СОЦИОЛОГИЯ ОБРАЗОВАНИЯ / SOCIOLOGY OF EDUCATION

Factors for Increasing Motivation to Theory Class Attendance among Students of Technology Studies

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Introduction. The article examines factors for a potential increase in student motivation to theory class attendance. Scientific research presents various factors for students' non-attendance, beginning with personal reasons and nuances of study organization and ending with the teacher approach to their work. This article looks specifically into the factors controlled by the teacher, more precisely, their competences.

Materials and Methods. The qualitative study was conducted in the academic year 2018–2019, through the analysis of study motivation opinions of Vilnius Gediminas Technical University students majoring in technology studies. The article presents the analysis of one aspect of the conducted survey, i.e., what teachers could or should do to motivate students to attend theory classes.

Results. The processed data indicated that students link motivation to study to three primary teaching competences: the didactic, communicative and personal ones. According to students, the teaching staff's didactic competence should include the ability to create a reasonable balance between theory and practical application, the capability to visually present and impart focal points of the study material, the capacity to plan out lectures, the skill to apply interactive studying methods, and the potential to motivate students by introducing accumulative bonus grades.

Discussion and Conclusion. While there was a clear differentiation between three teacher competences, the weight placed on each one differs. The didactic competence carries the most weight, and teachers should, therefore, reflect on whether they establish an optimal state of balance between theory and praxis; prepare visually appealing lectures, and consistently and structurally convey the study material, etc.

Keywords: technology studies, student motivation, non-attendance, theory lectures, teachers' competences

Факторы, способствующие повышению мотивации студентов технологических программ для посещения теоретических лекций

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Введение. В настоящее время в образовательном процессе используются много современных технологий, открывающих доступ к новейшим научным источникам и позволяющих учиться дистанционно.

В связи с этим в настоящей статье авторы анализируют факторы, мотивирующие студентов к посещению теоретических лекций.

Материалы и методы. В 2018–2019 учебном году в Вильнюсском техническом университете им. Гедиминаса было проведено стандартизированное открытое интервью, в ходе которого были проанализированы мнения студентов технологических программ о мотивации учиться. В интервью приняли участие 110 студентов. В статье представлены результаты ответов на следующий вопрос: каким образом преподаватель может/должен мотивировать студентов к посещению теоретических лекций? Анализ ответов на этот вопрос выявил в общей сложности 243 высказывания, которые были разделены на три категории, а те, в свою очередь, на подкатегории.

Результаты исследования. Студенты связывают факторы мотивации с дидактической, коммуникативной и личностной компетенциями преподавателя. По мнению студентов, дидактическая компетенция преподавателя подразумевает умение наглядно связывать теоретический материал с практикой и доступно его излагать, планировать и организовывать лекцию, при проведении лекционных занятий применять различные интерактивные методы, а также поощрять студентов дополнительными накопительными баллами. Коммуникативная компетенция подразумевает умение активно и неформально общаться, а личностная – доброжелательное отношение к студенту и поддержание обратной связи с обучающимися. Выделенные компетенции преподавателя различаются по своей значимости. Важную роль при мотивации студентов играет дидактическая компетенция преподавателя. Преподаватели, стремящиеся своими лекциями заинтересовать студентов, должны критически оценить, связывают ли они теоретический материал с практикой, достаточно ли визуализируют его, а также насколько последовательно и структурированно излагают материал.

Обсуждение и заключение. Результаты данного исследования могут быть полезны для дальнейшего изучения мотивации студентов, а также преподавателям теоретических дисциплин в области технических наук.

Ключевые слова: технологические науки, мотивация студентов, пропуск лекций без уважительной причины, теоретическая лекция, компетенции преподавателей

Introduction

The motivation to study and the factors for participating in various class activities is a common research object. Research indicates that regular class attendance has a direct and positive effect on the students' results [1]. The introduction of compulsory attendance, however, has had only a minuscule positive influence on academic achievement and has even shown the potential to decrease the students' sense of obligation towards mandatory classes [1]. Consequently, it is obvious that attendance should not be obligatory, and it only produces results when achieved in alternate ways.

This article aims to analyze scientific literature encompassing possible means of motivating students along with the basis for non-attendance and, by utilizing the gathered data of the conducted qualitative study, to present possible factors for impelling students of technological sciences to attend their respective theory lectures. The study limits itself to the factors directly correlating with the teachers' competences. Therefore, the drawn conclusions could serve as guidelines for teachers on how to increase students' attendance.

