

THE EFFECTS OF EVALUATION OF THE SPECIAL STUDY WEEK/SSW 2022 – A CASE STUDY OF THE FACULTY OF PEDAGOGY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TETOVA

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Abstract

The Special Study Week-SSW, as an opportunity for in-depth and critical studies in an important thematic field, is a new practice at the Faculty of Pedagogy at the University of Tetova. It is carried out in collaboration with the Swiss Association ARSIMI⁶. Participants include fourth-year students of the Faculty of Pedagogy, lecturers from this faculty, and a representative of the ARSIMI association. Based on the hypothesis that "Critical assessment, transparency, and taking results seriously have a positive impact on changing and improving weak elements," the four days of the SSW were evaluated in detail by 60 participating students. The assessments for each previous day were presented the following day. In the paper titled "The Effects of Evaluation of the Special Study Week – A Case Study of the Faculty of Pedagogy at UT," the assessments of each day and the overall evaluation are presented. The overall evaluation indicates that this week has influenced the increase in knowledge and the way of studying - especially as researchers and discoverers. Didactic methods and professional competencies of lecturers received the highest ratings from students. The increase and expansion of students' knowledge are evaluated at 5.71 (out of 6), while the possibility of applying the acquired knowledge in professional work is rated at 5.68. The duration of lecture sequences and the participation and integration of all participants in the activities carried out received a lower average rating. After processing the evaluations, it was found that the overall assessment of SSW is correlated with didactic methods of work and social forms (Pearson's coefficient of 0.498), with study and group work, and with the work atmosphere created (Pearson's coefficient of 0.457).

Keywords: encounter, communication, interaction, reflection, self-study, self-determination, critical thinking, and evaluation.

Introduction

As a new practice at the University of Tetovo, the Special Study Week - SSW, was conducted for the second time. From October 4th to 7th, 2022, the theme of communication and related topics, such as encounters, interactions, and reflection, were extensively explored. The event was organized in collaboration with the Faculty of Pedagogy at UT and ARSIMI Association. Fourth-year students from all four study programs, as well as lecturers of the Faculty of Pedagogy at UT participated in the event. They attended and delivered lectures, engaged in scientific discussions, worked individually and in groups, conducted research, made observations, and presentations, and self-determined their professional development as future educators.

Objectives of the Special Study Week – SSW 2022:

1. Understanding the socio-cultural concepts and analytical methods that support critical self-approach (self-awareness), as well as being critical of oneself, others, and the topics discussed.
2. Familiarity with scientific theories related to communication, interaction, and reflection.
3. Understanding and awareness of trends regarding personal communication and interaction styles.
4. Knowledge of the characteristics of pedagogical communication with students.

5. Critical assessment regarding digitalization and the advantages and disadvantages of learning and communication from a distance.
6. Analysis and determination of competencies achieved during the four-year study.
7. Creation and use of an e-brochure on the topic of meeting-communication-interaction-reflection with SSW 2022 materials and making it available to all students and professors at the University of Tetovo. A documentary (film) about SSW and a graphic summary.

In summary, the goal of SSW was to deepen and expand knowledge about the main topic of communication, as well as the related topics, and apply them professionally during the practice of the profession as a teacher and educator. To achieve this major goal, students were provided with the appropriate program and script before the start of SSW to be prepared for active participation.

Using the TCI (Theme Centered Interaction), Ruth Cohn (1912 - 2010) method, also known as the four-factor model: I, You, We, Theme, students self-analyzed their relationship and attitude towards the main topic of communication, as well as the other closely related topics that present crucial themes for future teachers and educators. Individually and in groups, students defined the meaning of the concept of communication and its importance in meetings with others, in terms of interaction, conversation, cooperation, and reflection, comparing their determinations with those of well-known scholars. After gaining a deeper understanding of:

