

Für den Studierendensurvey spielt der internationale Austausch seit längerem eine große Rolle; im Rahmen des Aufbaus eines Europäischen Hochschulraumes und der Betonung von Internationalität des Studiums ist dessen Stellenwert noch gestiegen. Alljährlich veranstaltet die AG Hochschulforschung an der Universität Konstanz einen internationalen Workshop, bei dem von Partnern und Projekten aus anderen Ländern Europas empirische Befunde vorgestellt und diskutiert werden.

Der nachfolgende Beitrag wurde auf dem VI. internationalen Workshop zum Thema: „Beyond Employability: Citizenship and Responsibility in Higher Education“ (vgl. auch Nr. 66 der Hefte zur Bildungs- und Hochschulforschung, Januar 2013) vorgelegt; er ist daher in Englisch verfasst und wird stark gekürzt wiedergegeben.

43.4 Promoting social competences and responsibility of students

It is not possible to explain it in detail, but it might be helpful to give some hints about the theoretical background:

The first is the insight that we are discussing in the *frame of educational aims*. What is the sense of higher or scientific or academic education? We are convinced, that one general aim is very important, nevertheless often forgotten: “citizenship”, the competences to participate and engage in public affairs, or even more concrete: to gain social competencies and a sense of public responsibility during study time.

The other theoretical embedding of our research is *socialization theory*: How do students develop their values and habits, preferences and competences in the social context of universities. We ask: what are the central features of this context: what are intentional processes, what are processes behind our back (called latent).

The third important distinction concerns the *cultural dimension of studying*, to differentiate it from the social dimension or economic success. This means morality and communication, stiles and convictions about life, self and others, profession and work, politic and public affairs.

Let's go to the empirical base, the answers of the students in our student survey, as gathered in the last fifteen years. The Bachelor generation of students in Germany, as we can observe them in the last years, shows indeed some essential new features concerning the cultural dimension of study expectations and experiences: (1) They are more eager, to follow the regulations and prescriptions; they want more often a short study, to be efficient and reach a good exam. (2) They feel more stress and often they are irritated about further studying and their future after the first exam (Master or Job). (3) They are more interested in job security and in later career, they do not want to look for alternatives or new ways of living or working. (4) They often claim, that they are so overburden with studying, that they have no time to engage politically or socially.

All these are features of student's orientations as well as of institutional conditions which do not seem to be helpful to develop political interest, public engagement or social solidarity; in general called “citizenship”.

First Observation: Changes in Orientations and Activities

We start with the changes in student's orientations and activities. It was a slow process, really starting in the end of the nineties and becoming more and more widened.

Less Participation and Engagement

This might partly already be known: the students show less interest in politics and in participation. That is the case at the universities with less involvement in student unions, less political activities or less aggressive demonstrations. It's also the case in public life, the students hesitate to be a member of a political party or to take part in social initiatives. The engagement in social affairs has diminished as well as cultural interest and activities; we observe less support of solidarity and fairness, but more votes for concurrence and own advantages.

Low general responsibility

The Bachelor-students hesitate, to build up their own opinion or to develop broader concepts. But they expect more support and services; often they have the mindset of consumers, who demand for well-prepared and easily offerings. If they consider, to engage, they often ask about gratifications, for example the amount of ECTS-points. They are less idealistic, more passive: they show greater absence of responsibility.

That are only some traces of the changes, but it might be enough to put the question: how much are the universities a cause of it. To get answers we start to consider the experience of the students about the demands: what is wanted they should do or learn, how they should behave.

Second: Demands, Expectations and Obligations during Studying

To start with the main expectation: The demands and obligations, the students experienced in their field of study are rather one-sided: too much factual knowledge, and too less general, especially socio-political competencies. And in addition: this dis-balance is becoming even worse over time. We checked it with a question about demands and obligations in studying.

Let's have a look to the answers of the students. The table 1 offers differentiated insights: At first, the results confirm, that too much emphasis is on adaptive learning and working (52%). Too less demands for critical thinking (56%) or interest in socio-political questions (58%), and even participation in discussion during lessons is for the most students too less (53%). Especially in the last years (from 2007 und 2010) the obligation to work hard or to proof often the achievements in learning has increased very much. Now we understand that the students complain about overload of study work and stress.

But we have to admit as a positive result, that in the dimension of participation, interaction and individualism much more students evaluate the demands and possibilities as "quite right" – in all respects the data show from 1995 to 2010 a continuous growth of students who think, the demands are in a good balance.

It is worthwhile to have a short look at the differences between the students of different fields of subjects. We observe three main levels concerning the demands for critical thinking, socio-political interest and involvement with ethical questions. In all three cases the students of economics and of medicine experiences a very low degree of emphasis, much too low for even two thirds of them.

On the other hand, we have the students of cultural and of social sciences, as we may expect: They have some more demands in this field, but even for many of them, the demands are too low (more than a half is discontent and judge: too low.). - It might be a little bit surprising, but the students of engineering belongs to same level of students, that are not so much discontent, especially concerning the demand for critical abilities and interest in ethical questions.