Teachers of higher education institutions note that it is getting increasingly more difficult to get students to attend theory lectures. One reason being the incorporation of modern technology into the studying process. Open access, university subscriptions to databases, the vast variety of e-books and other electronically available prints, MOOCs and virtual learning environments have, without doubt, enriched and accelerated the studying process. Conversely, however, such numerous opportunities for self-study have also greatly decreased the relevance of theory classes. The second reason could be the unique traits and distinct ways of studying the current generation of students. Generation Z are digital natives and prioritize virtuality over reality, they "show a higher degree of narcissism and are more disconnected from the real

world" [2]. They are accustomed to processing huge amounts of information and extensive multitasking, but they also encounter more issues when it comes to keeping focus for prolonged periods of time. Consequently, the traditional 90-minute-long lecture seems unappealing and obsolete.

The question arises of whether or not a frontal instruction approach to theory lectures conforms to the constructivist teaching model, which defines the learning process as one with a proactive student in its center and the teacher acting merely as a consultant and counselor. The teacher does no longer impart knowledge, and the student is no longer a passive receiver of that knowledge. The teaching paradigm has been replaced by the learning paradigm. In the studying process, this paradigmatic change is established by the concept of student-centered learning and teaching. The Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) underline the necessity of ensuring student-centered learning and teaching, i.e., by utilizing different modes of delivery, a flexible usage of variety of pedagogical methods, encouraging a sense of autonomy in the learning process, etc.[1]. One of the pivotal reasons for that being the encouragement of autonomy: "Student-centered learning and teaching play an important role in stimulating students' motivation, self-reflection, and engagement in the learning process"[2]. Student-centered learning and teaching correspond to the problem-based learning (PBL) method notably more in contrast to the conventional lecture design. PBL is practiced mostly in western European universities, especially in the area of medical studies. In Lithuania, PBL has since been successfully adapted and is being continually executed in the Lithuanian University of Health Sciences [3]. The transition to PBL, however, requires the managing authorities of a higher education institution to perform a systemic change in the study programs. As a result, the traditional approaches to studies, which cannot

function without theory lectures, remain vastly popular in many countries, including Lithuania: "(...) the current practice, where the educational model and structure applied at national level is based on lecture-type classes, oriented at large groups" [4].

Despite everything, scientific research shows that even the old-fashioned conventional lecture can be appropriate and serviceable. According to Bligh, common lectures are by far the least suitable method of learning, when the overall goal is the comprehension of complex concepts, the application of abilities, the formation of world view, the encouragement of taking interest in a particular subject and the furthering of social integrity. If the overall goal is to simply convey knowledge, however, lectures are no less effective than discussions, individual work, and projects [1].

Literature Review

Motivation. According to Teresevičienė et al., the motive is a state of the human mind, compelling an individual to consciously strive towards a given goal. When a person is confronted with an activity, which has the potential to satisfy a particular individual need, that basic need transforms into motive [5]. Many motives compel a person to act, and such a state is known as motivation. Among other functions, motive helps understand the purpose of one's actions and plays a significant part in controlling and changing activities. The causal relationship between motivation and study results is undeniable [5].

Ryan and Deci, in their Self-Determination Theory, differentiate between autonomous motivation and controlled motivation. Autonomous motivation comprises both intrinsic motivation and certain types of extrinsic motivation, i.e., when the activity does not contradict moral values and needs. Controlled motivation consists of external regulation and introjected regulation. External regulation is tied to external pressure (e.g. reward and punish-

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[1] [Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)]. 2015. Available at: https://enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/ESG_2015.pdf (accessed 30.02.2019). (In Eng.)
[2] Ibid.

ment), while introjected motivation refers to a partial correspondence to the activity when an individual feels internal pressure due to a feeling of shame, dignity, etc. [6].

Intrinsic motivation comes into question when people commit to certain activities without external influences as the activity itself appears worthwhile. The Self-Determination Theory claims that intrinsic motivation depends on the satisfaction of three innate psychological needs: competence, relatedness, and autonomy [6; 7]. The higher the degree of satisfaction, the more the performed activity appears rewarding, thus also creating stronger intrinsic motivation. These needs are basic and universal, making them independent of cultural differences. They are, therefore "essential for optimal functioning in a broad range of highly varied cultures" [6].

