

# Self-reflection in Relation to the Quality and Competitive Ability

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**Abstract** The knowledge economics raises claims for students and university teachers. The comprehensive analysis and preparation of the teaching process enables one to create the suitable system approach of students to the new facts, abilities, experience and knowledge. The society, the inseparable part of which are information and communication technologies continuously lays higher claims to the field of education, markedly acting on the relation between a teacher and a student.

*Keywords* – Self-reflection, Quality, Competitive Ability.

## I. INTRODUCTION

If the teacher wants to be successful in the present conditions, he must be exposed to the lifelong educational process, improvement of the qualification and quality of the knowledge and capabilities provided as well as also to the acceptance by students coming in contact with him. The contribution is aimed to confront the teacher's behaviour with the behaviour of students and to make an evaluation of the teacher's personality from the aspect of his self-control and a perception on the side of students. If we want to evaluate the quality of our work, we have to pay attention to the way of its performance and preparation. The pedagogical dictionary defines self-reflection as "the contemplation of an individual about himself and his personality, as the retrospective glance at his actions, ideas, attitudes and feelings, but also as the recapitulation of a certain time period of his own life, behaviour and decisions made in situations which are for a particular person important. The aim is to evaluate himself and decide on what and how should be changed and what strategy for future should be chosen [1].

Self-reflection is an inner process enabling one to understand the subconscious content of our mind and subconscious driving motives and to help an individual realize his actions, thinking, opinions and approaches. The matter in question is an inner dialogue conducted by a teacher with himself, particularly about his action whether he is doing his work well or not. He evaluates his work in a class-room and equally his attitudes to students, his communication with colleagues, etc. Self-reflection permits him to analyze and compare his previous and new pedagogical experience and thus to find out some stimuli for the improvement of his next work [2].

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Simultaneously, self-reflection forms a diagnostic basis of the teacher's pedagogical activity which can be understood in the widest sense of a word as the way of recognition and evaluation of the own pedagogical activity and its results judged from different aspects. It is a case of the pedagogical and psychological auto-diagnostics aimed at the spheres of the teacher's pedagogical work. Its methodological techniques are based on the analysis of results obtained from the teacher's pedagogical activity, from a course of the interaction between a teacher and a student during classes, and from the valuation of both of them [3]. A role of the self-reflection is to induce a teacher to conduct the inner dialogue with himself to achieve the more effective work. Only the teacher who does the self-reflection of his own work can make himself perfect and innovate the educational process. The qualified monitoring of the teacher's educational activity promotes the professional advancement and becomes a tool of the optimization of the everyday work.

## II. EDUCATIONAL QUALITY

There exist some principles which should be part of the educational quality. They are:

- **diligence and endurance** – to overcome knowledge barriers, problems and the resistance, to follow the defined aim with the purpose of its achievement,
- **enthusiasm and ardour for the education** – a positive approach to the education, rational decisions on the way of education, expenditure of the sufficient amount of energy in the interest of the higher education,
- **organizational mastering of the education** – timing of the work and personal programme with regard to a defined space of time for the education, regularity and intensity,
- **self-confidence** – an object of the education must be persuaded about his ability and competence to achieve the required education at the level which was set by him as a goal, the belief in the positive result has a strong motivating character,
- **conscientiousness** – a precise and thorough approach to all tasks at different educational levels, no underestimation of easier tasks, sufficient attention to solving the targeted problems,
- **exacting character** – in view of the final education it is necessary to be exacting to ourselves and to those who participate in the educational process, to be actively involved in increasing the educational level,
- **ensuring of the relax** – to alternate the educational time with a relax purposefully in order to strengthen our

perceptivity and activity, to use breaks for the consolidation of our forces and attention, to alternate the mental work with a physical load,

- **environmental suitability** – to ensure educational conditions which will be an optimum supplement of the created environment and which will stimulate the interest and necessity to be educated – the pleasant environment evokes the atmosphere in which attention can be better devoted to the educational process itself and to inspiring some remarks or impulses,
- **tenacity** – a clear and targeted route leading to the required education is perspective only if supported by the endurance and ambitions,
- **need and feeling to be educated** – they are an essential criterion for achieving the higher education, defined objectives and encoded system of the “lifelong” education, all of which stimulate managers to set new aims and find new solutions.

