

BARABÁSNÉ KÁRPÁTI DÓRA – TORKOS KATALIN

CHANGES IN SCHOOL LIFE: AN EXAMINATION OF LEARNING ATTITUDES AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE

AZ ISKOLAI ÉLET VÁLTOZÁSAI: TANULÁSI ATTITÜDÖK VIZSGÁLATA FIATALOK KÖRÉBEN

ABSTRACT

In the second half of the 20th century, as a result of rapid economic and social development, developed countries are characterized by the formation of a knowledge-based society. The body of knowledge of humanity is growing at a sudden pace, and the view that knowledge is the main condition for an individual's prosperity and social usefulness is gradually becoming accepted.

In order to find a place in life and to continuously improve, it is essential that we constantly develop our knowledge. Lifelong learning can be considered most successful if the person is intrinsically motivated. Since young people spend most of their time at school, it is important to get to know students' attitudes towards school. School, as a secondary socializing environment, plays an important role in the development of learning attitudes.

The attitude to learning can be examined with the help of various factors: the degree of motivation for good performance, anxiety about performance, classroom atmosphere, school results, teacher-student relationship, behavior problems, absence from school (illness or truancy), extra lessons.

The results show that young people's attitude towards learning is mostly positive. The learning attitude of young people is characterized as follows: every second young person likes school and classes, the teacher-student relationship is good, their school results are average. Some level of anxiety appears in almost all young people. Discipline and behavior problems during class characterize a quarter of young people. Furthermore, it can be concluded that the attitude of girls towards learning is more positive than that of boys.

Keywords: attitude towards learning, learning attitudes, young people

ÖSSZEFOGLALÓ

A 20. század második felében a viharos gyorsaságú gazdasági és társadalmi fejlődés következtében a tudás alapú társadalom kialakulása jellemzi a fejlett országokat. Az emberiség tudásanyaga hirtelen tempóban nő, és fokozatosan elfogadottá válik az a nézet, miszerint az egyén boldogulásának, s egyben társadalmi hasznosságának legfőbb feltétele a tudás.

Az életben való helytálláshoz, a folyamatos továbbfejlődéshez elengedhetetlen, hogy folyamatosan képezzük tudásunkat. Az élethosszig tartó tanulás akkor tekinthető a legsikeresebbnek, ha a személy belsőleg motivált. Mivel a fiatalok idejük nagy részét az iskolában töltik, ezért fontos hogy megismerjük a tanulók iskolához való hozzáállását, viszonyulását. Az iskola, mint másodlagos szocializáló közeg fontos szerepet játszik a tanulási attitűdök kialakulásában.

A tanuláshoz való hozzáállást különböző tényezők segítségével vizsgálhatjuk: a jó teljesítményre való motiváltság mértéke, teljesítmény miatti aggodalom, osztálytermi légkör, iskolai eredmény, tanár-diák kapcsolat, magatartási problémák, iskolából való mulasztás (betegség, vagy lógás), különórák.

Az eredmények azt mutatják, hogy a fiatalok tanuláshoz való hozzáállása többnyire pozitív. A fiatalok tanulási attitűdjét jellemzi: minden 2. fiatal szereti az iskolát, az órákat, jó a tanár-diák kapcsolat, iskolai eredményük átlagos. Valamilyen szintű aggodalom csaknem minden fiatalnál megjelenik. Az óra alatti fegyelmezési, magatartási problémák a fiatalok 1/4ét jellemzik. Továbbá megállapítható, hogy a lányok tanulás iránti attitűdje pozitívabb, mint a fiúké.

Kulcsszavak: tanuláshoz való hozzáállás, tanulási attitűdök, fiatalok

1. Changes in school life

The expectations of education have changed, i.e. instead of creating opportunities and striving for equal opportunities, the goal has become the achievement of high performance. (Bognár, 2000) Rapid changes in the labor market require the extension of learning to the entire life course.

People need to keep up with development, constantly improve their knowledge and skills in order to keep their jobs and secure their position in society, and avoid exclusion.

Education has a fundamental role in personal and social development and must play an important role in reducing poverty, social exclusion, ignorance and oppression. (Delors, 1997)

The relationship with the teachers has also changed a lot: a much less dependent, more equal, "partner" relationship has developed, but at the same time, a kind of depersonalization can be observed in the teacher-student relationship. Since there is less time for each student, the chance of creating a personal relationship decreases. (Delors, 1997)

The school is a social organization whose main function is the transmission of culture in an organized and regulated manner. In addition to being socialized for integration into organized society, the organizational structure probably plays an important role in the distribution of knowledge, "symbolic capital" (Bourdieu), and in the evolution of society's stratification.

