

LEARNING STYLES AS INDICATORS OF HIGHER EDUCATION QUALITY¹

Grozdana Gojkov, Ph.D.¹

¹Teacher Training Faculty – Belgrade and Preschool Teacher Training College “M. Palov” Vršac,
Republic of Serbia, g_gojkov@open.telekom.rs

Abstract

From the viewpoint of styles as indicators of learning quality in higher education teaching the text considers the issue of putting into a context and understanding of the notion of higher education quality. Relations of meta-theoretical conceptions of pedagogy are considered, interwoven in theoretical grounds of didactic concepts; the relationship between didactics and postmodernism has been dealt with, as well as unexplained relation between postmodernism and constructivism; postmodernism as a new philosophy and constructivism as a general theory of cognition are considered in regard to emancipatory didactics which is theoretical grounds of participatory epistemology and learning styles as indicators of higher education teaching. The text gives a finding of a previously conducted explorative research on the correspondence between learning styles and discourse methods in higher education teaching, involving 2nd and 3rd year students (N-114) enrolled at Teacher Training Faculty of Belgrade University – teaching department in Vršac. The finding in question refers to the statement that learning styles correspond to discourse method and that the students with highly expressed dimensions of a meaningful style (search for the essence and understanding it; raising questions after reading...) understand discourse as a teaching method better due to the possibility to exchange opinions, express their own ideas, better understanding of contents, connecting knowledge...) which could be considered a possible guideline towards the culture of learning quality within higher education teaching.

¹ The text is written within the project under the title *Quality of Education System in Serbia in European Perspective*, financed by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia for the period 2010-2014.

JEL Classification: I23

Keywords: learning styles, higher education teaching quality.

1. Introduction

Teaching quality management, especially in higher education teaching, is considered an essential determinant of sustainable development in the conditions of highly competitive global market. The strategy is characterised by an emphasized note of innovative development, based on the management of changes that do not stop at the level of adaptive responses to the environment, but rather emphasize new competences for the world of employment. Among these a special place belongs to readiness for change. Psychologists explain such a readiness according to specific cognitive, affective and conative functioning of a person. In cognitive sense, this competence refers to flexible, creative thinking which is not dogmatic, as well as to ability to accept pluralism of ideas; in affective sense, it refers to the ability to tolerate suspense and uncertainty, while in conative sense, it refers to taking initiative, being innovative and ready for risk taking (Djurisic-Bojanovic, M. 2008). As a consequence, we are facing the idea that it is necessary to prepare young people for the world of work and life in general in pluralistic educational concept that should involve flexibility of educational models, with greater number of optional courses, along with the creation of personalized programs and multi-perspective teaching. The following didactic means of the flexible educational model are usually mentioned: team work, cooperative and individualized work, dialogic methods, nominal methods, the "brainstorming" method (Ibid). Pluralistic education concept is based on democratic values, ontological and gnoseological assumptions of pluralism in philosophy, as well as on the postulate of functional and critical process of democratization in school and society in pedagogy, leading to "student-oriented didactics" with a task to practice self-determination and co-determination and to enable self-responsible and co-responsible action (Kron, F. W, 1996). However, the didactic orientation supported by such arguments does not fully insist on social constructs of individual action. In other words, this is another didactic theory that has not been completely positively assessed. It has been reproached for the insufficiency in its efforts made for the aspect of relations and contents at getting closer to democratic self-comprehension of society in an integrated and balanced reality construct, through realization of self-determination and co-determination in the processes of learning and teachings at the institution of a faculty as a subsystem.

In this sense, criticisms have been expressed to the postulates of communicative didactics of Schaffer and Schaller in which personality related to emancipatory postulate is in the basis of open curriculum. In such a way, the extreme tendencies towards relativism of contents and types of learning have become omens of “open didactics” suffering from severe criticisms here in Serbia, as well. Meta-theoretical discussions on student-oriented didactics have been going on for years, and some of its statements would be the following:

- “self-determination” does not appear only as the most important aim of pedagogic process, but broader, as the only valid organizational criterion that can be met only if it is immediately manifested; brought in connection with the title of the text it should be manifested as a process, evident as an effect, i.e. indicator of quality of higher education teaching;
- the terms of “self-determination” and “emancipation” are insufficiently explained: it has neither been analysed what their relation to other notions (individuality, personality...) is, nor this has been put into *ens sociale* setting. And this is only one of the aspects of the complexity of the issue of learning process in higher education teaching and difficulties of delineating the question how to consider and improve the quality of education at higher education level.

