično razmišljanje šteje kot osrednja točka. Z oblikovanjem opisnih sistemov je ustvarjen izobraževalni okvir, ki mora enotno definirati zahteve glede kakovosti po vsej Evropi (www.jointquality.org). V zadnji stopnji definiranja »kvalifikacijskih okvirov za vseživljenjsko učenje« (Evropski svet, 2008) so deskriptorji razdeljeni v osem stopenj, od katerih stopnje 6-8 ustrezajo študijskim ciklom 1-3 v visokošolskem izobraževanju. Opisujejo učne rezultate v stolpcih »znanje«, »sposobnosti« in »poklicne kvalifikacije«. V tabeli 1 sta prvi dve kategoriji.

Raziskava, katere izsledke bomo predstavili v tem prispevku, predstavlja le en segment obširnejše študije, ugotovitve pa kažejo, da je za mnoge študente kritično razmišljanje izziv, ki se mu zlahka uprejo, če lahko svoj uspeh pri študiju dopolnijo tudi z učenjem pomnjenja (učenja na pamet) in obnavljanja. Kritično razmišljanje je zahtevno in prefinjeno, zahteva odprtost za novo in pripravljenost, da se izraža lastno mišljenje (Halpern, 2007, po: Kruse), vse to pa so zadeve, ki bi morale biti ne le omogočene, ampak kar zahtevane. Kritično mišljenje ni samo stvar strategije učenja in komuniciranja pri pouku, prisotno je tudi med študenti, če obstaja za to primerna kultura diskusije.

Študentom ni treba vsega znanja, ki se predava pri študiju, oblikovati in kritično pregledovati. Oblike učenja, ki služijo za prenos znanja, so pomemben sestavni del vsakega učnega načrta, če je ohranjeno ravnovesje med reproduktivnim učenjem in

tistim, ki zahteva aktivno in kritično sodelovanje. Dva tečaja v enem polletju, ki sta osredotočena na spodbujanje kritičnega mišljenja (proseminarji, praksa, vaje, usposabljanje), bi bilo najmanj, kar lahko vzdržuje ravnovesje (čeprav so tu velike področno specifične razlike).

Če so reproduktivne komponente premočne, potem so predavanja, kjer je potrebno aktivno sodelovanje, slabo obiskana, saj jih doživljajo kot oviro na poti k preizkusu znanja. Kar je v okviru »Bologne« treba še posebej popraviti, je to, da se mora prenos znanja usmeriti h komunikaciji. Ustvariti kritične mislece pomeni razviti osebnost. Morajo biti partnerji v izobraževanju in postati partnerji v strokovnih razpravah, za to pa je, se zdi, nujna drugačna strukturna ureditev študija, ki vključuje predvsem delo z manjšo skupino studentov, ki omogoča več mentorskega dela, kar je predpogoj za priložnost mentorskega dela profesorja, potem pa tudi drugih vidikov, ki so bili obravnavani v besedilu.

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