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Students' self-study time and its relationship with a lifelong learning profile

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Abstract

Education policies emphasise the importance of lifelong learning and the development of students' skills to promote their autonomy. The Bologna Process, which points to the learning paradigm, deems that *student self-study time* represents a valuable opportunity to construct learning. Taking these ideas into consideration, the aim of this paper is to investigate how *self-study time* can generate *lifelong student profiles, bringing additional value to pedagogical teachers' work in higher education and thus facilitating the development of students' competences*. A longitudinal approach is used, first with questionnaires answered by undergraduate higher education students, and two years later via focus groups conducted with some of the students who were by this time enrolled on a professional Master's course internship. In the process, the study investigates these students' perceptions, with particular attention to the perceived importance of *self-study time* and how this is related to students' teaching-learning-assessment processes, as well as the development of a *lifelong student profile*. Through simple statistical and content analysis, the study concludes that an instrumental relationship exists between *self-study* and the ways in which teachers evaluate learning. It also highlights that the pedagogical teacher's work represents an opportunity to develop a *lifelong student profile*. Although the relationship may be instrumental, students' autonomy is transferred to the professional internship and projected into the future.

Keywords: Higher education; Lifelong student profile; Self-study time; Learning assessment; Pedagogical teachers' work

Introduction

European education and policies associated with the Bologna Process enhance students' learning and help promote a lifelong learning culture (Jarvis, 2004; Gibbs et al., 2013). The requirement to be a social actor who can successfully integrate into a society with an economy based on information and knowledge is essential to selecting an appropriate form of lifelong training (Magalhães et al., 2015).

Under the Bologna Process, it is also essential that curriculum organisation and teaching-learning processes promote conditions for the development of students' autonomy, itself necessary to learning pathways definition. In this

learning paradigm, teacher face-to-face time is distinguished from student *self-study time*, viewed as an activity for formal learning construction (Redecker et al., 2008; Attard et al., 2010; Zabalza, 2011). It is expected that the active involvement of students in this *self-study time* framework constitutes a training context that fosters learning conditions and grounds recognition of the necessity of lifelong learning. Sagitova (2004, p. 272) argues that 'a successful learner in the modern society should be able to integrate knowledge from different sources, educate and self-educate throughout the life'.

This situation necessitates a shift from the scientific rationality paradigm (Santos, 1996; Leite and Ramos, 2012, 2015), which is based on the idea that training corresponds to the transmission and acquisition of a teacher's knowledge. This article proposes that this pedagogical model be replaced by a paradigm that pays greater attention to educational teaching processes and students' opportunities to construct learning (Cullen 2007; Leite and Fernandes, 2011). In this conception, the evaluation process is added to the teaching and learning process. The distinction between evaluation *of* learning and evaluation *for* learning (Gibbs, 1992; MacLellan, 2001; Gibbs and Simpson, 2004; Crisp, 2007) has accompanied the growing awareness that teaching only makes sense if it triggers students' learning, approaches to learning, self-regulation and cognitive strategies (Heikkila and Lonka, 2007), resulting in the establishment of a teaching-learning-assessment relationship. Consequently, Siow (2015, p. 21) argues that:

> Since the main goal of higher education is to promote independent and lifelong learning, both of which help students to develop into 'reflective practitioners' who are able to critically reflect upon their professional practice (...), the traditional assessment practices that provide a grade at the end of the learning process are no longer practical to help students learn.

> Therefore, this study was developed with the aim of understanding how assessment processes influence the ways in which students construct knowledge and *self-study-time* organisation, and how this results in a lifelong student profile.

Indeed, the study explores students' perceptions of teaching-learning-assessment processes associated with *self-study time* and its relationship to the development of a *lifelong student profile*. The study answers the following questions: Which pedagogical and assessment tools tend to be used by teachers?; How do these teaching-learning-assessment processes promote greater opportunity for students' autonomous knowledge construction?; What are students' perceptions regarding the effects of teachers' assessment tools on autonomous study time in both academic and professional contexts, and their contributions to the construction of a *lifelong student profile*?