Limitation of space does not allow broader discussion so that it will only be mentioned that meta-theoretical conceptions of pedagogy, permeating theoretical grounds of didactic concepts, are closely connected with the issue of higher education quality. On the normative dimension, postmodernism asks for a reflected attitude towards pluralism and tolerance (for further reading, see Gojkov, G., 2007, 114). Pluralistic tolerance does not imply that anything is all right and that everything has to be accepted – such a concept is rather unethical and undemocratic. Pluralistic tolerance is nourished by the insight into the heterogeneity of discourse types and language games. So, today’s task is to accept this fact and to develop the ability to fight for one’s own convictions without using violence; in other words, to learn to live with more or less permanent disagreement and dissent. This seems to be more important than to achieve the high and surely noble ideal of the subject that searches for a consensus according to rational arguments – an ideal that just a few achieve, anyway. The development of the ability to endure disagreement and dissent is closely connected to the insight that there is always a lack of information and knowledge, and it is connected to individual, often hurtful experiences of getting stuck with powerless, helpless and lacking arguments. To focus on complexity,

discontinuity and differences in school and teaching may lead to this postmodern modesty – a modesty that resigns from the modern belief that there are rational solutions to every problem and there is some higher sense and meaning in every difference (Gojkov & Stojanovic 2011: 289). All this refers to the search for the teaching methods to guide young people towards the above described abilities. Therefore new methods of instructions are being searched for; according to the modest assessment of the authoress of these reflections what fits well into new teaching methods is the issue of learning styles which, from the aspect of higher education teaching quality, could be viewed from two angles: as value learning styles themselves have or as a value through realization of teaching achievements. In other words, we are talking about value determinant of pedagogical process and work of teachers, which is an essential feature of the relations between subjects in the process of acquiring knowledge, attribute feature of those involved in education, as well as marking means through which higher education quality is reached. This further leads to a conclusion that it is difficult if not impossible to differentiation between the means and the results, so that, as it will turn out later, quality is contained by both process and its result (Vlahovic, B. 1996: 98). At this point there is a space to consider learning styles as indicators of higher education teaching quality. In other words, learning styles have a twofold role in the process of acquiring knowledge, from the angle of observing its quality.

2. Quality of Education and Learning Styles of Students

Higher education quality and, consequently, university teaching is the first issue in the changes being made in higher education. The changes introduced through the Bologna process are marked by a whole range of moves whose purpose, apart from standardization striving for harmonization of European space of higher education, is to improve the quality of studies. Quality of university studies is considered a complex phenomenon, so that it seems that there is no issue in realization of teaching concepts not regarding quality (Nikolic, Paunovic, according to Bojovic, Z. 2012: 36-37). The reaches of reform currents in higher education teaching and of the intentions of the Bologna process have up to now been mostly limited to structural changes, leading to the coherence of European higher education space, as a precondition for greater mobility of professors and students... Essential changes that should have directly contributed to the quality of studies are still not visible enough; consequently, higher education didactics has found itself in a position to have to reconsider its concepts, as well as teaching methods within them, since

they are directly related to quality of studies. An important place here belongs to learning styles as indicators of the level of higher education teaching quality. Various approaches to defining quality of education are multi-layered and permeated by emphasized social-interest fragmentation (Djermannov-Kostovic 2006: 253). Significant observation also seems to be the fact that in various fields quality is differently defined; due to such relativity, it is used more as a descriptive than as a normative notion (Ibid). When quality is in question, literature offers various standpoints, e.g: quality as an attribute in broader and narrower sense; as a degree of excellence; as a value and as assessment (Djermanov, Kostovic 2006: 254). The statement that diversity in approaches to quality understanding leads to complex conceptual definitions is also significant for quality of education. So, under the influence of one of them, quality is viewed as well-being education provides, through the value education has as qualitative determinant of pedagogic process and achieved results, and also as an attribute feature of subjects involved in educational process (Djukic 2002: 51). Since the efforts within higher education quality traced by Lisbon convention dating from 1997 emphasized the question of quality of aims, actor program, processes and results, a need appeared to more clearly determine the notion of quality; it has turned out that this is not a simple question. Some authors have pointed out that quality is "impossible to seize", unreachable ideal, in a sense "moving target" (Goddard, according to Djukic 2002: 56). Analyses have indicated that there is no generally accepted definition of education quality, but the term could imply value education has; in other word, it could refer to value determinants of pedagogical work, as well as attributive feature of the subjects involved in educational process (Vlahovic 1996). Three categories of definitions of higher education quality are found in education. First refers to quality as measure of values, the second to research of the level the targets have been met, and the third refers to quality as a measure of standard fulfilment (Djukic 2002: 510). It is inevitable to include multidimensionality in considerations of quality essence and majority of authors hold that it is a significant feature being in the grounds of complexity conditioned by numerous factors and their permeatedness at individual and social level. All this leads to the fact that a consensus has already been reached today that individual quality indicators cannot lead to reliable and valid indicators for relevant evaluation of higher education quality (Tunijnman, Batani 1994: 76).

