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MOSTAR UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' SELF-ASSESSMENT OF LIFELONG LEARNING COMPETENCIES

ABSTRACT

The introductory part of this paper defines the concept of lifelong learning and describes the key competencies for lifelong learning as defined by the European Union. The empirical part of the paper outlines the results of the research on students' self-assessment of lifelong learning competencies. The goal of the research was to re-evaluate students' self-assessment of lifelong learning competencies and to establish whether or not there is a significant difference in attitudes towards the usage and assessment of lifelong learning competencies among students of various study programmes. The research was conducted on the student population at the University of Mostar (N=283). The principal research findings suggest that various study groups of students provide various assessments of lifelong learning competencies, depending on their professional orientation.

Keywords: *lifelong learning, research, key competencies, self-assessment*

SAMOOCENA KOMPETENC ZA VSEŽIVLJENJSKO UČENJE ŠTUDENTOV UNIVERZE V MOSTARJU – POVZETEK

Uvodni del prispevka definira koncept vseživljenjskega učenja in opiše ključne kompetence vseživljenjskega učenja v skladu s koncepti Evropske unije. Empirični del prispevka predstavi rezultate študentskih samoocen kompetenc za vseživljenjsko učenje. Cilj raziskave je ovrednotenje študentskih samoocen kompetenc za vseživljenjsko učenje in poskus ugotoviti, ali obstaja občutna razlika v razmerju do kompetenc za vseživljenjsko učenje in njihovo uporabo med študenti različnih študijskih programov. Glavne ugotovitve raziskave kažejo, da se ocene kompetenc za vseživljenjsko učenje med različnimi študijskimi skupinami razlikujejo glede na strokovno usmeritev slednjih študentov.

Ključne besede: *vseživljenjsko učenje, raziskava, ključne kompetence, samoocena*

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INTRODUCTION

Man continues to learn throughout his life, whether in different situations or at educational institutions. Modern society introduces yet another concept – the lifelong learning process, which alters the past concept of learning and education and influences public policies (Žiljak, 2004).

Today, the most common definition of lifelong learning, as accepted by the EU and as incorporated into the European Commission Working Document, states that lifelong learning represents “a purposeful learning activity, undertaken on an ongoing basis with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competency,” (A Memorandum on Lifelong Learning, 2000, p. 3). According to this definition, lifelong learning refers to all kinds of learning during adult life with the purpose of developing knowledge, skills, and competency within the framework of one’s personal, civil, social, or professional life. Lifelong learning is oriented towards the individual and the individual’s abilities, improving individual behavior, managing information, expanding knowledge, developing comprehension, new attitudes, etc. (Marcetić, 2010).

In 2006, the European Union put forward a recommendation regarding key competencies for lifelong learning entitled *Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December for Lifelong Learning* (2006), which presents a group of eight competencies: communication in the mother tongue, communication in foreign languages, mathematical competency, and basic competencies in science and technology, digital competency, learning to learn, social and civic competency, sense of initiative and entrepreneurship, and cultural awareness and expression.¹

Communication in the Mother Tongue

This competency refers to education in the appropriate and creative oral and written expression and interpretation of concepts, thoughts, feelings, opinions, and facts, as well as in linguistic interaction in a range of various social and cultural situations: education, work, and free time and leisure. It also includes the development of awareness about the impact of language on others and the need to use language in a positive and socially responsible manner (Marcetić, 2010). Bearing in mind the importance of language interpenetration in the future world, it is crucial to maintain awareness about the proper and conscientious usage of one’s own language.

Communication in Foreign Languages

This key competency refers to education in the comprehension, oral and written expression, and interpretation of concepts, thoughts, emotions, attitudes, and facts in the foreign language in a range of various cultural and social situations. A significant constituent of this competency is the development of intercultural comprehension skills (Marcetić, 2010). In contemporary society, the importance of speaking foreign languages is beyond

1 See, for instance, Marcetić (2010).

dispute, especially when it comes to the English language and its presence in the public life of most countries in the world (Balenović, 2008).

Mathematical Competence and Basic Competencies in Science and Technology

Mathematical competency refers to student education in the development and application of mathematical thinking to solving problems in a series of various everyday situations, while competency in science refers to education in using knowledge and technology, employed to explain nature, to pose questions and make conclusions on the basis of facts. Technological competency is understood as the ability to use scientific knowledge and methodology to respond to human needs and desires (Marcetić, 2010).

