

THE EFFICIENT MANAGEMENT OF ACADEMIC LEARNING

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ABSTRACT. In contemporary society, lack of time has become a major problem for all of us, so that the pressure of time determines engaging in efficient actions . Hence the need to increase the efficiency of learning activities through proper management of time, the execution of the learning plan, hygiene and ergonomics of the learning space, applying the law of stimulating variety through intellectual compartmentalization. The present study meets the needs of finding optimal solutions in order to obtain an efficient academic learning. By definition, the learning plan is a complex process that generates an objective and thorough knowledge of the surrounding world, social life, knowledge that subsumes both the processes and products of human thought, experience and collective creations.

Keywords: *effective learning, academic learning, learning management, learning conditions, factors of learning*

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG. In der heutigen Gesellschaft ist der Mangel an Zeit ein großen Problem für uns alle geworden, so dass Zeitdruck führt zu Durchführung von festen und wirksamen Aktionen. Daraus ergibt sich die Notwendigkeit, die Wirksamkeit des Lernens zu erhöhen durch folgende Maßnahmen: ordnungsgemäße Verwaltung der Zeit, Durchführung des Lernplans, Hygiene und Ergonomie des Lernraums, Durchsetzung von Gesetzen in Bezug auf vielfältige Stimulierung den Intellekt. Diese Studie erfüllt die Bedürfnisse der Suche nach optimalen Lösungen, um eine effektive akademischen Lernens zu erreichen. Wir meinen, das Lernen einer komplexen Prozess, der objektive und gründliche Kenntnisse der umgebenden Welt, soziales Leben und Wissen erzeugt, die sowohl die Prozesse und Produkte des menschlichen Denkens, als auch der Erfahrung und kollektiven Kreationen subsumiert.

Schlüsselwörter: *effektives Lernen, akademisches Lernen, Lernmanagement, Lernbedingungen, Faktoren des Lernens.*

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Introduction

Learning to learn is an objective necessity of the contemporary world, especially since, according to I. Neacșu, learning is an attitude towards knowledge, towards life; acquiring and practicing new methods, new skills and values necessary to live in an ever changing world; the process of preparing to face new situations (I. Neacșu, 2006). Cognitive strategies mediate the relationship between the motivation for learning and academic performance. Regarding the relationship between motivation, self-regulated learning and academic performance, Zimmerman and Martinez-Pons (1988) showed that motivation and self-regulated learning are closely correlated. (Zimmerman, M. - Ponce, 1988). In the studies included in the doctoral thesis “Self-regulated learning strategies in an academic context” of author A. Boiler, the results show that self-regulated learning strategies efficiently predict academic performances and that this prediction is more efficient if it intervenes on metacognitive strategies, in the direction of optimization of their use by students. (A. Cazan, 2012). By challenging the role of metacognition in learning, W. Peirce also addresses the relationship between metacognition and motivation. The author believes that metacognition influences motivation, because it firstly influences self-efficacy and attribution. When the pupils / students obtain some results in a situation assessment (a simple exam) – and especially when these results are weak and unexpected - pupils / students try to find an explanation for this situation and then perform a mental inquiry (W. Peirce, 2003). Annie Murphy Paul, author of “Brilliant: The New Science of Smart”, details how to use the testing method for efficient learning, as the research shows that the simple act of calling upon the information from memory helps strengthen knowledge and subsequent recollection. According to the four-stage experiential learning model of Kolb, the pupil / student must be willing to play an active role in the experience, to be able to reflect on the experience; to have and to use analytical skills for conceptualizing the experience; and to have decision-making and problem solving skills, so that they can use the new ideas derived from the experience (Kolb, 1984). That is why, once again, we are concerned with identifying the constellation of factors of cognitive and / or metacognitive order that favorably influence learning and practical-actional mechanisms likely to lead to quality learning.

Research coordinates

The purpose of the research: Determining factors of cognitive and /or metacognitive order that favorably influence learning and identifying actional-motivational leverages in order to determine the production of efficient learning.

The research methodology: The method used was the questionnaire based survey. The questionnaire comprised 10 closed questions with items of choice and 4-5 possible answers.

The target group: The questionnaire was applied to a total of 95 students included in the form of full-time education, at the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca.

The presentation and analysis of results

Analysis of the results refers to a number of 91 respondents, 4 of the questionnaires being eliminated because of errors in completion (missing responses to an item or marking two correct answers to an item).