- theories of human communication from social, psychological, and pedagogical perspectives to the Austrian psychologist Paul Watzlawick (1921 – 2007) and his colleagues: Beavin H. J., Jackson D. D.,
 - the axioms of Paul Watzlawick and his colleagues,
 - types of communication,
 - communication styles according to the German psychologist F. Schulz von Thun (1944),
 - communication styles according to the anthropologist, ethnologist, and founder of intercultural communication, American Edward T. Hall (1914 - 2009),
 - styles of interaction according to the American psychologist for group work Timothy Francis Lary (1920-1996),
 - nonviolent communication according to the American psychologist Marshall B. Rosenberg (1934-2015),
- the students have self-studied and self-identified their tendencies in terms of their communication styles and have presented them in various creative ways in plenary sessions. During their self-inquiry and self-identification efforts, the students have paid special attention to defining their combined style tendencies (Schulz von Thun, F., 2011 and www.germanistik-kommprojekt.uni-oldenburg.de/sites/1/1_08.htm, last access 09.03.2023). They have particularly researched themselves as sociocultural and communicative beings, examining their attitudes toward meetings with others, or during interactions with others, and their tendencies in terms of interaction and collaboration styles with others (Schulz von Thun, F, 2014. P. 65 – 290).

With the help of self-perception methods, the students have practiced not only observing how others behave, communicate, and act during meetings, interactions, and collaborations, but also consciously being careful with their feelings, reactions, communication, and readiness for interaction and collaboration.

The purpose of all these analytical aspects has been to approach themselves and others critically, to create a real reflection of themselves, from their perspective as well as that of others. By identifying their strengths and weaknesses themselves, the students have worked not only to define but also to consciously change them. They have consciously developed this research experience through the professional reflection process (Dobmeier A: *Selbstreflexion*: www.deselfie.de/was-ist-selbstreflexion, last access 10.03.2023).

Thinking and recalling the specific events that have left a special impression on us about others, meaning events that often come to mind intentionally or unintentionally and often occupy our thoughts, the participants have analyzed and reanalyzed their communication and behavior and have reconsidered and reflected on them to draw personal and professional conclusions for the future. Thus, the students have become aware that the process of reflection should not remain just an exercise of structured form and way of thinking, respectively

of reconsideration, but rather a connection of reconsideration with orienting conclusions for concrete actions that result in changes in thoughts, behavior, sensitivity, and actions. Special importance has been given in this context to professional reflection, which distinguishes the professional from ordinary reflectors (McDrury, M., Alterio, M., 2003. *Learning through storytelling in higher education: using reflection and experience to improve learning*. Kogan Page, London).

Scientific conversations have been developed for professional reasons, experiences have been exchanged, and practical examples have been collected regarding the influencing factors in creating the relationship and communication of students as future teachers with their future students. To achieve proper awareness, they have worked with their experiences as learners. Their experiences have been researched, analyzed, and reflected upon in terms of the relationships and communication styles of their teachers with them. They have communicated good and not-so-good experiences and developed strategies for how they would handle similar situations in the future.

In the context of intercultural communication, students have been working on the contexts of Low and High-context communication by identifying influential factors about the differences between these types of communication. Through biographical work, students have discovered the presence of High-context elements in their communication style and environment (Hall, E., 1976. *Beyond Culture*. Garden City, New York).

The topic of communication from a distance through contemporary communication tools and virtual spaces such as Zoom, Teams, and others, due to and despite the pandemic, has been treated in different forms because students, as members of Generation Z, are influenced, both positively and negatively, by new communication technology. Exchanges of experiences and observations about the effects and tendencies of excessive consumption have been critically and constructively evaluated.

In the context of different types of communication, priority has been given to in-depth study of non-violent communication (Rosenberg M. 2007. P. 18 -19), as this type of communication presents the best opportunity to establish good student-teacher relationships and motivating communication and interaction among students (Rosenberg, M., 2005. *Kinder einführend unterrichten. Erfolg durch gegenseitiges Verständnis*. Junfermann, Paderborn). Non-violent communication is also viewed from the perspective of the role of teachers as leaders of groups and classes. For the expansion of knowledge regarding the importance of teachers' leadership in their class or classes, the phases through which groups pass, the different formal and informal roles of teachers and students have been analyzed, and management strategies and management models have been identified (Rosenberg, M., 2007. *Kinder einführend ins Leben begleiten*. 2. Auflage. Junfermann, Paderborn). During group work, students analyzed challenging situations experienced in groups and drew useful conclusions for the future.