Digital Competence

This key competency refers to the ability to make confident and critical use of information communication technology in work, personal, and social life, and in ncommunication. Its key elements are basic information communication skills and abilities: the use of computers to find, evaluate, store, create, present, and exchange information, as well as to develop associative networks on the internet.

Learning to Learn

This encompasses the learning process and persistence in learning, as well as organising one's own learning, including the effective management of time and information both in individual and group learning (Marcetić, 2010).

Social and Civic Competence

Social and civil competency encompasses the ability for interpersonal and intercultural cooperation (Marcetić, 2010), which in the contemporary world represents a fundamental necessity, as Europe consists of an increasing number of societies which represent intercultural mosaics (A Memorandum on Lifelong Learning, 2000). The construction of active citizenship is stated as an important task of lifelong learning, which was emphasised in the elaboration of the longterm goals of the Lisabon Process in addition to in the Memorandum. Such an education would assist in social cohesion, prevent discrimination and exclusion, and stimulate respect for human rights. Active citizenship not only fosters personal growth, but also accrues increasing importance as a significant form of political socialisation (Žiljak, 2004).

Sense of Initiative and Entrepreneurship

This competency refers to the individual's ability to transform ideas into actions, and includes creativity, innovation, and risk-taking, as well as the ability to plan and manage projects to achieve objectives. It is the foundation for leading in the everyday, professional, and social life of an individual (Marcetić, 2010). The notions of initiative and entrepreneurship are directly connected with the economy. As the aspirations of the lifelong learning process, as well as globalisation and other contemporary social efforts, are direc-

ted towards the improvement of economic prosperity and social cohesion, these notions will be highly valued on the world market.

Cultural Awareness and Expression

Cultural awareness and expression refers to the awareness of the importance of the creative expression of ideas, experiences, and emotions in a range of arts and media, including music, dance, theater, literature, and the visual arts. It also includes the knowledge and awareness of the local, national, and European cultural heritage and of their place in the world (Marcetić, 2010). Awareness concerning the preservation of one's own cultural heritage should be developed from childhood. The preservation of one's own cultural values, which does not harm others, completely supports the spirit of sustainable development and basic human rights, as well as natural law.

OVERVIEW OF PAST RESEARCH ON THE COMPETENCIES FOR LIFE-LONG LEARNING

Popularisation of the concept of lifelong learning has led to a significant amount of research in this area, particularly in the area of lifelong learning and education in sustainable development, as evidenced in various proceedings and pedagogical magazines. Many authors (Uzelac, Vujčić, Matijević, Mrnjauš, Lučin, Previšić, and others) dealt with the subject of sustainable development in the context of lifelong learning. Regardless of vast research on lifelong learning, few studies deal directly with the topic of competencies for lifelong learning.

The empirical research that was conducted and certainly deserves mention refers to the research report entitled "Key Competencies: 'Learning to Learn' and 'Entrepreneurship' in Elementary Schooling in Croatia", by the editor Jukić et al. The research was conducted on a sample of 25 state elementary schools in the Republic of Croatia. Overall, the results of the research indicate clear problems regarding grading and assessment in Croatian elementary education. These problems are obvious in outdated forms of grading and assessment, as well as in the lack of clarity in grading elements presented to the student. To an extent, grading and assessment in higher grades is perceived by students as unfair and is characterised by a lack of useful and elaborated feedback. The results also indicate that there exists an unsatisfactory general level of communication between students and teachers in Croatian elementary education.²

The research study conducted by Klapan, Rafajac, and Rončević entitled "The Attitudes of University of Rijeka Undergraduate Pedagogy Students Towards Lifelong Learning" must be included, although it does not directly refer to competencies for lifelong learning, but rather creates the basic foundation for such research. The research was conducted in November 2008, with a sample of 83 pedagogy students. The main results of the research indicate a high assessment of lifelong learning, which according to the attitudes the

2 See more about research results in: Jokić, B. (2007).

students expressed, is meant for all age groups. Furthermore, the results demonstrate that the students themselves are prepared to invest, partially or wholly, in further education. The differences in attitudes can mostly be perceived in the first and second year, while the third year does not significantly differ from the first two.³