Thus, to identify the self-appreciation mode by each of our respondents, under item 1 we have the following results: three of the students consider themselves to be very good while the vast majority consider themselves good, 80.2% respectively; 15 students claim to be average, representing 16.5% in our sample. Surprisingly it seems that no students consider themselves weak, which indicates a high self-esteem of the entire group surveyed. The results recorded are presented in Table 1.

Table 1.

Student type

Answer options	N	%
Very good student	3	3,3%
Good student	73	80,2%
Average student	15	16,5%
Weak student	0	0%

Item 2 completes item 1 in the sense of assessing the degree of sincerity and honesty in the self-evaluation expressed in the previous item. The results, summarized through Table 2, indicates an equitable assessment of very good students, in the sense that they indeed have average grades between the values of 9 and 10 in the previous year or semester. The data analysis shows that, in general, the students' performances are good and very good, most with average grades of 8 to 10, representing 65 of the students surveyed, while poor performances between 6-6.99 are registered among 2.2% of respondents.

Table 2.

Final marks

Answer options	N	%
9-10	30	33%
8-8.99	35	38,5%
7-7.99	24	26,4%
6-6.99	2	2,2%
under 6	0	0%

Through the third item we wanted to highlight the perception of students in relation to their own participation in lecture and seminar activities. From the results presented in Table 3 we can notice, as an encouraging fact, that three quarters of the sample polled consider their participation in lecture and seminar activities as very active (12.1%) and active (64.8%). The fact that a large number of students, 23.1%, consider that they are only slightly active in lecture and seminar activities constitutes a warning to the trainers to reorganize these activities and to generate actions to determine the active participation of the students.

Table 3.

Participation in courses/seminars

Answer options	N	%
Very active	11	12,1%
Active	59	64,8%
Slightly active	21	23,1%
Passive	0	0%

The analysis of responses to item 4 allows us to highlight the students' preferred way of taking notes. Thus, as can be seen in Table 4, half of the students (56.0%) prefer to write down only the essential data. Writing down as much as possible of the lectures delivered by the teacher is carried out by 25.3% of respondents while 15.4% prefer to selectively record only what is relevant to them. Commendable is the fact that a very small number of students, 3.3%, are concerned with copying the presented slides. We appreciate that as a correct behavior, which supports effective academic learning, taking notes in a conscious and responsible manner by 81.3% of the questioned students. This enables us to appreciate that the students' expectations regarding the content transmitted during the courses are high, fact that implicitly increases also the responsibility of the academic teaching staff regarding the selection and transmission of information.

Table 4.

Taking notes

Answer options	N	%
Essential data	51	56,0%
As much as possible	23	25,3%
Copying the presented slides	3	3,3%
Selectively noting what is of personal interest	14	15,4%
No noting at all	0	0%

In order to obtain a performance in academic learning, importance is given to the learning course used in preparing for the exam. Through item 5 we intend to identify the preferred tools accessed by the students in achieving their training. From the responses received and presented in Table 5 we can observe that the course materials represent in 58% of the cases, the basic element used by the students in preparation for the exam. At the same time, using handwritten notes is preferred by a large number of students, 36.3%. Unfortunately, only 5.5% of the students mainly use mandatory reference sources in preparing for the exam, which entitles us to state that students are not willing to search for information, but prefer to acquire information from the course materials and the handwritten notes from lectures and seminars. Equally disturbing for the formation of competencies of identifying and selecting information from the sphere of a certain subject area is the fact that none of the respondents prefer other sources in order to prepare for the exams.

Table 5.

Preparation materials for the exam

Answer options	N	%
Handwritten notes	33	36,3%
Course materials	53	58,2%
Mandatory reference sources	5	5,5%
Other sources	0	0%

In efficient learning, certain conditions must be met, which is why item 6 covers some of the conditions that it entails. As we can tell from the data presented through table 6, half of the respondents (50.5%) are of the opinion that the basic condition of efficient learning is “systematic learning throughout the

semester.” This gives us the right to assert that assuming the role of a student the constantly participation and involvement in sustaining the learning activities is perceived by a significant number of students as being a success in obtaining academic performance. In the hierarchy of importance of efficient learning conditions, we can notice, in second place, “drawing schemes to facilitate a better understanding of the subject” (19.8%). “The optimal dosage of time for learning” is situated to a short distance, of just a percentage, namely 18, 7%. The fact that a percentage of 11.3% of respondents consider “effort invested in learning” as an essential condition of learning allows us to say that the determination; the personal motivation level may constitute an important factor in achieving performance. Surprising is the fact that „giving up on any pastime activities” is an auxiliary condition in producing an efficient academic learning as long as specialty studies confirm the fact that alternating the cycles of intense learning with relaxation moments through activities that involve other nerve centers than the ones involved in learning is beneficial to the overall performance.