Table 1: Demands and Obligations in the field of study: Experience of students at Universities in Germany (German Student Survey, 1995 – 2010)

	1995	1998	2001	2004	2007	2010
Adaptation, Obedience and Effectiveness						
(A 1): to work much and intensive for studying						
too less	19	22	20	20	18	12
quite right	40	41	37	41	40	34
too much	37	32	40	37	39	52
<i>cannot judge</i>	4	4	3	3	2	2
(A 2): to gain a big amount of factual knowledge						
too less	15	18	16	17	17	12
quite right	41	41	44	47	49	46
too much	39	36	37	33	31	39
<i>cannot judge</i>	4	5	4	4	3	3
(A 3): to offer regular proof of learning achievement (tests etc.)						
too less	22	25	23	22	19	11
quite right	52	51	50	52	52	46
too much	37	32	40	37	39	52
<i>cannot judge</i>	2	3	2	2	2	2
Participation, Interaction and Individualism						
(B 1): to understand basic principles						
too less	42	39	36	31	28	28
quite right	50	51	56	59	62	63
too much	6	7	8	8	8	8
<i>cannot judge</i>	2	3	2	2	2	2
(B 2): to participate in discussions during lessons						
too less	65	64	62	58	55	53
quite right	29	30	32	35	38	40
too much	4	4	4	4	5	4
<i>cannot judge</i>	3	3	3	3	3	3
(B 3): to work together with other students						
too less	55	54	51	44	40	38
quite right	39	40	42	49	52	52
too much	4	3	5	6	7	7
<i>cannot judge</i>	2	3	2	2	2	2
Critical Ability, socio-political Interests and ethical Reflectivity						
(C 1): Critical ability concerning leading opinions						
too less	67	65	62	57	55	56
quite right	39	39	40	39	39	39
too much	3	2	3	3	3	3
<i>cannot judge</i>	8	9	8	10	10	11
(C 2): to be interested in social and political questions						
too less	64	65	59	57	56	58
quite right	34	35	35	36	36	36
too much	3	1	2	1	2	1
<i>cannot judge</i>	10	11	12	12	15	15
(C 3): to be concerned with ethical questions of the subject						
too less	--	--	54	51	50	51
quite right	--	--	26	29	27	28
too much	--	--	1	3	2	2
<i>cannot judge</i>	--	--	18	18	20	19

Source: German Students Survey, RG in Higher Education, University of Constance, 1995 – 2010.

Between these two levels are situated the students of natural science and law. They reach both the identical score for this dimension of demand for critics, politics and ethics – and they are nearer to the first level of greater demands in this respect.

Third: The Outcome of Qualification and Socialization

If we know the “input”, the demands and obligations at the one hand, we have to ask for the “output”, nowadays “outcome” of studying, at the other hand. For the moment we take those elements of qualification and socialization we gathered in the last six enquiries over the last 15 years (cf. table 2).

Table 2: Outcome of Studying at Universities in Germany in four Branches of Core- and General Competencies (German Student Survey, 1995 – 2010)

	1995	1998	2001	2004	2007	2010	balance
Knowledge and Thinking							
(A 1): factual knowledge							
rather good	42	45	43	42	41	43	
very much	51	49	51	53	54	53	
Together	93	94	94	95	95	96	+ 3
(A 2): intellectual abilities, logical think							
rather good	45	45	44	45	45	47	
very much	33	32	28	29	32	31	
Together	78	77	72	74	77	78	+/- 0
Employability and Working							
(B 1): practical abilities							
rather good	32	33	35	37	39	41	
very much	12	11	13	14	17	17	
Together	44	44	48	51	56	58	+ 14
(B 2): working techniques/systematic working							
rather good	44	44	45	46	47	48	
very much	24	24	19	21	22	22	
Together	68	68	64	67	69	70	+ 2
Autonomy and General education							
(C 1): autonomy and self-reliance							
rather good	43	42	41	41	41	38	
very much	32	34	38	42	47	46	
Together	75	76	79	83	88	84	+ 9
(C 2): general education, broad knowledge							
rather good	34	38	38	39	41	40	
very much	13	15	14	14	17	16	
Together	47	53	52	53	58	56	+ 9
Critical Ability and social responsibility							
(D 1): Critical ability, critical thinking							
rather good	41	40	42	42	43	41	
very much	22	25	25	27	27	27	
Together	63	65	67	69	70	68	+ 5
(D 2): social responsibility							
rather good	30	32	33	35	35	35	
very much	11	13	15	15	18	19	
Together	41	45	48	50	53	54	+ 13

Source: German Students Survey, RG in Higher Education, University of Constance, 1995 – 2010.

The gain in subject knowledge is evaluated by the students as quite high –more than the half even very much. Also the gain in autonomy is quite high – and the outcome seems to the students often better than in other fields of competencies. Low and worse is the outcome, if we look to elements which may be belonging to what we call “citizenship” as social responsibility and critical thinking.

This may be only a starting point for further research. We will investigate more precisely the input and the output and we want to see if there is a latent connection with the demands in the field of subject and the outcomes of studying. Also we want to look at determinants, especially comparing personal-individual factors on the one hand and institutional conditions on the other.

Consequences for study situation and support

In general it seems necessary to implement the cultural principles of science and studying again as autonomy and mobility, research orientation and responsibility.

Activity and responsibility: Often the students get too many prepared offers and are not motivated to discuss, to decide, to make proposals, to criticize and to follow their own ideas. These conditions enforce their avoidance of responsibility and mislead them in the *role of a consumer*. This seems as a sweet seduction, but it does not foster autonomy and responsibility.

That means more time for thinking, discussion, for open processes, that means more cooperation and exchange as in projects with team work, which combines individuality and responsibility. It is an error, that students might learn this in special “qualification courses”, it must be the fundament of all lessons and studying from the first day – to have effectiveness.

Citizenship and Engagement: It is necessary to see citizenship as important as employability. That means to offer arrangements, activities, tasks to the students, where they can develop engagement and exercise responsibility. Every level of involvement should be enhanced to counter apathy and helplessness. Every field of activity should be used, building up opinions, work in the students council, activity in orchestra or choir, continuous participation in political or social groups, interest in initiatives. There are many possibilities to encourage and support cultural work, social engagement and political orientation of the students – in normal lessons as well as in special offers or opportunities, sometimes duties.

Tino Bargel / Monika Schmidt