Due to its nature and role, the school has three functions:

- passing on socially important information,
- developing attitudes that help learning processes,
- helping the student prepare for his future profession.

Latent or indirect, however, the school has countless other important functions. The school itself was formed over centuries and shaped in the image of the society of the time. In addition to the transfer of theoretical knowledge, it

plays an important role in the process of becoming an adult. Leaving the safe and protected environment of the family, our outlook on the world expands through the peer group, we get to know new values and learn norms. Our conscious and latent knowledge is deepened through positive reinforcement and failures. (Ferge–Háber 1974)

2. The school as a socialization scene

The school is therefore the most important organization of formal education. It is the determining factor of later institutional socialization as both a social organization and a setting for socialization. The key determining interactions are student-student and teacher-student relationships. (Schmerz, 2002, Ligeti, 2006) Unfortunately, in this interpretation, formal education only means the transfer of knowledge, since the school is unable to replace talent management, the guarantee of equal opportunities, and attention to individual treatment.

The developmental function of the school (including the teacher) in shaping the student's personality is crucial. Above all, the changes in the lives of families caused this situation: the changed lifestyle of the parents, the pressure on both parents to work, and the growing tensions in the lives of families have called into question the effective functioning of the primary socialization scene (the family) in the practical development of the child's personality. More precisely, these changes often led to unfavourable trends in the development of children's personalities. It increasingly fell on the teacher to try to make up for the resulting gaps and negative phenomena. (Balogh–Tóth, 2005)

Peers of the same age, classmates and other fellow students also play an important role in the student's personality development in general, but especially in the relationship between the child and the school. It can be observed that those students who were able to fit into the school community (have friends, are accepted by their peers, are not ostracized) go to school more willingly than those who cannot identify with the environment around them.

Since children spend most of their time at school, the events and experiences there can have a great impact on them. The appropriate school environment (e.g. welcoming social atmosphere, helpful classmates) and successful adaptation (school performance, appropriate attitude to school tasks, low stress) ensure the experience of competence and success. (Seiffge-Krenke–Weidemann–Fentner és mtsai, 2001.)

3. Learning attitude and behavior of young people

Student evaluation ends with school grades. On the one hand, the grades are not completely objective, and on the other hand, they are difficult to compare.

The same grades obtained in different school institutions may in reality be based on different levels of knowledge. Several factors can play a role in the teacher's decision (how they evaluate a specific performance): the institution as a whole, the narrower class community, the student's previous performance. The students' performance can therefore be measured on the one hand by "papers", "credits" or by obtaining the given qualification. Actual knowledge can be measured with various tests. (Róbert, 2004)

Academic performance depends not only on abilities, but also on learning attitudes. (Józsa, 2002) In the case of internal learning motivation, the student meets the school's expectations because he or she is driven by curiosity and interest in the subject matter. External learning motivation refers to studying for external rewards (e.g. a good grade, material reward) or to avoid negative consequences (bad grade, punishment, etc.). Motivation arising from meeting the expectations of the people involved in learning (parents, teachers, peers) can also be classified here. Thus, motivation can arise either from internal self-assertion tendencies or from external competitive situations. (Réthyné, 2003).

The more favorable attitude of girls to school and their better academic results are in line with both international (Samdal–Dür–Freeman, 2004) and previous domestic results (Aszmann, 2003). Girls are more determined, for them it is not only important to achieve the goal, but also quality work. The time spent on studies and its effectiveness are closely related: girls attend lectures more regularly, prepare more, perform their tasks more precisely, and are more successful in exams (Engler, 2014).

It is more important for girls to perform well, and among the underachievers there are more boys, while the differences in ability between the sexes are negligible in various areas (Nguyen, 2002). Benő Csapó (2002) also reports on the academic superiority of girls.

However, the grades do not express the quality of thinking, the development of abilities, the readiness to apply the acquired knowledge (Korom, 2002). This is also supported by the fact that, while boys and girls performed equally in the problem-solving puzzle test, girls' academic results are better.