Revisiting educational policies linked with the *lifelong learning profile*

The idea of a *lifelong* education that complements and extends the education system was commonly espoused in the 1950s, coupled with the notion of constant adaptation to complex societies where the 'labor productivity and the efficiency of other daily activities require the application of both scientific, technical, aesthetic and ethical knowledge' (Dumazedier, 2005, pp. 344-345). In the publication *Introduction to Permanent Education,* the author, Paul Lengrand,

highlights a universal vision of the concept that 'education should aim to make every man a self-taught person in the full sense of the term (...) who calls his destiny intellectual, moral and spiritual' (Dumazedier, 2005, 345). The scope of the *lifelong learning* concept in the form of assisted self-training was conceptualised to include both school and non-school dimensions (in Bertrand's 1994 report published by the European Council of Culture; Dumazedier, 2005, p. 345). The idea of *lifelong education* has been portrayed as 'a terrain of choice' in adult education, which includes teaching-learning strategies focused on 'continuing education in school' through 'teaching young people to learn'; that is, it contains the education perspective of a concept associated with 'continuous self-education in adulthood' (Dumazedier, 2005, p. 346).

In sum, the concept of permanent education presupposes that school education integrates a pedagogically sustained purpose in individual and collective self-education, recognising that students can learn intentionally and autonomously (Lea, Stephenson and Troy, 2003; Dumazedier, 2005; Larsen, 2015; Steiner, 2016), rendering them proficient in *lifelong learning*.

The Memorandum on Lifelong Learning, which was rectified in 2000 by the European Commission in the Lisbon Strategy, states that 'lifelong learning is not only one aspect of education and learning; it should become the guiding principle that guarantees everyone access to education and training offering a wide variety of learning contexts' (Commission of the European Communities, 2000, p. 3).

In recent years, the concept of *lifelong learning* has been acquiring a strategic and instrumental orientation, strongly anchored in an economic and political framework whose objectives are competitiveness, employability and adaptation to the labour market (Jarvis, 2004; Alheit and Dausien, 2006). Nevertheless, it does not eliminate the emancipatory potential of knowledge continuously in construction and reconstruction, which can help create professionals and citizens who are more competent, free, autonomous and responsible. It is in this sense that Bourdieu argued that training should primarily aim to generate 'the intellectual instruments allowing, not only the understanding of all messages, but the rational integration of knowledge, and also the critical synthesis of information that can be acquired by other mean' (Bourdieu, 1987, p. 118).

According to Knapper and Cropley (2000), a lifelong learner possesses the following competencies and characteristics: is strongly aware of the relationship between learning and real life; is aware of the need for lifelong learning; is highly motivated to undertake lifelong learning; possesses a self-concept conducive to lifelong learning; and has the necessary skills for lifelong learning. These characteristics are in line with the pedagogical model advocated by the Bologna Process, which indicates the need to replace methods that are based on the mere transmission of knowledge, by active methods that place students in situations requiring thinking and that are adapted to the nature of the demands (Knapper and Cropley, 2000; Monteiro et al., 2013).

According to this logic, the student's involvement in the teaching-learning-assessment process is essential and requires that teachers break from the traditional pedagogical teaching model. Assessment is conceived as a mediating device that provides information that must be used to improve both teaching and

learning processes. In the educational conception, the teacher's role continues to be indispensable (Cassidy, 2011; Ning Downing, 2014; Beaumont, Moscrop and Canning, 2018), as per the factors mentioned by Rué (2007), such as: the requirement to make information accessible, clearly defined and transparent; effective organisation of students' work groups; the preparation of the student logbook; the selection of proposals for learning activities in which the student can combine theory and practice; the fostering of students' metacognitive situations and questions (for instance, justification of work, interest generated, relationship between experiences and other sources, difficulties encountered); the stimulation of students to organise critical information through maps, diagrams and tables, thus serving as knowledge systematisation; the provision of virtual resources; and the development of students' self-assessments (such as decision-making, issue control, work volume, task resolution, tutorial assistance and mandatory material delivery). These ideas are in line with Larsen (2015, p. 50), who states that '[t]he notion of a student centred learning environment is rooted in constructivism and embraces student agency. Knowledge is actively constructed by the learner rather than imparted by the teacher, and "goals are negotiated and selected by the learners"'. The same idea is reinforced by Kwan and Dowing (2015), who argue that learning experience factors (teaching quality, clear goals and standards, appropriate assessment and workload) are significant predictors of students' self-regulated learning strategies and must be considered in higher education pedagogy (Cassidy, 2011).