According to various scholars and research results, actions driven by autonomous motivation and controlled motivation lead to divergent results. When compared to one another, autonomous motivation comes out ahead as it leads to greater psychological health, more effective performance on heuristic types of activities and greater long-term persistence [6].

Autonomy does not mean that a person acts independently of their surroundings. It is imperative that the action complements the individual's values and objectives. Applying said autonomy to the study process, the following example situation could be presented. A student will feel autonomous and independent during an examination of their knowledge at any given time and place when they themselves have chosen the subject and are able to feel the importance of the contents to their overall study goals. The need for competence is dictated by a subjective sense of achievement. Continuous failures and setbacks (e.g. poor exam results) weaken one's intrinsic motivation and give rise to passivity. However, the opposite, constant success without much effort, carries with it the same effect of demotivation [1].

Student attendance and its potential influences. Various reasons for absenteeism can be distinguished. In their research, Billings-Gagliardi and Mazor revealed that students do not make deliberate attendance decisions as a staggering 83% of respondents described making the decision on whether or not to attend lectures on a case-by-case basis [8].

Overall, attendance depends on whether the lecture notes prepared and materials presented are adequate for the learning process, lecturer – lecture – student quality, the scope and difficulty of the subject, the possibility of learning about the same subject outside of lectures and other reasons (e.g. stress level, time management and difficulty travelling to the university) [9]. Various research indicates that students attend lectures believing that attendance is a necessity and that it affects academic achievement [9; 10], whereas the by students stated reasons for non-attendance are predominantly individual and external: "In our study, it is apparent that reasons such as illness and lack of sleep play an important role in absenteeism" [9].

Westrick data shows that a low level of attendance does not only depend on a student's personal circumstances (disease, fatigue, etc.) and the organization of the learning process (e.g. preparation for exams and tests) but the activity itself as well, especially when any additional gain of the activity is opaque [11].

Kusurkar, Croiset and Ten Cate have formulated 12 tips on how to boost the intrinsic motivation of medical students: identify and nurture what students need and want; have students' internal states guide their behavior; encourage active participation; encourage students to accept more responsibility for their learning; provide structured guidance; provide optimal challenges; give positive and constructive feedback; give emotional support; acknowledge students' expressions of negative effect; communicate value in uninteresting activities; give choices; direct with 'can, may, could' instead of 'must, need, should' [12]. The authors add that these 12 tips can be applied in different types of teaching sessions including large groups, interactive lectures, clinical presentations, etc., and also in problem-based learning sessions. It would not be wrong to assume that these

tips apply to other programs other than medical studies too.

Following the Self-Determination Theory, intrinsic motivation can easily be affected by external sources of motivation: parents, friends, and teachers. Research shows that a materialistic reward for any kind of achievement lowers the level of intrinsic motivation, while praise raises it. If the teacher creates a connection between a boring and unappealing assignment and the students' inner values and goals, the students will experience an increase in morale and willingness to dedicate more time to their work. Unclear evaluation criteria and discrepancies between the course material and contents of tests and exams will ultimately impede the students' ability to achieve their goals and high grades, creating growing passivity [1]. So the general level of attendance largely depends on how a teacher organizes and conducts their lecture, making the teacher's personal, didactic, communicative and other competences major factors for the increase or decrease in student attendance in their classes. The study conducted by Billings-Gagliardi and Mazor revealed that 82% of students cited previous positive or negative experiences with a particular lecturer as a major factor in their decisions. The factors, which had an impact on student attendance, included providing clear, understandable explanations, discussing concepts rather than listing facts and integrating information [8].

Continuing on the topic of the teacher's influence on attendance, student absenteeism is affected by a lack of active learning, dull and boring instructors and disorganization within the layout of the lecture [13]. Research by Bati et al. found that instructive lectures, emphasis on important topics, the opportunity to ask questions and receive guidance, enthusiastic and keen lecturers increase student attendance, while boring lectures and lecturers, much too simple and easy classes increase absenteeism [9]. Other research distinguishes, among others, a feeling of inferiority and fear of the lecturer [14] and disrespect towards the students [10] as causes of non-attendance.