All of these observations described above have been presented by the students during their individual and group work presentations. By presenting to their peers and instructors, they have received feedback according to the rules of feedback related to their communication and presentation competencies.

Methodology research and results

As mentioned in the previous chapter, one of the important goals of SSW has been in the context of assessment, self-evaluation, and self-determination to achieve change and improvement. This goal has been consistently pursued over the four days of work. All participants have been encouraged to critically evaluate themselves and their colleagues, so that through transparency and taking the results seriously, improvements in weak areas can be achieved. The application of critical assessment and taking the results seriously has led the organizers and implementers of SSW to claim maximum benefits in the personal and professional development of the participants.

Assessment was carried out with the help of evaluation sheets at the end of each day's work. The evaluation sheets were collected and analyzed, and conclusions were drawn, which were presented to all participants at the beginning of each day. These presentations aimed to identify the weak and strong aspects of each day's elements and their impact on improving the weak aspects of SSW.

This work will present the results of each day and the overall evaluation result that was done at the end of SSW. The aspects of the evaluation sheet were scaled from 1, for completely disagree, to 6, for completely agree. A total of 10 aspects were evaluated: the expectations of the participants towards SSW, the professional competencies of the leaders of the previous day, the leadership style and integration of all participants in the activity, the didactic and social methods of work, personal and professional benefits, opportunities for practical application, growth and expansion of knowledge, the quality of materials (scripts, etc.) used, the social formats of work: plenary, in groups, individual, the work atmosphere, exchanges, presentations, etc. The number of evaluation sheets shows that 66 students completed the evaluation questionnaire on the first day of SSW.

From the results of the answers to the first aspect - the expectations of the students towards SSW - it appears that 21% of the students have expressed that their expectations have been partially fulfilled, while 48.5% of the students have expressed that their expectations for the first day have been fully met. Based on these results, it has been found that the first day of SSW has fully met 30.3% of the expectations of the participating students. The other elements result as follows:

1. 65.2% of students feel that **the professional competencies of the associate professors** have fully met their expectations, while for 27.3% of students, their expectations have been met. For 7.6% of participating students, the professional competencies of the instructors have only partially met their expectations.
2. **The management style and integration of all participants in SSW activities** have been evaluated as follows: 34.8% of students fully agree, 33.3% of students agree that the integration of all has met their expectations, and 25.8% have declared that their expectations have only been partially met. The rest have expressed that their expectations have not been met or have been completely unfulfilled. From these results, it can be seen that students believe that the majority of participants have been integrated into the activities carried out. The integration of the majority of students in the activities developed serves as an important indicator for the success of applying the knowledge gained in practical work as instructors.
3. **The didactic and social methods of work** during the first day have been fully agreed upon by 36.4% of participating students, while 33.3% of students have declared that the first day has met their expectations regarding didactic methods. The rest of the students believe that their expectations have been partially met.
4. **Personal and professional gain:** 37.9% of students have fully gained, while the same percentage of students believe that their expectations have been met. Meanwhile, 21.2% of students, their expectations have only been partially met.
5. **Growth and expansion of knowledge:** 56.1% of students have declared that their expectations have been fully met, while 28.8% of students have declared that it has met their expectations regarding the growth and expansion of their knowledge. Expectations have been partially met for 12.1% of students.
6. **The quality of the materials used** (during the SSW, students worked with various work materials): 45.5% of students have declared that the materials have fully met their expectations, while for 30.3% of them, the materials have met their expectations. For 15.2% of participating students, the materials offered have only partially met their expectations, while the rest have expressed that their expectations have not been met.
7. **The social methods and formats of work** (plenary, in groups, individual, exchanges, presentations, etc.) have been evaluated similarly to the materials offered.
8. The group and work atmosphere during the first day (exchanges between groups and presentations) have fully met the expectations of 59.1% of students, while for 28.8% of students, their expectations have been met.