Similar research was conducted under the title “The Attitudes of University of Mostar Educational Programme Students towards Lifelong Learning” by Anita Lukenda. The results of the research reveal that the educational programme students of the University of Mostar have very little or no knowledge of the basic concepts, principles, programmes, models, and issues involved in lifelong learning, which is undoubtedly one of the key factors of the socio-economic development of Bosnia and Herzegovina and its expedited entry into the EU. Therefore, these students do not have suitable formal attitudes about the issue. The author found it necessary to inform the public comprehensively about lifelong learning, and then to initiate actions for the application of EU lifelong learning programmes with a careful examination of the conditions and means of their modification in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

GOAL AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The goal of the research is to explore students’ self-assessment about competencies for lifelong learning and to establish whether or not there is a significant difference in the attitudes towards using and evaluating lifelong learning competencies among students of various study programmes. The procedure of scaling was used for the purpose of achieving the goal of the research. Scaling instruments include evaluation scales “which examine opinions (estimates, attitudes) by the subjects on certain phenomena, procedures or characteristics of subjects,” (Bognar and Matijević, 2005, p. 81).

Study Participants

The research included a total of N=253 students from the University of Mostar from the following study groups: Economy (N=42), English Language (N=19), Philosophy (N=30), the Faculty of Civil Engineering (N=10), Croatian Language (N=15), Informatics (N=12), Pedagogy (N=22), the Faculty of Engineering and Computer Science (N=24), Politology (N=31), Social Welfare (N=28) and Tourism and Environment Protection (N=20).

RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A competency refers to the sum of an individual’s skills, knowledge, talent, and attitudes, and in addition to knowledge and skills, it also encompasses the tendency to learn. In accordance with the wider approach, key competencies may be defined as a transferrable multifunctional set of knowledge, skills, and attitudes, necessary to all individuals for their personal realisation and growth, inclusion in the society, and employment. These

3 See more about the research results in: Klapan, A., Rafajac, B. and Rončević, N. (2009).

competencies should be developed by the end of formal education or training and represent a foundation for further learning as part of lifelong learning (Marcetić, 2010).

The results achieved by each individual undergo a certain degree of assessment and evaluation, which again have their purpose in the further progress of the work. In that sense, it is crucial to find successful mechanisms of assessing one's own knowledge, skills, and abilities. The data shown in the subsequent tables are ideographically much more interesting for comparison, but in this case, the emphasis is placed on individual study groups and their comparison.

Table 1: Communication in the Mother Tongue

Grade	Insufficient		Sufficient		Good		Very good		Excellent		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Study Group	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Economy	0	0%	5	12%	8	19%	18	43%	11	26%	42	100%
English Language	0	0%	0	0%	5	26%	10	53%	4	21%	19	100%
Philosophy	0	0%	1	3%	5	17%	13	43%	11	37%	30	100%
Civil Engineering	0	0%	0	0%	1	10%	5	50%	4	40%	10	100%
Croatian Language	1	7%	1	7%	7	46%	4	27%	2	13%	15	100%
Informatics	1	8%	1	8%	2	17%	5	42%	3	25%	12	100%
Pedagogy	1	5%	2	9%	5	23%	8	36%	6	27%	28	100%
Computer Science	0	0%	0	0%	3	13%	16	67%	5	20%	24	100%
Politolology	0	0%	0	0%	10	32%	11	35%	10	33%	31	100%
Social Welfare	1	4%	1	4%	8	29%	12	43%	6	20%	28	100%
TEP	0	0%	1	4%	2	10%	9	45%	8	40%	20	100%
Total	4	2%	12	5%	56	22%	111	45%	70	26%	253	100%

Table 1 clearly demonstrates that the greatest number of students graded their *communication in the mother tongue* as very good (4). It is interesting to observe the study group Croatian Language, where the greatest percent of the students, 46%, graded competency communication in the mother tongue as good (3). The reason lies that by studying their language, they understand the seriousness and gravity of approach to communication in the mother tongue, which does not imply everyday communication among speakers, but a purposeful, correct, and creative oral and written expression, as well as a series of other segments which were taken for granted by other students. Most students graded themselves with the grade they received during elementary school and high school.