According to the data of domestic and international measurements, 10-15 percent of children struggle with various learning problems, and this proportion increases every year. Learning problems already appear in the upper grades of primary school. (Bácskai–Gerevich, 2000)

On the other hand, as a result of poor school performance, learning difficulties, and learning-related failures, a conflictual relationship with the school environment may develop, which may lead to further deterioration of academic results and low learning motivation. (Demetrovics–Urbán–Kököneyi, 2007)

The school atmosphere shows the strongest positive correlation with the attitude towards the school, i.e. the more the school takes into account the needs

of the students, the more they like the school. The second in line is the attitude towards the teachers, i.e. the more helpful and fair the students see the teachers, the more they like the school. School stress is the following, but it has a negative effect: the more the school tasks pressure the student, the less favorable his or her attitude towards school is. School performance is the fourth, and attitude towards classmates is the fifth. (Várnai–Örkényi–Aszmann–Kököneyi–Balogh, 2007)

Another important school problem is integration and behavior problems. Several factors can play a role in unjustified absences from school and truancy: negative attitudes towards school, integration and other behavioral problems, emotional difficulties, and various family influences. (Rác–Forgács 1988)

Behavioral difficulties can be classified into another category. This includes children who do not adapt to the school rules, commit crimes against them, or remove themselves from their influence. They disturb the teacher and their peers with their behavior. (Kósáné, 1998, Zsidi, 1999) The prevalence of the behavioral disorders is 1-10 percent. (Farkas, 2005) There can be many types of behavior disorders at school (for example, the child disrupts the course of the lesson by shouting, using obscene words, talking to his or her classmate, being rude and disrespectful to the teacher, etc.). (Kósáné, 1998, Schmerz, 2002)

Parents' attitudes towards learning and school can affect young people's attitude towards learning. According to the results of the 2000 PISA study, in Hungary, the family's cultural capital has the strongest effect on student performance. (Kelemen, 2003) According to previous research, the education of the mother plays only a minor role, and that of the father even less, while surveys from the 1970s generally showed the determining role of the mother's education. In contrast, Csapó (2002) found that the father's education was more closely correlated with the grades than the mother's education.

4. Hypothesis, method

The Euroadad questionnaire was used for this research. The variables related to school progress were classified into 2 groups.

- 1. learning attitude: I enjoy classes and school, I am motivated to do well in school, school result (previous semester's academic average), anxiety about performance, special lessons*
- 2. integration and behavioral factors: teacher-student relationship, absence from school (illness or unjustified truancy), behavior problems during class, class or group community*

We assumed that the learning attitude of young people studying in an educational institution is mostly positive, and that there is a difference between the learning attitude of girls and boys.

5. Results of examination

5.1. General characteristics of the sample

The survey is based on questionnaires conducted in Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg county. The size of the sample is 190 participants. The people included in the sample were selected randomly.

The sample was stratified by age, only affecting the 15-25 age group. The questioning was done on paper, in the form of a self-administered questionnaire.

The sample included 25 women and 165 men, 75.8 percent of them were over 18 years old, and 24.2 percent were between 15 and 18 years old. All respondents attend school.

5.2. Variables measuring school progress

When asked "how were your school results last year", young people could choose from three answer categories: below average, average, above average. In terms of their school results, 10 percent of the young people (19 people) had below average performance, 70.5 percent (134 people) had average performance and 19.5 percent (37 people) had above average performance.

According to the HBSC research (Health Behavior in School Aged Children), 11 percent of schoolchildren classify themselves as the best, 33 percent as good, 48 percent as average, and 6.9 percent as weaker than average. (Aszmann, 2003)

If we examine the school results by gender, it can be said that the school performance of girls is significantly better. (Réthy, 2003)

The questionnaire also asked about performance concerns. 42.6 percent of young people are somewhat worried about their performance, and 31.1 percent are very worried about their performance.

According to the HBSC research, 56 percent of students perceive schoolwork as a little and 24 percent as very stressful, while one-fifth of students (19%) do not know the concept of school stress. (Aszmann, 2003) Mild anxiety has a motivating effect and increases performance, while excessive anxiety reduces performance. (Balogh, 1999, Tóth, 2000).

In the questionnaire, young people's learning attitudes were measured with

a number of additional questions. Answers to the questions were coded as follows: 0=no; 1=yes. It can be seen that some of the questions have a positive charge, while others have a negative charge: that is, agreement with the question always indicates some kind of school problem.

