

Students' Attitudes to Work

Vilmante Kumpikaite¹⁺ and Kestutis Duoba²

^{1,2} Kaunas University of Technology, Lithuania

Abstract. Learning, both institutional and individual, and the ensuing corporate changes are seen as a prerequisite for the success and survival of organizations. The purpose of this paper is to introduce students' attitudes to work using results of empirical research of students in Lithuania. The paper reports the findings of a study of 438 higher education institutions' students in Lithuania, which revealed their main attitudes to work. According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs students want to satisfy their lowest needs from work the most. Methods used in this paper are scientific literature analysis, empirical study, and statistical data analysis, correlation analysis, using SPSS and Excel programs

Keywords: students' attitudes, work, Lithuania.

1. Introduction

What constitutes and influences students' attitudes is a subject of ongoing discussion and research (Siegel & Ranney, 2003). Researchers consider that the attitudes people have toward concepts and issues determine how they will behave in various situations (e.g., Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). Schoenfeld (1985) claimed that attitudes and beliefs are part of "cognition" itself, while Koballa (1988) proposed that beliefs form the basis for attitudes. Consequently it is important to find out what attitudes to work and studies students have. Students' approach, especially in science, is field of interest of such researchers as Aiken & Aiken (1969), Marion (1986), Hogan (2000), Scherz & Oren (2006) and others. Teaching effectiveness and its dimensions were developed in researches by Feldman (1976), Marsh (1987), Marsh & Dunkin (1992), Centra (1993); Braskamp & Ory (1994) and Peltier et al. (2003).

The purpose of this paper is to introduce students' attitudes to work and studies using results of empirical research of students in Lithuania. Similar research was provided in 2007-2008, comparing students' attitudes for work in Lithuania and Estonia (Kumpikaite & Alas, 2009; Kumpikaite, 2009; Ciarniene et al (2010)). Methods used in this paper are scientific literature analysis, empirical study, and statistical data analysis, correlation analysis, using SPSS and Excel programs.

2. Theoretical Framework

Following scientific literature, three main directions for finding students' attitudes to work were developed for this survey (see Figure 1).

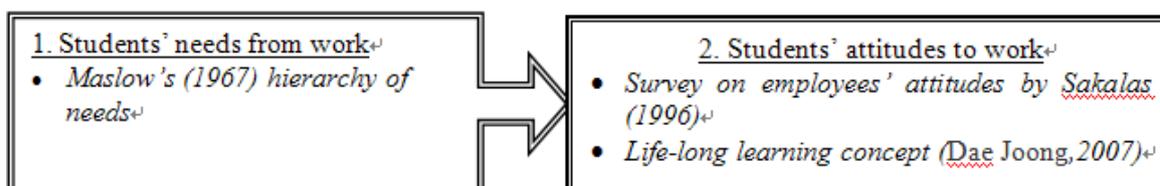


Figure 1. Directions of the research

⁺ Vilmante Kumpikaite Tel.: +37037323683; fax: +37037323683.
E-mail address: vilmante.kumpikaite@ktu.lt

As a base for empirical study, the five dimensions of the Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1967) were used to understand student's needs:

- **Physiological needs.** The first level encompasses the needs involved with basic physiological requirements.
- **Safety security needs.** In terms of this study, it includes job security, protection from physical harm, and avoidance of the unexpected.
- **Social needs.** The third level describes a person's need to "belong" and be accepted by others. People desire social contacts and have a basic need to be affiliated with others. The areas covered for social needs for the study are as follows: work relations with co-workers that provide harmonious relations with others and organized activities that provide participation.
- **Self-esteem needs.** Above social needs, self-esteem needs describe a person's desire to feel a sense of accomplishment and achievement. People need external validation of their worth in addition to internal self-respect and a sense of importance.
- **Self-actualisation needs.** At the apex of the hierarchy, Maslow described self-actualization as an individual's urge "to develop and actualize his fullest potentialities and capacities ... what a man can be, he must be" (Maslow, 1967). For this study, the following areas are included: self-expression, creativity, and freedom to experiment with new ideas; opportunity to use one's skills and talents (Kumpikaite, 2007; Kumpikaite & Ciarniene, 2008; Zakarevicius & Zuperkiene, 2008) and interest, satisfaction of curiosity, and attraction to particular areas.

In 1944 Maslow depicted this hierarchy of needs, where physiological and safety needs were described as lower-order needs; and social, esteem and self actualization needs were described as higher-order-needs.

If we understand what kind of needs students want to satisfy from their work, it lets us to explore students' attitudes to work. In order to analyze them, 4 questions of employees' survey (Sakalas, 1996) were used in the following way:

- You want to perform the work nominated you as better as possible, despite received salary.
- Any work should not make troubles in your normal life.
- You see work as business: the more you are paid the better you work and vice versa.
- To live it is necessary to work, but you would not work if you could.