Table 2: Communication in Foreign Languages

Grade	Insufficient		Sufficient		Good		Very good		Excellent		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Study Group	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Economy	2	5%	9	21%	21	50%	8	19%	2	5%	42	100%
English Language	0	0%	0	0%	6	32%	11	58%	2	10%	19	100%
Philosophy	0	0%	4	13%	7	23%	12	40%	7	24%	30	100%
Civil Engineering	0	0%	2	20%	3	30%	3	30%	2	20%	10	100%
Croatian Language	0	0%	1	7%	2	13%	9	60%	3	20%	15	100%
Informatics	1	8%	4	33%	3	25%	3	25%	1	8%	12	100%
Pedagogy	2	9%	5	23%	7	32%	6	27%	2	9%	22	100%
Computer Science	0	0%	2	8%	10	42%	11	46%	1	4%	24	100%
Politology	0	0%	8	26%	11	35%	10	32%	2	6%	31	100%
Social Welfare	1	4%	7	25%	11	39%	5	18%	4	14%	28	100%
TEP	1	5%	5	25%	5	25%	6	30%	3	15%	20	100%
Total	7	3%	47	19%	86	34%	84	33%	29	11%	253	100%

When it comes to *communication in foreign languages*, the results demonstrate that students studying foreign languages graded themselves with higher grades, while the students of Informatics, Politology, and Social Welfare graded themselves with somewhat lower grades. The greatest number of students graded their knowledge of foreign languages as good 3 (34%) and as very good 4 (33%). It is interesting that the students of Informatics graded their knowledge of foreign language mostly with sufficient, 2, which reveals their awareness of the importance of foreign language in their profession, and also their lack of that same knowledge. The data indicate that there is a need to introduce more foreign language learning hours in the study groups mentioned.

Table 3: Mathematical Competency and Basic Competencies in Science and Technology

Grade	Insufficient		Sufficient		Good		Very good		Excellent		Total	
	F	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	F	%
Study Group	F	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	F	%
Economy	3	7%	9	21%	16	38%	10	24%	4	10%	42	100%
English Language	5	26%	4	21%	9	47%	1	5%	0	0%	19	100%
Philosophy	0	0%	6	20%	14	47%	9	30%	1	3%	30	100%
Civil Engineering	0	0%	1	10%	3	30%	4	40%	2	20%	10	100%
Croatian Language	1	7%	4	27%	5	33%	5	33%	0	0%	15	100%
Informatics	0	0%	1	8%	2	17%	6	50%	3	25%	12	100%
Pedagogy	1	5%	5	23%	12	55%	3	14%	1	5%	22	100%
Computer Science	0	0%	2	8%	2	8%	15	63%	5	21%	24	100%
Politology	0	0%	9	29%	15	48%	7	23%	0	0%	31	100%
Social Welfare	2	7%	9	32%	14	50%	2	7%	1	4%	28	100%
TEP	1	5%	2	10%	8	40%	9	45%	0	0%	20	100%
Total	13	5%	52	21%	100	40%	71	28%	17	7%	253	100%

In case of *mathematical competency and basic competencies in science and technology*, there is the greatest number of insufficient and sufficient grades in self-assessment, especially with students of language studies, while the average grade of all study groups is good. The largest number of students, those in Informatics (50%) and Computer Science (63%), graded their knowledge in this area with very good. This competency is most important for their study, therefore, their assessment of the competency is not surprising. On the other hand, 26% of the students of English Language graded this competency with insufficient, or 1.

Table 4: Digital Competency

Grade	Insufficient		Sufficient		Good		Very good		Excellent		Total	
	F	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	F	%
Study Group	F	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	F	%
Economy	0	0%	6	14%	9	21%	22	52%	5	12%	42	100%
English Language	1	5%	2	11%	5	26%	9	47%	2	11%	19	100%
Philosophy	0	0%	3	10%	14	47%	10	33%	3	10%	30	100%
Civil Engineering	0	0%	0	0%	2	20%	2	20%	6	60%	10	100%
Croatian Language	0	0%	0	0%	5	33%	6	40%	4	27%	15	100%
Informatics	1	8%	0	0%	2	17%	5	42%	4	33%	12	100%
Pedagogy	1	5%	1	5%	6	27%	9	41%	5	23%	22	100%
Computer Science	0	0%	2	8%	1	4%	12	50%	9	38%	24	100%
Politology	0	0%	4	13%	10	32%	14	45%	3	10%	31	100%
Social Welfare	2	7%	4	14%	11	39%	7	25%	4	14%	28	100%
TEP	0	0%	1	5%	10	50%	6	30%	3	15%	20	100%
Total	5	2%	23	9%	75	30%	102	40%	48	19%	253	100%

The search for *digital competency* has become of utmost importance in almost every line of work. The results of students' self-assessment within certain study groups vary within the expected range, so, generally speaking, the students of those study groups with digital competency assess themselves with high grades. As many as 60% of Civil Engineering students assessed their digital competency as excellent. The table shows that student self-assessment mostly revolves around the grade very good (a total of 40% of students) and good (30% of students). Out of all those asked to complete the survey, Social Welfare students assigned this competency with the lowest grade.