9. The duration of the activities: 63.6% of students believe that the activities of the first day lasted too long, while 36.4% believe that the duration was appropriate.

Tab.1 Student evaluations for the first day of SSW

Fundings:

1. The arithmetic average for students' expectations for the first day of SSW is 3.09.
2. The arithmetic average for the question about the work forms and integration of all participants in the work of SSW is 4.83 and 4.95 respectively. This result indicates the values that students express and makes it known that these elements need to be fulfilled more.
3. For other elements such as the work methods used during the first day, an arithmetic average of 5.05 was obtained.
4. For the personal and professional benefits of the students, the obtained average is 5.11.

These data served as a stimulus for the organizers and implementers of SSW to pay more attention to the elements that need to be improved.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total	Average
Q1-Expectations of the first day	0	0	0	21.2%	48.5%	30.3%	100%	3.09
Q2-Professors' competencies	0%	0%	0%	7.6%	27.3%	65.2%	100%	5.58
Q3-Integration of participants	0%	1.5%	4.5%	25.8%	33.3%	34.8%	100%	4.95
Q4-Didactic methods of work	0%	0%	1.5%	28.8%	33.3%	36.4%	100%	5.05
Q5-Professional benefits	0%	0%	3.0%	21.2%	37.9%	37.9%	100%	5.11
Q6-Increasing knowledge	0%	0%	3.0%	12.1%	28.8%	56.1%	100%	5.38
Q7-Material evaluation	0%	0%	9.1%	15.2%	30.3%	45.5%	100%	5.12
Q8-Ways of working	0%	0%	9.1%	15.2%	30.3%	45.5%	100%	4.83
Q9-Work Atmosphere	0%	0%	3%	9.1%	28.8%	59.1%	100%	5.44

The verified hypotheses of the first day are given below, and the values of the Pearson coefficient are presented in Table 2, which confirm the formulated hypotheses:

H1: The overall assessment of the first day of SSW is correlated with the assessment of leadership style, and integration of all participants (0.471, $p = 0.007$)

H2: The overall assessment of the first day of SSW is correlated with the assessment of the duration of activities (0.434, $p = 0.00$)

Table 2: Pearson correlation coefficient values for the first day of SSW

		P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9	P10
P1	Pearson Correlation	1	.357**	.471**	.220	.162	.202	.333**	.164	.255*	.434**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.003	.000	.075	.194	.103	.006	.188	.039	.000
	N	66	66	66	66	66	66	66	66	66	66

Based on the information presented so far, it can be concluded that during the other days of work, more attention should be given to the participation and integration of all participants and the duration of activities. Integrating participants into activities and respecting the duration of sequences, within the allotted time, will enable the overall evaluation of SSW to be higher, in line with the goal of SSW organizers.

On the second day of SSW, a total of 59 students participated. The responses are presented in Table 3.

Table.3 Student evaluations for the second day of the study week.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total	average
Q1-Expectations of the second day	0	0	1.7	6.8%	33.9%	57.6%	100%	3.47
Q2- Professors' competencies	0%	0%	1.7%	15.3%	27.1%	55.9%	100%	5.36
Q3- Integration of participants	0%	1.7%	3.4%	22%	20.3%	52.5%	100%	5.19
Q4- Didactic methods of work	0%	0%	3.4%	6.8%	42.4%	47.5%	100%	5.34
Q5- Professional benefits	0%	0%	0%	10.2%	40.7%	49.2%	100%	5.39
Q6- Increasing knowledge	0%	0%	0%	15.3%	25.4%	59.3%	100%	5.44
Q7- Material evaluation	0%	0%	1.7%	11.9%	28.8%	57.6%	100%	5.42
Q8- Ways of working	0%	0%	3.4%	5.1%	28.8%	62.7%	100%	5.51
Q9-Work Atmosphere	0%	0%	3.4%	5.1%	23.7%	67.8%	100%	5.56

Question 10 was about the duration of activities. In this question, 47.5% of students think that the activities of the second day lasted too long, while 50.8% think that the duration was fine, and 1.7% of students think that the duration was too short.