Also mentioned are cases in which the increase of extrinsic motivation carries value as well, i.e., when a teacher has to explicate an unappealing and dry topic. At the beginning of a dull course, grades, compulsory attendance, mediate assessments, etc. can be valuable and effective means of stimulating extrinsic motivation. That way, factors for extrinsic motivation may ensure learning success and an increase in interest in a particular topic. That in turn, leads to a better understanding of the presented material and a long-term rise in intrinsic motivation [1].

Materials and Methods

Diverse and extensive technical education counts as one of the most vital prerequisites of human evolution [15]. In the academic year 2018–2019, a qualitative study was conducted to thoroughly analyze the opinions of students on the factors that motivate them to study. At the beginning of the semester, a total of 110 first-year VGTU students within the area of technology studies participated in a written standardized open-ended interview: 51 students from environmental engineering and 59 from construction engineering. This article presents one of the constituents of the analyzed data, i.e., potential factors for an increase in theory class attendance. The students were asked to submit detailed answers to the open-ended question "How should/could a teacher motivate them to attend theory classes?".

Before commencing the interview, the students were introduced to the objective of the study. All interviews were anonymous and submitted voluntarily. A content-based analysis method was opted to examine the collected data. A grand total of 243 statements were analyzed and, based on their content, divided into respective categories and subcategories. The establishment of categories and subcategories is based on differing corresponding quotes.

Qualitative studies are deemed valid when they aim to constitute a list of opinions, evaluations, and statements on a particular question [16]. The goal of the conducted study was to collect a large variety of differing viewpoints and perspectives; thus no time or answer length limit was

set. Open-ended questions present a great opportunity to collect numerous and differing answers, giving the interviewees more freedom of choice and encouragement, they "let the researcher understand and present the world as it is seen and experienced by the participants without predetermining those standpoints" [17]. Only a qualitative study has the capacity to reveal the reasons for choosing a particular answer. Thus only a qualitative, not a quantitative, study will prove to be resultative when the goal is to conclude what factors influence students to attend theory lectures. The internal validity (credibility) of the research is further constituted by the fact that the study and data analysis has been conducted by two researchers, the data has been recorded in written form, and that the respondents answered the same questions, which increased the comparability of responses and reduced interviewer bias. The latter also accredits the conducted study in terms of objectivity as the interviewees' statements are frequently quoted in the presentation of the results of the analysis. The external validity (transferability) of the research is guaranteed by the applicability of the results, i.e., granting the reader the understanding of where to apply the results [16], especially to increase student motivation in the study process.

Within the context of qualitative studies, what is commonly associated with them is not their reliability, but their dependability in terms of the stability of the acquired data [18; 19]. The study is deemed dependable if the study findings were replicated with similar participants in similar conditions. This study has been conducted with two distinct student groups at different times. The data gathered from both groups led to greatly similar results, though the two are not subject to comparison in this article. Therefore, it can be concluded that the conducted study is dependable.

Results

The submitted answers to the open-ended question represent the students' opinions on the factors for theory class attendance. 18 of the interviewees attested that intrinsic motivation encourages students to attend theory classes. That comprises 7.4% of all statements, in other words, every 13th student attends theory classes motivated by the will to acquire more knowledge on the subject and "the wish to understand and pass the exam". This is testified by the following student quotes: "the information presented in these lectures is a sufficient argument for regular attendance", "difficult subject", "great amounts of relevant information". The remaining 225 statements indicate that students primarily expect external influences and sources of motivation, independent of themselves. It is believed that these factors are largely dependent on individual personality traits [20].

The analyzed data revealed three main groups of factors for theory class attendance for students within the area of technology studies linked to didactic, communicative and personal teacher competences. So that research could progress smoothly, these categories of competences were divided into two to six subcategories for each main one.

The first category: the factors related to the didactic teacher competence. The majority, 170 statements, claim that the main factor that has an influence on the attendance of theory classes is the teacher's ability to plan out educational content and organize student-centered learning processes. This competence affects the choice of study material and its delivery to the students along with the capacity and willingness to convey information in a comprehensive and serviceable manner. Based on student statements, six subcategories can be assigned to this category.

1.1. The ability to combine theory with praxis. A total of 31 participants agree that the presented material should come together with empirical real-life examples, i.e., it is imperative "to only convey specific theoretical information, which can be applied practically". Furthermore, the students believe that course material is easier to commit to memory when presented together with real-life examples ("more real-life situations should be described and presented during lectures as that would make memorization easier"), which they

believe should be visualized using videos and other media ("to show how theory is applied practically", "using short films", etc.). Another 10 state that the material from theory classes should be connected to their target career ("to show us where we will be able to utilize this knowledge in the future") and be up-to-date ("more contemporary examples and cases within the subject", "the class material should match modern standards, i.e., must not be obsolete"). Having guests within that specific scientific area hold lectures and speeches could help convince the students of the necessity and practical use of the course material, as illustrated by the following quote: "invite guests from the industry".