Table 6.

The condition for efficient learning

Answer options	N	%
Systematic learning during the semester	46	50,5%
The effort invested in learning	10	11,3%
Optimal learning periods	17	18,7%
Drawing schemes to facilitate understanding a subject	18	19,8%
Giving up on any pastime activities	0	0%

As far as the preferred learning period, through the next item, „When do you prefer to learn?”, the results obtained are summarised in Table 7. The analysis of the results allows us to notice that morning is the preferred learning period by most of the students polled, 40,7%. 30,8% of respondents prefer to learn all day long, which we believe to be natural, considering the general schedule of courses and seminars. Although a smaller number of students prefer to learn in the evening, respectively 17.6% and even lower at night, 11.0%, we believe that a more careful management of the time allotted for study and rest is required, in order to obtain and maintain a high level of academic performance in the medium and long term.

Table 7.

Learning period

Answer options	N	%
Morning	37	40,7%
All day	28	30,8%
Evening	16	17,6%
Night	10	11,0%

Motivation for learning is constituted in an inexhaustible resort regarding recording performances. Therefore, through item 8, we want to find out the students' assessments regarding noncognitive factors that influence efficient learning. Thus, as we can see in Table 8, 54.9% of respondents said that their learning is efficient in courses that they consider to be fundamental in preparation for the desired profession, 25.3% believe that they are most effective in learning courses where they appreciate the teaching style of the teacher, 18.9% think that efficient learning occurs in subjects they like. Only one student states that learning is effective in subjects he considers difficult, we believe that it is so because his mobilization is at a maximum and the investment of effort is substantial.

Table 8.

Learning is more efficient regarding

Answer options	N	%
Subjects I like	17	18,7%
The courses that I consider fundamental for the job I would like	50	54,9%
The courses where I like the teaching style of the teacher	23	25,3%
Subjects that I consider more difficult	1	1,1%

From the data presented above we notice the importance of the teacher's teaching style in determining the efficient learning of the student. At the same time, the high percentage of students (54.9%) who consider that their learning is efficient in courses considered as basic in the initial training undertaken entitles us to assert that awareness has occurred regarding the fact that only a good theoretical preparation can lead to obtain further professional performances.

Conclusions

Following our investigations, we can draw a number of conclusions that we present below:

- the practice of effective time management for study and rest is imposed, in order to obtain and maintain a high level of academic performances in the medium and long term, especially since according to the study of the researchers at the University of Wisconsin, the vital role of sleep in efficient learning is confirmed, in the sense that the stimulation is more intense as the development of synapse is more intense and the need for sleep is greater. (Simionescu, R., 2013)

- systematic learning throughout the semester, followed by the development of schemes in order to achieve a better systematization of the subject and the optimal dosage of the time allotted for learning constitutes actional leverages in efficient learning. This conclusion of our study is in line with the psycho-hygienic and ergonomic requirements of efficient learning.

- The optimal time for learning meant to ensure the effectiveness of learning is the morning. Our results on the optimum time for the production of efficient learning are consistent with the specialty studies which indicate a peak of learning between 8-13 o'clock in the morning while in the evening; the period of 17 to 21 is preferable for the rehearsal of the learnt materials.

- the vast majority of students prefer to prepare for the exams by using the course materials, 58.2%, as well as handwritten notes taken in class, 36.3%. Therefore, we believe that a pronounced mobilization of the students in using as many sources of learning and eliminating their dependence on the course materials.

- learning is efficient in subjects considered by the students as having an increased importance in order to ensure a proper preparation for their chosen profession, in the opinion of 54.9% of respondents, requiring decision makers in curriculum development to assume the responsibility in joining the efforts to ensure an appropriate initial training. At the same time, the fact that 25.3% of the students consider their learning as being efficient in courses where they enjoy the teacher's teaching style compels teachers to introspect and reflect on their own teaching style.

Recognizing the fact that each human or social agent represents a single, independent entity in the learning process, we believe that efficient academic learning requires self-determination and commitment, and its mode of production varies from case to case, depending on the particular and experiential circumstances recorded.

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