The discourse of lifelong learning potentially expands the theoretical exploration of adult education beyond pedagogical applicability, because there are many more things that we learn in our lives than are taught in educational settings (Dae Joong, 2007). We made an assumption that positive view for life-long learning concept also shows affirmative students' attitudes to work. This assumption was explored in the survey too.

Reviewed dimensions made a background for this research of studying students' attitudes to work. The presentation of research and its results is given in next sections.

3. Empirical Research and its Results

3.1. Basic Information about Research and Respondents

4 point scale was used for evaluation, where 0 was as totally not agree with provided statement and 3 – totally agree with it. Calculated statistical means and frequencies were used for the analysis of data in this paper. Survey was provided during January of 2010 in Lithuania. 438 students from 2 different universities and 1 college participated in the research. 46.1 percent of respondents were up to 20 years old, 38.6 percent were men and according to speciality they were divided following: studying Management - 27.6 percent, studying Economics –45.4 percent, studying Business and Administration – 4.6 percent, studying Information Technologies – 18.9 percent and the other 3.2 percent of respondents were from other specialities.

Our goal was to explore students' attitudes to work. Therefore more specific questions were formulated:

- What needs students want to satisfy from their work?
- What are students' attitudes to work? Do they want to work or would they not work if they could?

3.2. Study Results

At first, analysing students' needs from work it was found that the most important for them are possibility to belong to some social group, prestige and quick career (See Figure 2). In comparison with previous research provided in 2007 (Kumpikaite & Alas, 2009) situation is very similar. It was found that all safety needs as salary, work conditions and work guarantees were the most important for students. Social and higher needs were less important. At the same time prestige, quick career and wish to belong for some social group is the least important for respondents. Significant statistical difference among different specialties was not found. This present study showed that salary is very important for 45.6 percent of economists and just for 18.8 percent of IT specialists. Other physiological needs are also much more important for Economists than for other respondents.