Table 1: Variables measuring young people's school attitude n=190 people, (%)

Iskolai tényezők (%)			
Learning attitude		Integration and behavioral factors	
34,2	I am motivated to perform well	Good teacher-student relationship	78,4
64,7	I enjoy school and classes	absence from school (illness or truancy)	25,8
73,7	Concern about performance	Behavior problem during class	21,6
27,4	Extra classes	bad classroom atmosphere	15,8

* The questions were coded in two ways: 0=no, 1=yes. The table contains the distribution of yes answers.

Source: own investigations

A key element of school motivation is how motivated the student is for good school performance, i.e. the student's interest and desire for knowledge can significantly influence school progress. 34.2 percent of young people (65 people) were motivated to do well in school. If we look at it according to gender, it can be said that it is more typical for girls to study with a predominantly internal drive, mainly for better grades. (Table No. 1)

Young people have a favourable attitude towards school, every second young person (64.7%) agrees with the statement that school is a place where I feel good. (Table 1) This is consistent with previous research results (Aszmann, 2003).

Getting a bad grade (and its consequences) can cause fear and anxiety in a student. 73.7 percent of young people reported some level of concern. (Table No. 1) If the student is afraid of getting bad grades or the consequences at home, the grading process can cause serious anxiety, which also affects performance. Because of the fears, it is possible that worse performance will be produced, thus maintaining the presuppositions related to the performance situation. Fears and excitement can cause psychological overload in the student,

and in extreme cases, the classification can have a health-damaging effect. (Rajnai, 2003).

27.4 percent of respondents (52 people) answered yes to the question of whether they attend special classes. It follows that every third young person needs help with school work. (Table No. 1)

Absence from school in the last 30 days was as follows: the most typical absence is between 1 and 5 days, which characterizes 25.8 percent of the sample. This includes absence due to illness and unjustified absence from school, "truancy".

Three quarters of the young people reported that they had a good relationship with their teachers. (Table No. 1) However, teachers' behavior has a smaller effect on student performance than the characteristics of the classroom atmosphere. A bad social atmosphere is more likely to be accompanied by a greater pressure to perform, rivalry among each other, and a negative effect on the students' self-esteem (Jámboři, 2003). 30 people (15.8%) reported that there are conflicts within the school community. (Table No. 1)

5.3. Differences between girls' and boys' learning attitudes

The relationships between the young people's learning attitude and the studied variables were examined using regression analysis, which is illustrated in Table No. 2.

Table No. 2 clearly shows that the attitude of girls towards learning is more positive and shows a significant correlation with almost all of the investigated factors. This is consistent with previous research findings (Réthy, 2003) In the case of boys, it can also be said that they like school, but good results are not so important to them, and they are less motivated to achieve good results. Anxiety about schoolwork can be observed among both boys and girls.

A good relationship with teachers showed a significant correlation for both genders.

Boys are more likely to have behavioural and discipline problems. Justified and unjustified absences from school showed a significant correlation in the case of both sexes. (Table No. 2)

Table 2: Correlations between the factors affecting young people's learning attitude and the gender of the interviewed young people

	Boy	Girl
Learning attitude		
I am motivated to perform well	0,584	2,602*

I enjoy school	1,542*	1,844*
School result	0,788	1,269*
Concern about performance	1,505*	1,664*
Extra lessons	1,840*	1,544*
Integration and behavioral factors		
Good teacher-student relationship	1,522*	1,916*
absence from school (illness or truancy)	1,899*	1,003*
Behavior problem during class	1,658*	0,527

Source: Own research

Summary

In the background of the attitude to learning lies the duality of internal motivation (curiosity, interest) and external motivation (good grades or avoiding failure).

Overall, it can be said that the school results of young people are average. Some level of anxiety appears in almost all young people. Every second young person likes the school and the lessons, the teacher-student relationship is good. Discipline and behaviour problems during class characterize a quarter of young people.

If we examine the attitude of young people to school according to gender, it can be established that a strong significance can be observed in favour of girls in terms of learning attitude. It is more important for girls to perform well, they are more motivated and more concerned about their performance. Problems related to integration and behaviour are more typical of boys.

Young people's attitude to school can be significantly influenced by teachers and classmates.

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AUTHORS

Barabásné dr. Kárpáti Dóra, PhD főiskolai docens
Nyíregyházi Egyetem
karpati.dora@nye.hu

Dr. Torkos Katalin PhD egyetemi docens
Nyíregyházi Egyetem
torkos.katalin@nye.hu