If we compare Table 1 and Table 3, we will see that all the average values of students' responses have increased, except for the second question, which has shown a decrease on the second day. Considering that the results of the previous day are presented, it appears that both the teaching staff and the students were more careful in improving the weaknesses of the second day of study. The arithmetic average of the first question regarding the students' expectations for the first day has increased from 3.09 to 3.47, and the arithmetic average of the

third question 4.95 has increased to 5.19. The highest arithmetic average is 5.56, which belongs to the question about the atmosphere and presentations, which was also the highest on the previous day with 5.44. Positive growth has also been achieved from the answers to the 10th question.

The confirmed hypotheses of the second day are given below, while the Pearson coefficient values are presented in Table 4, which confirm the formulated hypotheses.

H1: The overall assessment of the second day of SSW is correlated with the assessment of leadership style, and integration of all participants (0.529, p=0.00)

H2: The overall assessment of the second day of SSW is correlated with the assessment of the didactic and social work method (0.632, p=0.00) H3: The overall assessment of the second day of SSW is correlated with personal gain, opportunities for practical application of the method (0.552, p=0.00).

Table 4 Pearson correlation coefficients for the second day of the study week.

		P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9	P10
P1	Pearson Correlation	1	.340**	.529**	.632**	.552**	.480**	.195	.253	.273*	.284*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.008	.000	.000	.000	.000	.138	.053	.037	.029
	N	59	59	59	59	59	59	59	59	59	59

From the values of the Pearson correlation coefficient, it can be seen that the correlation between these variables is increasing. This indicates the interest of students in integrating into SSW activities, working methods, and opportunities for applying this knowledge during their future profession.

Table 5 Ratings of students for the third day of the study week.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total	average
Q1-Expectations of the third day	0	0	2.2%	17.4%	30.4%	50.0%	100%	3.28
Q2- Professors' competencies	0%	2.2%	4.3%	8.7%	19.6%	65.2%	100%	5.41
Q3- Integration of participants	0%	2.2%	4.3%	8.7%	30.4%	54.3%	100%	5.30
Q4- Didactic methods of work	0%	%	4.3%	8.7%	39.1%	47.8%	100%	5.30
Q5- Professional benefits	0%	0%	4.3%	8.7%	37.0%	50.0%	100%	5.33
Q6- Increasing knowledge	0%	0%	2.2%	13.0%	26.1%	58.7%	100%	5.39
Q7- Material evaluation	0%	2.2%	4.3%	10.9%	13.0%	69.6%	100%	5.43
Q8- Ways of working	0%	2.2%	8.7%	13.0%	23.9%	52.2%	100%	5.15
Q9-Work Atmosphere	2.2%	4.3%	4.3%	13.0%	15.2%	60.9%	100%	5.17

The above table presents the students' responses for the third day of SSW in percentages and arithmetic averages. More students participated on the third day, but a total of 46 students completed the evaluations. Out of the total number of students who participated, 50% declared that their expectations were fully met, while 30.4% stated that their expectations were partially met, and 17.4% said their expectations were not met. Table 5 shows a decrease in responses to questions one, eight, and nine, while responses to other questions have increased. 50% of the total number of students responded that the duration of the activities (from question 10 responses), and 43.5% responded that the time was too long.

The validated hypotheses for the third day are given below, and the Pearson correlation coefficient values are presented in Tab.6, which confirms the formulated hypotheses:

H1: The overall evaluation of the third day of SSW is correlated with the professional competencies of the day's leaders (0.588, p=0.00).

H2: The overall evaluation of the third day of SSW is correlated with the evaluation of the didactic and social work method (0.558, p=0.00).

H3: The overall evaluation of the third day of SSW is correlated with personal gain and the opportunities for applying the method in practice (0.578, p=0.00).

Table.6 presents the values of Pearson's coefficient for the third day of SSW, which confirm the formulated hypotheses.

		P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9	P10
P1	Pearson Correlation	1	.588**	.527**	.558**	.578**	.511**	.328*	.560**	.491**	.359*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.026	.000	.001	.014
	N	46	46	46	46	46	46	46	46	46	46

On the fourth day of SSW, more students participated, but a total of 63 completed the evaluations, from which it appears that 63.5% of them had their expectations fully met, 30.2% of the students stated that their expectations were met, while 4.8% of expectations were partially met.