1.2. Visualization of the course material. Any kind of information presented in an appealing manner arouses people's curiosity. It is therefore not surprising that 28 students expressed the desire of having theoretical material presented in an attractive way by visualizing it as much as possible ("do not force dry information onto us"). They are convinced that this can be achieved by introducing "more illustrations, examples", "related video footage" and "intriguing facts, pictures". They ask that teachers "do not read from their slides as that is extremely boring" and suggest that teachers "do not limit their lectures to dull and stale theoretical information". It is obvious that by employing a variety of visual tools the amount of textual data shrinks. This satisfies those students who enjoy having "less text in the slides" and "not having to copy and write too much".

1.3. The ability to emphatically present course material. The statements of 9 students claim that they not only value the application of visual tools when holding theory classes but also the teacher's capacity to clearly present and comment on their material. The students, therefore, underline that theoretical material should be presented "comprehensively and simply" as well as "quickly and clearly". That can be achieved when the teacher is capable of "using their own words to talk on a given subject instead of reading from their slides".

It is significantly easier to memorize systematically structured information in comparison to repetitive and dull data without underlining focal points or addressing related topics, etc. As a result, four students stressed the importance of "systemized and easily accessible information" to their learning process along with the teacher's ability to "structure the course material to simplify the learning process in preparation for tests and to minimize the need to look up additional information in thick and uncomfortable course books".

1.4. The ability to plan out and organize lectures. A poorly established working or learning environment is a greatly demotivating factor causing tension and boredom [21]. To avoid this, scientists suggest alternating between intense work and short periods of repose. They even suggest presenting interesting and engaging situations or utilizing audio or video files during these short relaxation intervals [5]. The ability to plan out and organize lectures does not only help the teacher deliver all the material prepared for the course but also to do so in a highly efficient fashion, i.e., using in advance prepared tools, structuring the material, setting a comfortable pace for the lectures with all the breaks in-between and even the time of the lecture itself ("so that it is not the first lecture"). The statements of 12 students confirmed that they would like to have short breaks during the lecture, while three of them would enjoy listening to music or watching a video in that time ("show information that is not related to the lecture's topic"). While another two would opt for a session of active rest, i.e., engaging activities unrelated to the lecture ("take breaks and do some brain activity stimulating tests"), another seven would prefer passive rest ("take 5-minute-long breaks"). Meanwhile, a group of three wish for a short spell of "peace and quiet".

For any activity to bear resultative fruit, not only the volume and structure of the lecture must be considered but also the pace and audio aspect. According to two students, teachers should "speak with a microphone" so that all the information they convey is intelligible and can be picked up with ease.

Every teacher has their own method of ensuring their material's commitment to lasting long-term memory. Normally, this process is followed by a large-scale course review. It is therefore unsurprising that "formulating questions, discussions" play a major role in every student's learning process. Three students suggest "asking the audience questions from previous slides" and, at the end of the lecture, "reviewing the lecture's material".

One student stated that the establishment of rules for active participation in class and behavior at the beginning of activities are of great importance to them ("immediately sets up rules").

1.5. The application of various methods for active participation. The teacher's objective should not only be accounting for and planning break periods during class but also considering the employment of diverse and creative methods for inspiring the active participation of students during the lecture. In addition, by learning actively, a considerably larger amount of information is retained as activeness intensifies the strengthening of neural pathways in the brain, resulting in memory [22]. A considerably large number of 30 students would like to do topic-related exercises during class activities as exemplified by the following extracts from the quotes: "create tasks, which would enthuse and encourage students as well as help them understand schematics and diagrams"; "try and draw the attention of students using various exercises"; "not only by listening but also by introducing tasks for the students to do by themselves". Students wish to see more challenging assignments as well ("more exercises, which would have us rack our brains more"). Students find themselves especially engaged in group projects so, as a result, a whole 19 of them declared that they would like to have group activities during theory classes. To that end, they suggest that teachers "assign more group work" and "organize more group activities".