To improve the quality of teaching the teachers should have a good view of how the students perceive their subjects and should know what are their opinions and attitudes. Considering the feedback as an information base in evaluating the success and quality of the teaching process a questionnaire was evaluated after it had been filled in by students at the end of one of the economic subjects at the University of Technology.

The questionnaire consists of ten statements to which the students give answers as follows: definitely yes, yes, no, definitely no and I cannot judge.

In the next part of the contribution only those results are documented which were related to the evaluation of pedagogical workers and their pedagogical activity and which gave the teacher the possibility to obtain a direct feedback from his students.

**Statement 1: The method and content of lectures correspond to the requirement for their expected level**

TABLE I  
ANSWERS OF RESPONDENTS ON  
STATEMENT 1

	2005	2006	2007
definitely yes	8	3	5
yes	3	6	7
no	4	1	2
definitely no	0	1	0
I cannot judge	4	3	1
Number of respondents	<b>19</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>

From the viewpoint of the student all subjects are evaluated by comparing the anticipated and real state of the instruction. The first views are influenced by the information obtained from senior colleagues or by the acquired experience of a well-known teacher. The student formulates his expectations on the basis of the preference of the given subject and also in virtue of his individual interest in the study and its employment in the future practice.

In the next figure the development of respondents’ answers during the individual evaluated period is illustrated.

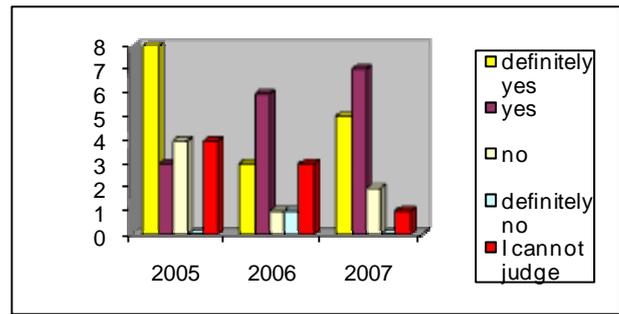


Fig. 1. The graphical illustration of results from the Statement 1

The answers of respondents corresponding to “definitely yes” and “yes” represented 58 % (2005), 64 % (2006) and 80 % (2007) in individual periods. From the aspect of the evaluated subject this result is positive. The statement incorporates also the evaluation of the content of the subject and the evaluation of the teacher. The content of the subject is determined by a syllabus of the subject which is elaborated by a teacher into the specific form complying with his abilities, possibilities and the assumed students’ requirements.

After finishing the subject a certain confrontation between the targeted and real state of the instruction occurs. This fact suggests that the feedback mainly from the side of students is a good controlling and information indicator of the success in teaching process. In the statement, the respondents were evaluating the mode of processing the teaching subject, preparation and conduct of the teaching unit, extent of pedagogical abilities and skills, relation to a teacher, sympathy and antipathy, ability to motivate, conduct of the group of people, professional competence, and usability in the future.

The positive responses to this statement resulted from the positive evaluation of the pedagogical process and from the satisfaction and willingness to co-operate in it. The negative responses arose from the different perception, subjective judgment and evaluation, or from the insufficient ambitions of a small group of students who did not exploit their potential. The category “I cannot judge” was considered as an inability to decide on the positive or negative evaluation of the statement, or it was regarded as a weak and even unsubstantial interest in the course of the educational process.

Seminars are considered to be a suitable form of the university teaching where students can sufficiently express their opinions, co-operate in the formation and course of the teaching unit and intensely influence the content and prospects of seminars. By joining the discussion and by presenting their views and proposals they can develop their communication, deductive and analytical abilities.

**Statement 2: The conduct of seminars is sufficiently stimulating and motivating**

TABLE II  
ANSWERS OF RESPONDENTS ON  
STATEMENT 2

	2005	2006	2007
definitely yes	4	5	3
yes	5	3	7
no	4	2	3
definitely no	2	1	0
I cannot judge	4	3	2
Number of respondents	19	14	15

The positive evaluation of seminars is important because their role is to assess the active participation of students and their ability to apply the acquired knowledge in simulated or real case studies, in which theoretical fundamentals and the implementation of the achieved conclusions transferred into the problems of the economic practice are confronted.

