

Abstract

The aim of the dissertation is to explore approaches to learning in the environment of a seminar paper through descriptive-exploratory analysis of perceptions of university teachers and students. We focus on how teachers plan and implement the processes of assigning a seminar paper, how they select of topics and types of assignments, use them in classroom practices and provide feedback and assessment. For the purposes of operationalization of the basic concepts, we developed a working typology of assignments. We interpret specific teaching strategies based on the models of learning and teaching approaches described in the theoretical part to find out how teachers explicitly or implicitly support a deep approach to learning, i.e. what teaching strategies lead to a strong interest in understanding the field, and conversely, which strategies lead to the mere reproduction of knowledge without a broader context in order to make minimal efforts to obtain assessment, or even resort to plagiarism. We confronted these results with students' perceptions to verify how they respond to each of the strategies. We found that an a deep approach to learning in writing a seminar paper is supported by a complex and demanding project assignment, which solves specific problems of real practice, is relevantly integrated in classroom practices and final assessment, and to which the student is provided with ongoing, concrete and factual feedback. Only then students do not perceive such assignments as a "task for a task", but as a meaningful opportunity that stimulates their interest in deeper understanding of the field, their own contribution and creativity. Such a task is also appreciated as an opportunity to develop communication and social skills, including personal growth, if it is organized as teamwork. Conversely, the surface approach to learning is supported by types of assignments that deal with topics isolated from the overall breadth of the subject or field, or that can be processed by reproducing resources without the need for argumentation or application, but also where students receive limited or no feedback on their work. Another problem is the situation where students do not have a detailed idea of what they will learn when writing a seminar paper. This can happen especially where the main goal is to meet the formal requirements set by the study programme, or if the teacher does not sufficiently or not at all explain the purpose of the seminar paper, and if students do not identify with these goals. This may be the case of academic skills, including working with resources, if the feedback focuses only on formalities and does not evaluate the content. We also pointed out low satisfaction with the type of the so-called traditional seminar paper which deals exclusively with theory and familiar topics, rather than encouraging students to formulate opinions and find solutions. In addition to this,

ineffective use of oral presentations in classroom practices and failing teamwork may also lead to the surface approach to learning and social loafing. Finally, we draw attention to the strategies suitable for the transition phases of study that can prevent unhealthy approaches to learning.