The quoted statement "a public declaration and presentation of the best work or works" suggests that active participation in lectures would not only increase overall attendance but also encourage constructive academic competition between the students. One student's idea of "inventing compelling games, which are related to the topic of the lecture and would help learn and memorize" would, undoubtedly, impose quite the challenge for the teachers concerned.

In the evaluated data of other scientific research by different authors concerning the subject of class attendance, a significant number of students cited active learning experiences as an important, positive factor [8]. In addition, this competence grants the teacher the opportunity to ensure a fitting choice of teaching methods and the relevance of the material in modern day society. Six interviewees stated that they would feel more obligated to attend their classes if the teacher were to employ more diverse state-of-the-art techniques. Quotes such as "try and present everything in a contemporary manner" and "diversify the teaching methods" confirm this claim. Information technology is already an inseparable part of the modern world. Therefore, students demand that "more smart technologies" are made use of during lectures.

1.6. Motivation through bonus grades. A staggering 39 interviewees supported the idea of being motivated through bonus grades. The majority of 33 of them stated that a reward system for consistent attendance should be seriously considered, i.e., giving bonus points on tests and exams. Statements such as "I believe that bonus points for attendance are a greatly motivating factor to attend and participate in class activities" and "getting an extra amount of points on a test to raise the final grade would be a great motivator" are just a couple of many other statements favoring this idea. "Receiving bonus points for achieving at least 80% on a test based on the contents from a previous lecture" and "being asked additional questions to earn bonus points" are quotes of six students who think that this form of bonus grades would have to be earned in some way (e.g. answering certain question or completing extra tasks).

The second category: the factors related to communicative teacher compe-

tence. Communication is the exchange of information between individuals forming a group. The statements of 16 interviewees indicate that the way a teacher interacts with the students is of great importance, including the way they communicate information to the audience and how they respond to feedback. It may at times be difficult to differentiate this competence from the personal one as an individual's personality traits directly affect their social behavior and interpersonal interaction. They are also closely interrelated in the educational process [23].

2.1. The ability to interact actively. A teacher's active contact with others could be described as consistent communication with students on lecture-topic-related and unrelated matters. A total of 10 students support this idea. They fault the teacher's inability to organize an open discussion with and in-between the students as a cause for boredom, especially when the teacher has their back turned to the audience for extended periods of time ("speaks to the wall or blackboard/whiteboard"). As a result, students feel more prompted to attend lectures when the audience is an active participant in the class activities and the teacher speaks to the students and not himself". "Active cooperation between the students and the teacher" and "interesting discussions on the subject at hand" are dominating factors for the students' engagement in class activities. That, in turn, makes classes greatly more appealing and the course material becomes easier to remember.

2.2. The ability to interact colloquially. Interpersonal interaction is crucial to any form of social interaction. Humans directly affect one another. They have the ability to influence another's feelings, views and behavior. By interacting with their students adequately, the teacher is able to help their audience better understand the lecture's material and create a personal link with their listeners in order to receive more genuine feedback. In their interviews, six students expressed the wish "to be treated by the teacher as equals without blatantly boasting about their higher scholarly status". That may be a necessary prerequisite for "natural interaction and the use of everyday real-life examples for general explanations" and "informal and simple conversations".

The third category: the factors related to the personal competence of teachers. The personal competence of a teacher encompasses personal ability and human values, personality traits, which help establish a suitable learning environment, interpersonal relationships, adequate emotional climate [24]. A favorable learning environment not only influences student attendance but also affects their general view on the study process [25].

The statements of 39 students confirm the importance of a teacher's personal qualities: their behavior during various class activities, the learning environment and the atmosphere they create. Although the deep-rooted conservative way of teaching of a several decades ago should have already subsided in current years, certain student requests such as "stop calling us dumb" are cause for much concern and call for a more detailed examination of their statements. Following the interviewees' answers to the questions, the personal competence of a teacher has been divided into two subcategories: accommodativeness and response to feedback.

3.1. Accommodativeness. A total of 33 participants put significant weight and priority on the personal qualities belonging to this subcategory. Students are most motivated by "the teacher being in a good mood". Other student statements like "the teacher has a good sense of humor" and "are not afraid to deviate from the main topic to lift the audience's mood and alleviate some of the tension in the room" affirm this. Honesty, friendliness, empathy and all the other core human qualities are also positive contributors to an increase in student attendance. The following quotes support this claim: "the friendliness of teachers encourages studying", "occasionally giving casual real-life tips", "a wholehearted teacher", "the possibility to find compromises", "a charismatic teacher".