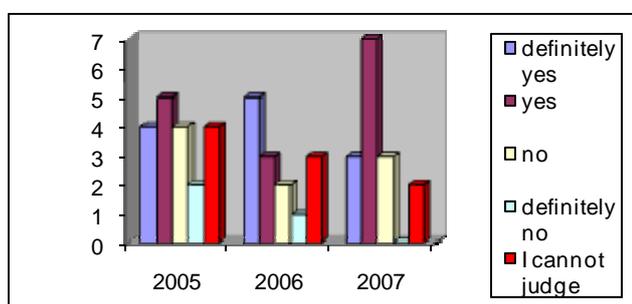


Fig. 2. The graphical illustration of results from the Statement 2

The positive evaluation of respondents characterized by answers “definitely yes” and “yes” represented 47 % in 2005, 57 % in 2006 and 67 % in 2007. These results arise from the insufficient communicative experience of students and from their easiness and habit not to be actively involved in the teaching process. The growing tendency of the positive evaluation was achieved by introducing the up-to-date studies and examples exploited in practice and by holding the discussions about up-to-date problems and conflicts corresponding to the subject of seminars. The main task was to decrease the number of inactive students passively watching the ongoing instruction, to motivate them to the common solution of the pre-determined problems, and to create the possibility of their incorporation into a team. The relative success can be documented by a fall of negative responses (“no” and “definitely no”) representing 32 % of respondents in the first year, 29 % of respondents in the second year and 13 % in the third year.

### Statement 3: An approach of the teacher to his subject is evaluated positively

The above-mentioned statement is directed towards the evaluation of the efficiency and competence of the teacher. It represents an ideal feedback for the teacher who is interested in the increased qualification and efficiency of the scientific as well as pedagogical activity. The relative objectivity is

ensured by the anonymity of questionnaires until the particular subject is finished by an examination.

TABLE III  
ANSWERS OF RESPONDENTS ON  
STATEMENT 3

	2005	2006	2007
definitely yes	12	10	8
yes	6	4	4
no	0	0	0
definitely no	0	0	1
I cannot judge	1	0	2
Number of respondents	19	14	15

This possibility is employed mainly in the self-evaluation and in the own testing of abilities and skills manifested in the successful conduct of the teaching process. However, in the evaluation of all statements it is necessary to consider also the fact that not all respondents will answer to submitted statements correctly. The results achieved by the evaluation of the statement are very satisfactory. The answer corresponding to “definitely yes” and “yes” was proclaimed by 95 % of respondents in 2005, by 100 % of respondents in 2006 and by 80 % of respondents in 2007.

The teacher’s evaluation includes a large spectrum of spheres to which students can express their attitudes. It is mainly: professional competence, ability to teach, ability to react adequately to the impulses and interests of students, communication abilities, ability to motivate and conduct the chosen group, rhetoric abilities, character, objectivity, willingness to create the natural and suitable conditions for the education, readiness to help, etc. The evaluation can be regarded successful because in the first two years no respondent answered to the statement in the way of “no” or “definitely no”. Only in 2007 there was one negative reaction to the above-indicated statement.

The creation of the suitable position for introducing the subject is equally important as its correct conduct, didactics and confrontation with the practical exploitation. The main purpose of the formation and evaluation of the questionnaire was to use the reaction of students as a basis for the teacher’s self-reflection. The partial aim was to obtain data for improving the pedagogical process, gaining proposals for the extension and corrections in the particular subject, and to acquire some data for the identification of problematic teaching spheres.

### III. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS

The current development and building up of the knowledge economics are a challenge for increasing the educational level at all types of schools and educational institutions. The special position in the educational system of the Slovak Republic is occupied just by the schools of higher education in which the pedagogical education of university teachers is not obligatorily demanded. Despite this fact many teachers have such qualities which create together with a long-term experience and a high professional erudition and enthusiasm

for “a good cause” the suitable environment for the education of university students.