Educational indicators are considered to be the data talking about functioning of educational system, indicators of stated, indicators enabling assessments of the current state of affairs and functioning of the system of education. A standpoint is

found in the literature (Djukic 2002: 512) that there is agreement about the following features of educational indicators:

- they are quantitative, but they are more than a mere numeric expression;
- they give summary information on relevant aspects of educational system functioning;
- they inform interested actors;
- as diagnostic means, they are grounds of evaluation;
- in certain cases they can be a glimpse, a solid represent of a broader circle of other indicator meanings; in other words, in a sense it can be an indicator of interaction of a number of factors, their interrelations, thus having a great informational value (Tunijnman, Batani 1994: 56).

Three groups of indicators can be identified in consulted literature as relevant for higher education:

- input indicators: material and professional (professional and pedagogic teacher competencies);
- process and indicators of performances (curricula, content sources, students' activities, assessment of students' success...);
- output indicators (specific knowledge, abilities, skills, values, attitudes, motivation, independent learning abilities...)

The third group of indicators seems rather significant for the title of the text, having in mind that it could encompass learning styles as indicators of higher education teaching quality. In what sense? If we start from the generally accepted standpoint that education quality implies the value education itself has, or can reach, i.e. value determinant of pedagogical process and teachers' work, which is an essential feature of the relationship among subjects in the process of learning and an attributive feature of those involved in education, a conclusion can be made that it is difficult, if not impossible to differentiate between means and results. As a consequence, it can be concluded that quality involves both process and its result (Vlahovic 1996: 98). At this point we can consider learning styles as indicators of higher education teaching quality. Considering education quality, learning styles have a twofold role in the process of acquiring knowledge, since, on one hand, they are the means leading to quality knowledge and other attributes of quality knowledge and, on the other hand, they are the effect of the process of education,

efforts of teachers to form research approaches and learning strategies in their students, i.e. explorative logics of thinking.

Various efforts and approaches to the notion of quality, as a set of significant dimensions (features) manifested within education, is in question, are caused, among other things, by differences in ways quality is considered, conditioned by differences in theoretical standpoints permeating the grounds of theoretical analyses (Antonićević 2012: 25). Majority of starting points in the attempts to determine the essence of education quality deal with what quality of education is and what it involves (Anderson, according to Antonićećević 2012: 25), while the answers to the previous questions are in accordance with theoretical orientation underlying the search for the answers to the raised questions; thus the following dimensions have been emphasized in the reform of the system of education in Serbia, which started in 2000: openness, measurability and verifiability, efficacy, effectiveness, righteousness, legislative regulations, sustainability, coherence, etc (Kovac-Cerović 2004). It could be concluded according to the previous dimensions of education system quality what quality is and how it is defined, what determines the essence and the phenomenon of quality of education, and how it is possible to incite quality improvement, what are the dimensions according to which the general level of quality within the system of education could be encouraged. However, according to the previously stated, it could be concluded that in the mentioned dimensions there are no unambiguous indicators that the system would go towards essential changes of studies, ensuring the culture of teaching and learning, which could be taken as the basic, essential dimension, directly leading to quality of higher education.