Table 5: Learning to Learn

Grade	Insufficient		Sufficient		Good		Very good		Excellent		Total	
	F	%	f	%	f	%	F	%	f	%	f	%
Study Group	F	%	f	%	f	%	F	%	f	%	f	%
Economy	1	2%	5	12%	14	33%	15	36%	7	17%	42	100%
English Language	0	0%	5	26%	3	16%	10	53%	1	5%	19	100%
Philosophy	0	0%	7	23%	8	27%	9	30%	6	20%	30	100%
Civil Engineering	1	10%	1	10%	3	30%	3	30%	2	20%	10	100%
Croatian Language	0	0%	1	7%	4	27%	7	47%	3	20%	15	100%
Informatics	0	0%	2	17%	2	17%	4	33%	4	33%	12	100%
Pedagogy	1	5%	0	0%	3	14%	12	55%	6	27%	22	100%
Computer Science	0	0%	0	0%	5	21%	15	63%	4	17%	24	100%
Politology	0	0%	3	10%	10	32%	12	39%	6	19%	31	100%
Social Welfare	2	7%	1	4%	7	25%	10	36%	9	32%	28	100%
TEP	0	0%	2	10%	5	25%	7	35%	6	30%	20	100%
Total	5	2%	27	11%	64	25%	90	36%	54	21%	253	100%

Table 5 shows the results of students' self-assessment of competency in *Learning to Learn*. The greatest number of results revolves around the grades good (25%) and very good (36%), and in the study groups Informatics, Pedagogy, Social Welfare, and Tourism and Environment Protection around the grades very good and excellent (4 and 5). We can see that to a great extent students believe that they acquired the competency of 'learning to learn' during their schooling.

Table 6: Social and Civic Competence

Grade	Insufficient		Sufficient		Good		Very good		Excellent		Total	
	F	%	f	%	f	%	F	%	f	%	f	%
Study Group	F	%	f	%	f	%	F	%	f	%	f	%
Economy	1	2%	3	7%	14	33%	17	40%	7	17%	42	100%
English Language	3	16%	0	0%	2	11%	9	47%	5	26%	19	100%
Philosophy	0	0%	1	3%	11	37%	11	37%	7	23%	30	100%
Civil Engineering	0	0%	0	0%	2	20%	6	60%	2	20%	10	100%
Croatian Language	1	7%	0	0%	3	20%	7	47%	4	27%	15	100%
Informatics	1	8%	0	0%	0	0%	8	67%	3	25%	12	100%
Pedagogy	1	5%	0	0%	3	14%	11	50%	7	32%	22	100%
Computer Science	0	0%	1	4%	7	29%	12	50%	4	17%	24	100%
Politology	0	0%	1	3%	9	29%	15	48%	6	19%	31	100%
Social Welfare	1	5%	3	11%	8	29%	9	32%	7	25%	28	100%
TEP	0	0%	3	15%	3	15%	11	55%	3	15%	20	100%
Total	8	3%	12	5%	62	26%	116	46%	55	22%	253	100%

The results of self-assessment for *social and civic competency* again revolve around the middle grades. There is no significant difference in assessment among the students of the study groups mentioned. The greatest number of low grades (insufficient and sufficient) are observed with students of Social Welfare and Economy, who are directly related to this competency. Table 6 shows that students of all study groups most often evaluated this competency with a very good grade.

Table 7: Sense of Initiative and Entrepreneurship

Grade	Insufficient		Sufficient		Good		Very good		Excellent		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	F	%	f	%	f	%
Study Group	f	%	f	%	f	%	F	%	f	%	f	%
Economy	2	5%	7	17%	13	31%	13	31%	7	17%	42	100%
English Language	2	11%	3	16%	3	16%	9	47%	2	11%	19	100%
Philosophy	1	3%	3	10%	11	37%	9	30%	6	20%	30	100%
Civil Engineering	0	0%	2	20%	4	40%	3	30%	1	10%	10	100%
Croatian Language	4	27%	0	0%	3	20%	4	27%	4	27%	15	100%
Informatics	1	8%	1	8%	3	25%	5	42%	2	17%	12	100%
Pedagogy	1	5%	0	0%	8	36%	7	32%	6	27%	22	100%
Computer Science	0	0%	1	4%	12	50%	7	29%	4	17%	24	100%
Politology	2	6%	5	16%	10	32%	9	29%	5	16%	31	100%
Social Welfare	1	4%	3	11%	11	39%	9	32%	4	14%	28	100%
TEP	0	0%	1	5%	9	45%	8	40%	2	10%	20	100%
Total	14	6%	26	10%	87	34%	83	33%	39	15%	253	100%

