



Assessing higher education learning outcomes as a result of institutional and individual characteristics

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Background and purpose of paper

- Two meanings of "learning outcomes":
  - What have students actually learnt
  - What are students expected to learn
- Measures of qualifications:
  - Grades
  - Subject-specific and transferable skills
  - Employability
- The link between learning and assessment
- Our main aim: to illustrate a broader set of criteria for student learning



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What did we try to find out and how?

- Research questions:
  - How is learning outcomes related to institution, type of degree and field of study?
  - How is learning outcomes related to grades?
- Data and method:
  - Data on students (self-reported) learning outcomes from a national survey
  - Constructing a set of learning outcome components based on factor analysis



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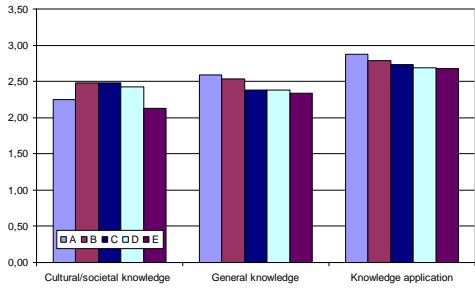
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Learning outcomes by grades



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Main findings

- Weak relations between learning outcomes and type of degree and field of study (except "cultural/societal knowledge")
- Also relatively weak correlation between grades and learning outcomes
- Possible explanations:
  - Measurement problems?
  - Students assess their progress in a "relativistic" way?
  - Grades and learning outcomes are complementary measures?



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Implications

- Traditional examinations and grading is insufficient to assess learning outcomes.
- Broader learning goals has to be supported by broader assessment criteria.
- From individual to institutional level:
  - Can learning outcomes among individual students serve as instruments for institutional assessment ?



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