Dimensions conceived in such a way, i.e. neglecting the culture of learning and teaching and changes university itself could come to from within, involving emancipatory approaches to learning and teaching, could not have had a different impact on changes. After ten years of the mentioned reform of higher education, which was in the sing of raising quality, analyses have pointed to the fear that what has been created through the structural reform is university of “III secondary level” (continuation of secondary school) with studies being to the great extent made school-like. It is considered that as the reform develops it has become more obvious that it essentially refers to the structural and organizational side of the courses with the consequences that, from the standpoint of higher education didactics, stand in the way of the development of science and studies. The task that “higher education institutions should pay more attention to the development of innovation strategies,

in regard to the organization of learning contents, teaching materials and teaching methods” (Cre/Unesco-Cepes, 1997: 11; according to Eberhardt, op. cit.) has not been noticeable so far. In other words, the efforts made in the domain of teaching have been limited to mere structural changes. At the same time, what has been an assumption of the success of the Bologna process project, i.e. the demands to establish “the culture of teaching” that “recognizes and acknowledges the results in teaching to the same extent it recognizes research results that can contribute to reputation” (Council of Europe for Science 2008: 8), has been scarcely perceptible. The critical tones from Europe reflect dissatisfaction with partial disappearance of both European and national university traditions and scientific structures, e.g. the unity of research and teaching, postulated by Humboldt (Eberhardt, op. cit.). Namely, what is needed are new didactic impulses to mitigate the criticisms resembling the sentence of Konrad Paul Liessman in his *Theory of Non-Education*: “The misery of European higher education institutions has one name: Bologna” (Liessman 2006: 104). The situation in Serbia is similar. The criticisms refer to the decrease of the level of demands at academic studies, professors and students being limited by the broadness of studies, limitations regarding the scope of learning material, i.e. literature through the number of ECTS, the lack of differentiation between academic and professional studies, structural changes according to which studies have become increasingly more school-like, fragmentation of fields to modules, terms..., emphasising the negative aspect of functional knowledge, technocratic approach to knowledge (knowledge as goods, manufactured to be materialized in a new value...), as well as the agreement with the criticisms heard in Germany pointing out that the predominant issue of the reform refers to administrative and organizational side, i.e. structural changes. On the other hand, this should be redirected towards the issues of teaching, instruction and studying, the aspects of the development of quality of higher education didactics that have still been kept in the background. According to the modest opinion of the authoress of these reflections, insufficient attention has been paid to higher education didactics, which would be in the function of reaching the aims leading to self-organized learning of students. self-responsible and self-determined characteristics whose purpose is for students to acquire the competences young people are expected to have not only in the world of labour, but according to contemporary social currents. In other words, what is needed is to integrate the aspect of emancipatory didactics into formulation and design of university courses in such a way that special attention is paid to the fact that the contents of university studies are generated from research and that

they need to undergo a didactic transformation by the very scientist who teaches. According to this, it is necessary for subject contents to transform into a subject of educational process of a student. This imposes the need for the competence for didactic reflection and creation of one's own teaching methodology, in accordance with higher education didactics nowadays acknowledging the need to innovate the organization of learning contents, teaching materials and teaching methods (Cre/Unesco-Cepes 1997: 11), in order to establish "culture of teaching". Arguments in favour of such a standpoint could be found in the findings of one of the previous studies conducted by the authoress of these modest reflections, which will, after a short dealing with learning styles, could be taken as indicators of quality of higher education; they could be seen as having a twofold role in the process of acquiring knowledge, since, on one hand, they are the means leading to quality knowledge and, on the other hand, they are the results of learning and teaching, since they reflect on quality by facilitating learning process and making it more qualitative. As a consequence, they could be considered suitable for consideration of quality of the process and effects of learning, and finally, of higher education quality in general. Before we deal with the findings of the research providing arguments in favour of previously emphasized critical tones of the efforts up to now invested into the changes of the system of higher education, we will briefly sketch the essence and importance of learning styles of students.

It is considered that learning styles are cognitive, affective and physiological personality features appearing as relatively stable indicator of perception and relation towards the environment that serves as the source of knowledge (Keefe J, W. 1987: 7). According to many other authors (*ibid*), learning styles reflect genetic laws, development of personality and its adjustment to the environment; they help a person to get to know oneself better, to understand the importance of differences among individuals; as such they can be appreciated in teaching. Learning styles are thought to be structures broader than cognitive styles (Gojkov, G. 1995: 20), involving affective, as well as a group of physiological styles. According to many other authors, they also include environmental factors, i.e. individual's reaction to the differences arising out from the environment. Cognitive styles are only one area within learning styles, only conditionally having clearly expressed cognitive, affective and physiological dimensions, having in mind that the process of learning implies integral activity form (Gojkov, G. 1995: 21). Having this in mind it can be concluded that I have chosen to consider learning styles due to comprehensiveness characterizing them; as such they encompass individual differences of students

in their approaches to learning; in other words, learning styles involve cognitive characteristics of knowledge acquisition or cognitive style, as well as strategies or techniques, approaches to contents.