Table 7 presents the results of student self-assessment regarding competency in *Sense of Initiative and Entrepreneurship*. The results are most often grouped around the middle grades. The results of Economy and Politology students' self-assessment, who should master this competency by the end of their studies, show that they grade their knowledge and the usage of the aforementioned competency with a greater number of lower grades than do the other groups. The results of the study group Croatian Language and Literature are also interesting, as 27% of students graded this competency with insufficient, 27% with very good, or 4, and 27% of students gave an excellent grade to their mastering of the competency.

Table 8: Cultural Awareness and Expression

Grade	Insufficient		Sufficient		Good		Very good		Excellent		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	F	%	f	%	f	%
Study Group	f	%	f	%	f	%	F	%	f	%	f	%
Economy	1	2%	5	12%	11	26%	13	31%	12	29%	42	100%
English Language	2	11%	0	0%	2	11%	6	32%	9	47%	19	100%
Philosophy	0	0%	1	3%	11	37%	11	37%	7	23%	30	100%
Civil Engineering	0	0%	1	10%	2	20%	7	70%	0	0%	10	100%
Croatian Language	1	7%	2	13%	3	20%	4	27%	5	33%	15	100%
Informatics	1	8%	1	8%	4	33%	4	33%	2	17%	12	100%
Pedagogy	1	7%	0	0%	4	18%	13	59%	4	18%	22	100%
Computer Science	0	0%	4	17%	4	17%	10	42%	6	25%	24	100%
Politolology	2	6%	4	13%	10	32%	9	29%	6	19%	31	100%
Social Welfare	0	0%	3	11%	11	39%	8	29%	6	21%	28	100%
TEP	0	0%	2	10%	2	10%	9	45%	7	35%	20	100%
Total	8	3%	23	9%	64	25%	94	37%	64	25%	253	100%

Competency which refers to *cultural awareness and expression* encompasses a wide range, starting from the creative expression of ideas and opinions, the arts, and an awareness of cultural affiliation. Table 8 reveals that the students in English Language and Croatian Language assess this competency mostly with an excellent grade. We can conclude that, during their studies, these students gained the knowledge and skills necessary to develop this competency.

CONCLUSION

The aspiration to be objective in assessing knowledge, skills, and abilities neglected a crucial and key factor in the personal development of each individual, which refers to self-assessment best examined by introspection. The reason lies in high subjectivity. Although the research emphasised objective evaluation in order to obtain results that would be as reliable as possible, in this case, subjectivity does not necessarily have to be unreliable, especially when it is investigated by means of analysis such as an anonymous survey. Assessing one's own knowledge, skills, and abilities properly and realistically presents a difficult task, as does finding valid ways to self-assess, which is significant in the further improvement of the same.

In assessing lifelong learning competencies, there is one specific feature reflected through criticality and systematic quality in grading those competencies closely related to the students' professional orientation. In that case, self-assessment is considerably more acceptable and realistic.

The research results clearly show that study groups highly evaluated those competencies that are directly connected with their future profession, i.e. language students gave preference to *communication in the mother tongue and foreign languages*, while mathematically engaged students emphasised *mathematical competency and basic competencies in science and technology*, as well as *sense of initiative and entrepreneurship*. The very high assessment of *digital competency* by all study groups confirms that the digital age prevailed in all spheres.

The key competencies put forward by the Council of Europe are currently crucial to personal growth, social cohesion, and employment. We cannot say that one of the competencies is more important than the other. They are all equally needed during this time of globalisation and our path into a society of knowledge. Social and civic competency is as important as mathematical and digital competency, as a sense for initiative and entrepreneurship and cultural awareness and expression are of equal merit and necessity. The research has shown that students are not trained in each of the competencies during their education to the same extent. Each study programme has one competency closely related to that particular area and professional orientation which prevails over the others. This shows that we still do not attach importance to gaining all eight key competencies, which, as a transferrable multipurpose set of knowledge, skills, and attitudes, are necessary today for personal realisation and development, as well as for inclusion in society and for employment.

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