Table 7 Ratings of students for the fourth day of SSW.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total	average
Q1-Expectations of the third day	0	0	1.6%	4.8%	30.2%	63.5%	100%	3.56
Q2- Professors' competencies	0%	%	1.6%	12.7%	19.0%	66.7%	100%	5.51
Q3- Integration of participants	0%	3.2%	3.2%	6.3%	19.0%	68.3%	100%	5.46
Q4- Didactic methods of work	0%	1.6%	4.8%	15.9%	19.0%	58.7%	100%	5.27
Q5- Professional benefits	1.6%	1.6%	3.2%	6.3%	20.6%	66.7%	100%	5.43
Q6- Increasing knowledge	1.60%	1.60%	3.2%	1.6%	19.0%	73.0%	100%	5.54
Q7- Material evaluation	0%	%	3.2%	6.3%	22.2%	68.3%	100%	5.56
Q8- Ways of working	0%	3.2%	3.2%	7.9%	20.6%	65.1%	100%	5.41
Q9-Work Atmosphere	%	3.2%	1.6%	6.3%	17.5%	71.4%	100%	5.52

From the answers to question 10, it appears that 61.9% of students found the duration of activities to be appropriate, while 34.9% of students answered that the time to complete activities was long.

If the values in Tables 7 and 5 are compared, a noticeable increase in the values of the column with a rating of 6, which is above 65, can be observed. The same applies to the column with the arithmetic averages.

The confirmed hypotheses for the fourth day are given below, while the values of the Pearson coefficient presented in Table 8 confirm the formulated hypotheses:

H1: The overall rating of the fourth day of SSW is correlated with the group, the atmosphere in the activities (0.667, $p=0.00$)

H2: The overall rating of the fourth day of SSW is correlated with leadership styles, and integration of all participants (0.614, $p=0.00$)

H3: The overall rating of the fourth day of SSW is correlated with work methods, and social didactics (0.603, $p=0.00$)

H4: The overall rating of the fourth day of SSW is correlated with professional development, and opportunities for practical application (0.580, $p=0.00$)

Table 8. Pearson correlation coefficients for the fourth day of SSW

		P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9	P10
P1	Pearson	1	.410 **	.614 **	.603 **	.580 **	.561 **	.433 **	.452 **	.667 **	.323 **
	Correlation										
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.010
	N	63	63	63	63	63	63	63	63	63	63

Conclusions and proposals

The processed data and the obtained results indicate that the students have fulfilled their expectations regarding the topic, respectively the topics covered during the SSW. The average values obtained, the hypotheses confirmed, and the comparison of the average values of the four days are also evidence that the assessments of each day and their presentation have influenced all participants in the SSW to identify the weaknesses and strengths during the work, the correlation between the variables that will later lead to benefits in the professional aspect of the students, the student's ability to apply different methods in the teaching process. Based on the processed data, we conclude that the assessments of the SSW days indicate that its implementation has achieved the goals of helping students understand the communication, interaction, and reflection processes and be able to apply them in their professional work as educators. Additionally, through the SSW assessment, the students were encouraged to develop their thinking to evaluate and self-assess. Using the assessment, the students developed critical thinking about the SSW, the professional competencies of the teaching staff, and the atmosphere created during the study week, whether during lectures, exercises, or workshops. The participation of students in such activities has been beneficial to them, given the benefits in the development of their competencies for their future profession.

The study concludes that transparency in critical evaluation, in identifying weak and strong elements, has influenced the improvement of weak elements in the following days. Identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the SSW and improving them has proven that this form of evaluation is useful and should be practiced in the field of education. Critical assessment as a measuring and motivating tool for improvement and change should serve as motivation for internalizing critical, creative thinking and promoting changes for the success of individual and group competencies, which also correspond to the development of 21st-century competencies: curiosity, critical thinking, creativity, non-violent communication, constructive and peaceful interaction, and collaboration.

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