Theoretical context the research could rely on is rather broad and involves a number of psychological: humanistic and phenomenological psychology, Jung's view on the dynamics and typology of personality, contribution of cognitive psychology to research on cognitive styles, contemporary views on cognitive abilities – Sternberg, Gilford, as well as mediation theory dealing with structures mediating between a stimulus and a reaction. Due to these structures, the subject is active in his adjustment to context, i.e. learning, leading to emancipatory approaches to learning, i.e. this is a direct line towards qualitative learning.

Humanistic interpretation of learning process and motivation has pointed to personal freedom of choice of an individual, self-determination and striving for self-actualization (Maslov: 82, according to Stojakovic, P. 2000: 35). This theoretical orientation has emphasized the importance of intrinsic motivation, which is in the basis of the choice of discourse method, whose reception by students has been considered in the research. Theoretical framework includes emancipatory didactics, as well, within which it has nowadays been considered that cognitive style, as a construct, and learning styles can significantly facilitate emancipation of students, using pluralistic cognitive style as a basis of pluralistic educational concept (Bojanovic-Djurisic, M. 2009). Apart from M. Bojanovic- Djurisic, numerous other authors consider that pluralistic cognitive style, as well as learning styles can contribute to the realization of an important task of modern upbringing, nurture and education, thus supporting the increase of quality level and higher education teaching, as well as at other levels of education. Emancipatory didactics is based on pluralistic educational concept, grounded on democratic values, on ontological and gnoseological assumptions of pluralism in philosophy; within pedagogy it is grounded on the postulate of functional and critical process of democratization in school and society, leading to "student-oriented didactics" whose aim is to practice self-determination and self-responsible and co-responsible action. Therefore the paper considers reactions of students to possibilities of finding one's way in the situations implied by the method of discourse, referring to cognitive functioning, which should be characterized by flexibility, creativity, readiness to risk-taking, etc. What is significant for learning style is didactical orientation towards the students, his/her autonomy implying participatory approach to learning. The guidelines of the Bologna process have put special emphasis on this.

3. Learning Styles as Indicators of Higher Education Quality

Methodological outline of the research whose findings will be used for reflections on the indicators of quality of higher education, in the shortest, refers to the following: explorative character; intention: to consider the importance of learning styles for students managing in the method of discourse in higher education, i.e. the place of learning styles of students within participatory approach to learning; another question was to what an extent discourse method, i.e. its efficacy depends on learning styles and the formed learning strategies. The question has actually tested the thesis on the influence of learning styles on the acceptance of discourse as a method in higher education teaching and what has been considered is the efficacy of discourse method, its motivational and cognitive aspect, leading to the insights into the ways higher education didactics tries to give its contribution to more comprehensive self-observation and self-reflective, self-managed learning towards self-changes that would ensure freedom of person's actions according to contemporary philosophical discussions leading to the creation of competences expected in working and social context today.

Learning styles have been screened according to a questionnaire construed for the purpose of the research; the sample is non-probable including 114 2nd and 3rd year students studying at Teacher Training Faculty of Belgrade University – teaching department in Vrsac. They filled the questionnaire expressing their opinion on discourse as an instruction method within higher education didactics at the end of lectures, i.e. in 2011 and 2012, while their cognitive and reactions in learning were monitored by the researcher. The independent variable is learning style of students and the dependent variable refers to opinion on discourse as a teaching method within higher education teaching and cognitive reactions. The method of systematic non-experimental observation was used in the research. Manipulation of variables in order to change them on purpose was not carried out, but statistic replacements were undertaken through statistic analyses for experimental controls; systematic approach was used in the research according to the synthesis of the data; *non-linear canonical correlation analysis* was used as a statistical procedure, and additional validation of correspondence was conducted according to cluster analysis. Out of all the findings of the briefly outlined research, those referring to learning styles and their relation to discourse method will be dealt with here, according to the order of their manifestation:

learning style components	opinion on the method of discourse
1. – superficial; learning to memorize - unsystematic learning - poor concentration - revision, repeating one's lessons aloud - reading several times until memorizing	discourse facilitates understanding large groups make it difficult to express oneself
2. learning drafts and abstracts made from text, mechanically - reading, learning what has been underlined, - revision, repeating one's lessons aloud - reading aloud, underlying, repeated reading; - learning some parts with understanding, others by heart - making notes after reading a complete text - memorizing during lectures and additional reading	the terms are better explained
3. meaningful style - searching for the essence and understanding of sense - searching for new pieces of information, analysis, synthesis, asking questions, expressing one's own ideas, exchanging and confronting ideas	- possibility to explore - discussions, checking one's own thesis - knowledge lasts longer

The above overview of the order learning styles appear shows that most often students have expressed the style of learning characterised by reading until memorizing; they repeat aloud, learn parts, some of them even by heart. There is a small number of students whose learning styles characteristics are: reading the text as a whole, raising questions after reading the text, making syntheses, comparing with other ideas, positioning new knowledge in the context – finding examples, search for the better ways of presenting contents, regroupings of ideas, questions referring to the ways of easier ways to solve a problem, acquire new knowledge, critically reconsider contents, evaluate one's own learning strategies (except the awareness

on unsystematic learning, learning by memorising texts, without getting into the essence, sense or message of the text).

This very outcome leads to the conclusion that students have poorly developed metacognitive components, or that they do not pay sufficient attention to them in learning: they learn from notes, abstracts, thesis and in some case even by heart, aiming at memorizing drafts; understanding, connecting, comparisons, synthesis and other learning styles are rarely met. It could be also concluded that motivation is low, extrinsic, oriented towards getting more points, a better grade.

The table above also shows that the opinions students have expressed on discourse as a teaching method in higher education didactics is in accordance to learning styles. As a consequence, students who have *meaningful learning style* expressed the most positive attitude towards discourse; it is most suitable to those who learn through search for the essence and according to understanding of the essence; they assess discourse as a good method, since within it they exchange thoughts, connect ideas, raise new questions, etc. However, according to their number, they are in the last place (about 15%).

4. Interpretation and conclusions

Modest reference to only one finding of the explorative research is given to stress the observation on the connection between learning styles of students and their reactions to the method of discourse. What is also significant for the title we are dealing with is that this can be considered indicative for quality of higher education, since it shows that what is expected from emancipatory didactics, i.e. self-responsible and self-organized learning leading to autonomy, has not been expressed by a majority of students; majority of students do not have intrinsic motivation, they have expressed neither meta-cognitive abilities nor learning strategies which would ensure orientation towards self-organized search for information, making independent conclusions according to the information they gather, creating their own standpoints accordingly, expressing their observations on the problematic issues science has still not offered undisputable answers for, expressing their opinions, discussing... As a consequence, a conclusion could be made that a small number of students have reached practical expression of participative epistemology, self-determined and self-organized learning, along with mentor guidance of a teacher who is in the function of realization of emancipatory potentials of students. In this sense, it seems that the realization of basic intentions of the Bologna process

is still not visible enough, while a step further, contributing to conceptual changes in accordance with contemporary philosophy of knowledge, as a framework of pluralistic concepts in emancipatory didactics and empowerment of emancipatory potentials of students as subjects in learning process, is still rather small. Beyond all this, we are ready to accept the assessments according to which what can be noticed in regard to quality when Bologna process is in question is nothing more but structural changes. Quality of education is recognized according to indicators showing that we are getting closer to participatory epistemology, self-determined, self-organized learning process, as a basis of creative potential of an individual, of encouragement of flexible knowledge structures, creativity, ways of observing, thinking, learning, problem solving, readiness to take risks, those expected in the conditions of highly competitive global market. The Bologna process is characterised by an emphasized note of innovative development, based on the management of changes that do not stop at the level of adaptive responses to the environment, but rather emphasize new competences for the world of employment. Among these a special place belongs to readiness for change, which means specific cognitive, affective and conative functioning of a person. In cognitive sense, this competence refers to flexible, creative thinking which is not dogmatic, as well as to ability to accept pluralism of ideas; in affective sense, it refers to the ability to tolerate suspense and uncertainty, while in conative sense, it refers to taking initiative, being innovative and ready for risk taking (Djurisic-Bojanovic, M. 2008). As a consequence, we are facing the idea that it is necessary to prepare young people for the world of work and life in general in pluralistic educational concept that should involve flexibility of educational models, with greater number of optional courses, along with the creation of personalized programs and multi-perspective teaching. The following didactic means of the flexible educational model are usually mentioned: team work, cooperative and individualized work, dialogic methods, nominal methods, the "brainstorming" method (Ibid). The text also deals with discourse method and the findings have shown that a great number of students have not expressed readiness to accept them. Discourse method is correspondent with the characteristics of learning style referring to learning with understanding, raising questions and searching for answers, and all this proves the ways leading closer to the "culture of learning" are to be found in emancipatory higher education didactics.