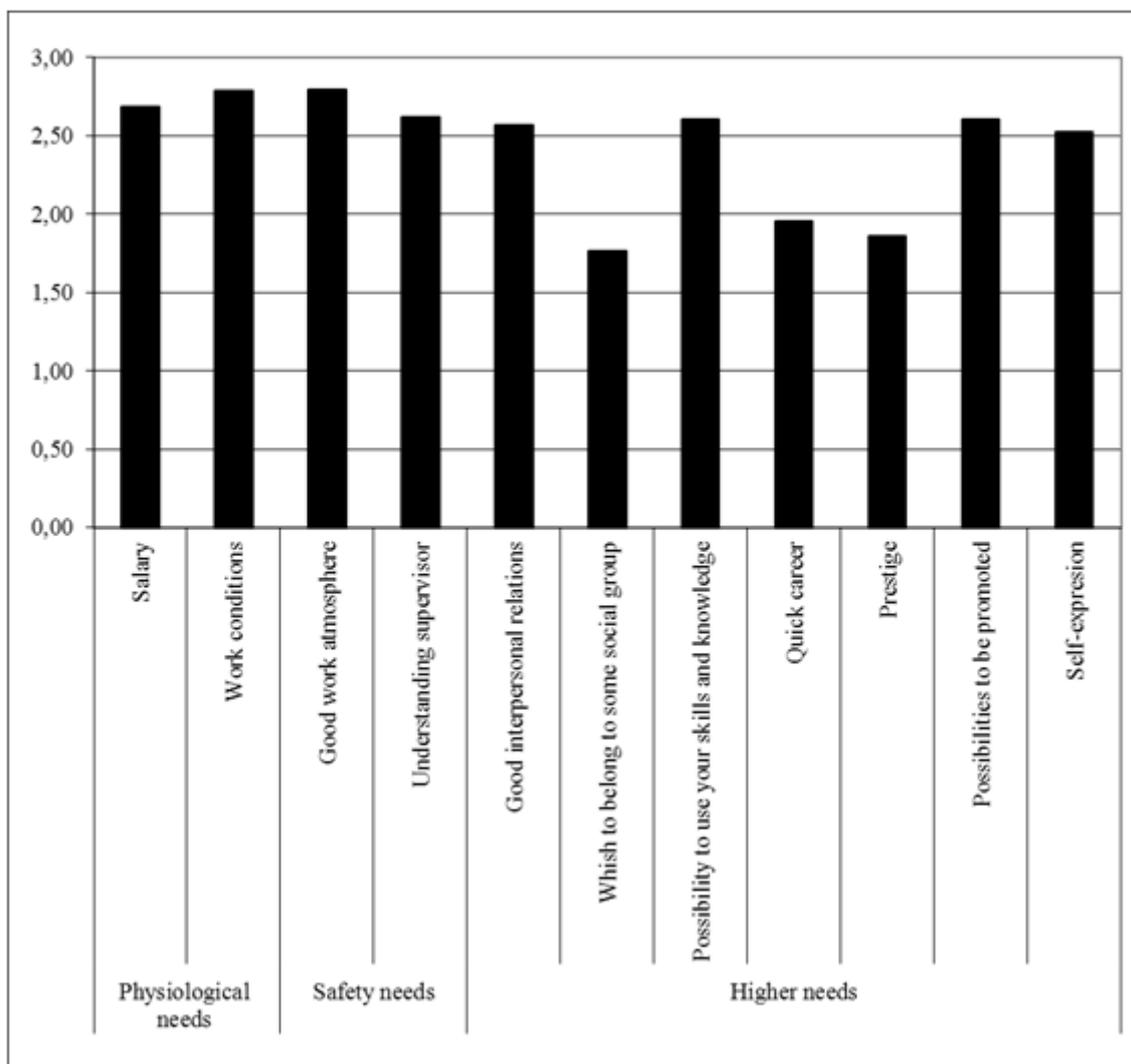


Table 2. Students' needs from work

In the next step it was tried to explore some basic students' attitudes to work providing them 4 propositions. Looking to respondents' answers we can see that almost a half of them strongly agree that they work in order to live better.

81.4 percent of them agreed that they want to perform the work nominated for them as better as possible, despite their received salary. This question was connected with the next one, trying to explore if students see work as business. 67.5 percent of our respondents agreed with this proposition that they see work as business: the more they are paid the better they work and vice versa. These answers show some variance between them. However using Spearman correlation analysis, it was found statistically significant negative dependence (-0.198 at the 0.05 level) between these answers. It shows that respondents are motivated by money. They work better if they are paid better and look at work as a business.

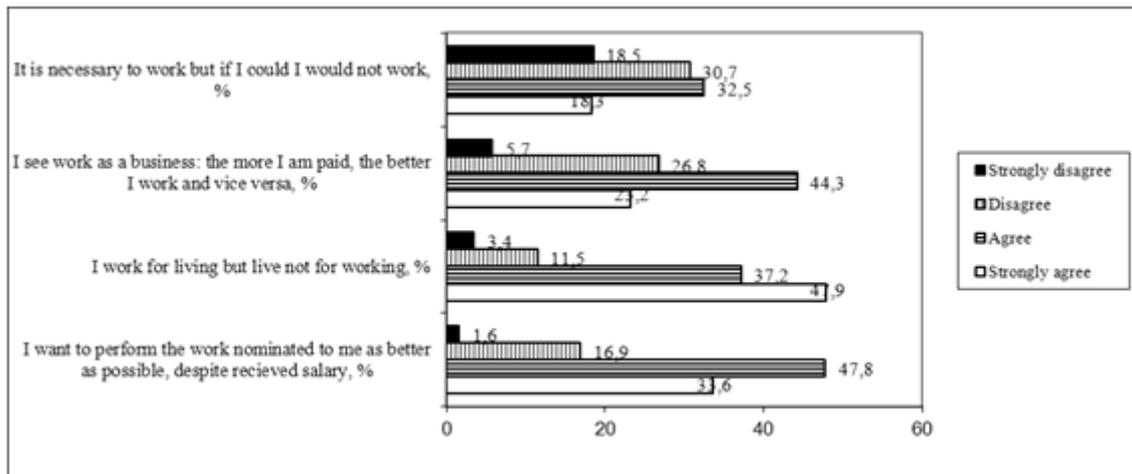


Table 3. Students' attitudes to work, in percent

After this, students were asked if they agree with conception of 'lifelong learning' and possibility to have a few specialties. Results showed that 61.2 percent of respondents agree with necessity of "lifelong learning" concept and 95.5 percent of respondents agree that it is useful to have several specialties. 74.7 percent of IT specialists, 65.3 percent of Economists, 52.9 percent of Management students and just 25.0 percent of students studying Business and Administration agreed with the concept of "lifelong learning". It could be explained that IT students understand how rapidly information technologies change and they need to follow them not to stay outsiders. At the same time students' answers vary according to their institutions. Statistical relevance dependence was found between acceptance of "life-long" concept and institution. Just 26 percent of college respondents agreed to that concept and these students are from program of Business and Administration.

4. Conclusion and Discussion

Summarizing, we could say that we can see quite positive students' attitudes to their studies and work. This conclusion is based on results that most students agreed with 'lifelong learning' concept and positive possibility to have several specialties.

Results showed that students want to satisfy their lowest needs from work the most. These results were similar as in previous surveys (Kumpikaite & Alas, 2009; Ciarniene et al, 2010). All safety needs as salary, work conditions and work guarantees are the most important for respondents. We do not know real reasons for such situation. We have only assumption that while students do not satisfy their basic needs and do not have big work experience and financial freedom from their relatives, they wish to get it and physiological needs are the most important for them. However if students reach them and will have more work experience, their attitudes probably will change. They will start to take care about higher needs more and they will find interest to work not only for money but for self development and satisfaction. This would decrease number of persons who would not work if they could. Looking at such perspectives, it would be interesting and useful to repeat this research with the same respondents after several years and to see how students' attitudes convert in changes of time.

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