All of the above stated human qualities create the required conditions for a friendly learning environment. An atmosphere of

this kind is necessary for students to work without pressure ("not feeling any tension", "a lighthearted atmosphere"). To make that a reality, the students suggest "not mind people eating in class", "not restrict student freedom", "allow to send mobile texts". The conclusion can be drawn that a lecturer must not only possess the compulsory qualities exemplifying a teacher but also become a "friend" to the students as well as a psychologist who would "never forget to consider that some students may be extraverted, while others are introverted".

3.2. Response to feedback. This teacher quality defines their flexibility when it comes to making necessary changes to the curricular activities, tools used and other factors according to the wishes and abilities of the audience [26]. In their interviews, six students stated that they greatly appreciate a constantly changing and evolving lecture structure: "ask us if any changes to the lectures are necessary", "the teacher matches their pace to ours", "our comments and wishes are considered".

In figure, the summarized results of the conducted qualitative analysis are shown.

Discussion and Conclusion

Various academic sources analyze the varying factors having an influence on student attendance. The qualitative study conducted by the authors of this article created an opportunity to have a more detailed look at those particular factors directly affected by the teacher. The study concluded that students link factors for increased motivation for theory class attendance to three main teacher competences: the didactic, the communicative and the personal. It is also important to note, however, that students weigh these competences rather unevenly. Although students crave a state of parity between students and teachers and appreciate informal casual interaction, it is obvious that didactic competence has the biggest influence. Teachers who aim to get students to consistently attend their theory lectures should, therefore, reflect on their own methods and determine whether they apply student activity inspiring techniques, employ enough tools for visualization, organize their lectures suitably, establish a logical connection between theory and praxis, and present their material in a cohesive and structured manner. The most favored means related to the didactic competence, however, proved to be the extrinsic motivator employing a bonus grades/points system. Conversely, only a small portion of interviewees stated that they attend lectures spurred by intrinsic motivators. That leads to the conclusion that the majority of students lack internal maturity. A potential cause for this might be the fact that the participants of the study were first-year students. A lack of maturity is, however, a common characteristic of generation Z,
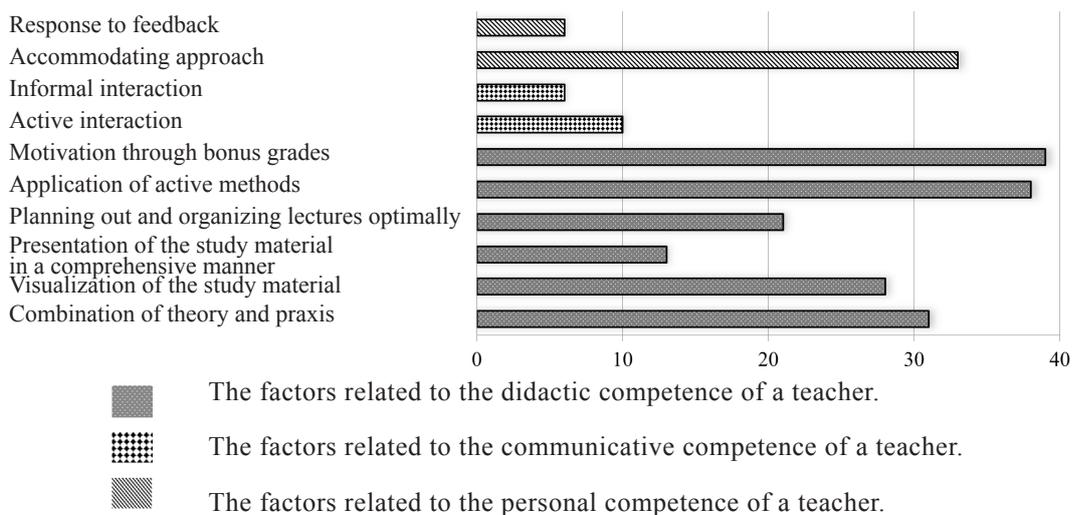

F i g u r e. The teacher-related factors for potential increase in student attendance

as "they still have immature expectations, requirements and behavior" [3]. Consequently, teachers are and will continue to face a variety of challenges trying to find effective means of motivating students.

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