Even though there have been numerous discussions on quality, it is beyond dispute that there are difficulties to clearly determine what is it quality actually refers to. A statement is often found in literature that quality is socially construed concept

(Stancic 2012: 289), dependant on the context in which it is talked about it (Stancic 2012: 289). In contrast to such a viewpoint, there are approaches to quality in education nowadays in Serbia, relying on standardization, unification of measures and procedures, with an intention to ensure better result through these arrangements. Assessment culture grounded on the external control of the outcomes is considered to be oriented towards utilitarian values and mechanistic-technicistic approaches, normative philosophy and, finally, economic logics. On the other hand, the research findings referred to in the text support the standpoints of socio-cultural and critical movement within pedagogy, pointing out the need to consider the problem of quality bearing in mind uniqueness, comprehensiveness, development, complexity, dynamics, context and unpredictability as fundamental characteristics of educational process; this means a different concept of quality. Such an approach implies that all the actors should create a shared understanding of quality and search for more adequate ways of reaching it (Stancic 2012: 302). In the situation in which majority of students manifests learning characterized by reading to memorization, by learning according to repeating parts of the contents, some of them even mechanically; in which a small number of students have learning styles characterised by: reading the text as a whole, raising questions after reading the text, making syntheses, comparing with other ideas, positioning new knowledge in the context – finding examples, search for the better ways of presenting contents, regroupings of ideas, questions referring to the ways of easier ways to solve a problem, acquire new knowledge, critically reconsider contents, evaluate one's own learning strategies...; in which majority of students do not search for the essence, sense, messages of the text – what can be concluded but that they are all actors of studies at the same track when quality is in question, certainly not searching for more adequate ways to reach higher level of quality. Learning styles manifested in the mentioned research are indicative, since they have shown that students' learning is still far from emancipatory pedagogy. Self-determined, self-organized learning of students would be recognized according to learning style enabling development of creative potential of individuals, encouragement of flexible knowledge structures, creativity, observation, thinking, learning and problem solving, readiness to take risks, expected in the conditions of highly competitive global society, which has been rarely met in the outlined findings. A step further leads to a conclusion that the current approaches to quality in higher education, expected from the changes outlined by the Bologna process have not been manifested. Changes have not penetrated deeper than structural changes, and mechanisms expected to install quality

culture actually are technicistically standardized approaches (accreditations, external evaluations of organizational forms...), making a culture of external quality. Essential indicators (with learning styles being only one of them) have been put aside, while they should make the essential guidelines in changes of learning and teaching quality in higher education. It could be also said that the existing ways of quality control, as it is noticed by Stancic (Stancic 2012: 303) impose the perspective of dominant social groups on understanding quality and the ways it should be reached, blurring different opinions in order to achieve obedience and adjustment to bureaucratic authority. So, it would be significant to introduce the issue of educational aims, key ideas and values permeating their paradigms, which is, also one of rather important factors of defining quality. Having all this in mind, it could be said that understanding of education quality is oriented in teleological manner. It seems that in the case of Serbia quality assessment found in other parts of Europe and the world has not been implemented yet (standardized knowledge tests...), but a tendency could be sensed that quality indicators are considered to be the acquired level of academic contents proscribed by a curriculum, tests results and exam marks at institutional and social level. Test score in these cases is the purpose of education; teachers and students are focused on achievements and adjust their activities to indicators; thus, measure becomes the aim, which, in the case of higher education due to its complexity, dynamics, multidimensionality... can be only partially considered. Therefore learning styles as quality indicators seem to be effective change of teaching and learning strategies leading to emancipatory learning. Who is to have most benefit are both individuals and society, and, in such a way the world of labour, as well.

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