The good pedagogical worker is an organizer and a manager. He is an upholder of the new information, defines the aim, content, principles and methods of the teaching process. His suitable attitude and approach to the management of the teaching process create the positive background for a receipt of the new knowledge, experience and skills. On presenting his knowledge and experience the pedagogical worker can be successful if he is able to attract his listeners, show a good professional competence and ability to motivate, arouse the interest, and deliver the latest scientific knowledge and point out to the interconnection of the theory with practice.

The quality of the teaching process is a determinant of the success and popularity of the subject. In the next part of the contribution there are suggested brief instructions and recommendations which can stimulate the improvement of the quality of the teaching process. These instructions and recommendations will be divided into three parts: preparation of the teaching process, course of the teaching process, evaluation of the teaching process.

**Preparation of the teaching process** includes all activities implemented by a teacher within the preparation for a teaching unit. It is inevitable to:

- specify the topic which will be an object of the lecture, practical training or seminars,
- realize the pedagogical diagnostics of the study group and thus to ensure the acquaintance of a teacher with students and the creation of the more advantageous position in the choice of suitable methods and teaching techniques,
- define aims of the instruction which must be verifiable, achievable, unambiguous and adequate,
- analyze the relations among subjects with an effort to provide the teaching in the environment known to the student and in the sphere clear to him,
- constitute the conceptual structure containing a comprehensive form of the subject matter suitable for the inclusion into the teaching process,
- analyze activities for the achievement of defined objectives, to create a set of examples, tasks and questions elucidating and strengthening the teaching,
- choose teaching aids, suitable methods, forms, didactic techniques or teaching devices,
- decide on the structure of the teaching unit which must be accommodated to the form, subject and study group,
- employ the subject matter in practice.

**The course of the teaching process** is directly dependent on the preparation of the teaching unit. It enables one to create different variations in relation to changes in the conditions of the instruction. In the case of the technological schools it is suitable to concentrate attention to the peculiarities of lectures in the technological subjects. It is necessary to:

- a) use tables in presentations of the information (the drawing of illustrative pictures, schemes, graphs, etc.),
- b) use audiovisual teaching aids (static projection of the complementary pictorial information, the presentation of suitable video-programmes and computerized programmes of the application type),

- c) demonstrate experiments in subjects of the theoretical basis of the study,
- d) give the explanation of the problem.

The teaching process is influenced by a teacher and students. Their mutual relations and reactions give the new stimuli and indications for future changes in the teaching unit. At this stage the key role is attributed to the teacher who is a mediator of teaching, new information, knowledge and abilities and, at the same time, who is a main actor of the teaching process.

The evaluation of the teaching process is an active feedback for each teacher. The evaluation can be followed on two levels. The first level is given by the evaluation through students which incorporates the analysis of the information, knowledge and experience absorbed by them during the teaching process. The second level represents the self-evaluation when the teacher evaluates the overall teaching process. During the research of the evaluation various methods can be used, especially those which are a reliable source of the collection of the information and data needed to evaluate the teaching process. In view of the stages of the research activity there exists:

- methods of the preparation for the research activity (study of the literature, literature research, writing of excerpts, work with literature – citation and paraphrasing),
- methods for obtaining new facts: from objective situations (watching, experiment) and from the subjective statements of respondents (talk, discussion, questionnaire, survey, socio-metric method of solving life situations),
- methods of processing the acquired facts: quantitative (statistical) and qualitative (analysis, synthesis, induction, deduction).

#### IV. CONCLUSION

In the conclusion it is possible to maintain that every possible contribution in the field of increasing the quality of the teaching process is a step leading to an increase of the quality of the human potential, to a stronger position of pedagogical workers, to a higher educational level and to a systematic education of the qualified university graduates.

From a short-term aspect the success achieved in the education is, however, difficult to evaluate. The real added value created by a total human potential can be evaluated and ascertained from a wider point of view, i.e. from the aspect of the future research and development, development of economic indicators, assertion of graduates from individual universities in practice, living standard of the population and from the aspect of the created human relations.

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