Strongly related to lifelong learning is the *lifelong student profile* concept, which is associated with the student's autonomy. Being distinct from heteronomy, in which the guidance of others (such as the teacher) prevails, autonomy is the ability to define and pursue one's own intellectual interests, based on enduring competencies that are developed with the same purpose (Wright, 2013). The *lifelong student profile* includes: skills that promote conditions for knowledge construction; the ability to understand and apply knowledge; capacity for judgment and decision-making; capability to select relevant information with ethical concerns; proper organization and communication of relevant information; and higher-level cognitive and interpersonal abilities such as critical and creative thinking (Peacock and Cohan, 2017). The pedagogical promotion of student autonomy envisaged in the Dublin Descriptors (Joint Quality Initiative, 2004), which influenced the Bologna Process paradigm, is part of a wider movement of modern society that, since 1980, seeks to stimulate autonomy through developing individuals' self-education. Therefore, in this European commitment politic, higher education institutions, as comparable institutions where knowledge is produced and circulates, today have a new mission: to develop students' self-learning skills throughout their lives. It is in this sense that D'Andrea and Gosling (2005) argue that one of the objectives of higher education – the development of students' autonomy to build their learning – implies the creation of conditions to promote their responsibility and hence their involvement in the process of constructing their own learning (Sfard, 1998; Peacock and Cowan, 2017). According to Weinstein et al. (2011), students are during the first semester underprepared for the personal responsibility of managing their own learning.

Rayner and Papakonstantinou (2015, p. 13) also reinforce the requirement for universities to ensure that graduates are well-prepared and perhaps even ready for work:

> The comparative lower confidence that students reported for their degree preparing them for placement tasks, compared to 'knowledge-related' elements of their degree, may reflect the fact that they are spending relatively little study time engaged in activities that promote self confidence or provide skills that they can clearly articulate as being work or job related.

Teachers have an important role in students' autonomy development, as according to Larsen (2015, p. 52), 'supportive teachers experience more classroom engagement, positive emotion, self-esteem, creativity, intrinsic motivation, psychological well-being, persistence in school, academic achievement, and conceptual understanding'.

This is one of the intentions of the policy that supports the Bologna Process, particularly in its distinction between *teacher's teaching time* from *self-study time*, which is the time that students devote to constructing their learning. Students' learning time includes all of the tasks performed by students outside of face-to-face class activities, whether these are proposed by teachers and related to the assessment process, or undertaken under the student's own initiative. This idea justifies the organisation of courses by the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS), which supplements class time with the student's workload time (Gonzalez and Robert, 2003), in which he or she is dedicated to building learning. This curricular organisation of higher education courses is influenced by theories of learning that recognise the importance of active learning. It is in this context that Nóvoa (2012, p. 639) states that:

> We must think Bologna parting from the value of the study, that is, from the ability to organize university work around reading and using libraries, experimentation and attendance at laboratories, research practices, autonomous study and accompanied study (tutoring, supervision, among others). In other words, we must go beyond a logic of classes and rigid curricular structures, valuing the study, in its various dimensions, as the main reference of university work.

Taking these ideas into consideration, the present study investigates students' perceptions about teaching-learning-assessment processes associated with *self-study time*, and their relationship with the development of a *lifelong student profile*, both in an academic context and in its transference to the professional internship.

Methodology

The study, guided by the aims mentioned, collected data from undergraduate students in Educational Sciences, and two years later from those enrolled on an internship of their professional Master's degree course.

The research process was designed in order to capture the influences of teaching-learning-assessment processes, in both an academic context (undergraduate students) and a professional context (Master's student internship). The impacts of these processes on students' management of *self-study time* in both contexts constituted the topic of study.

The option of collecting data from students in the same scientific area and

the same higher education institution, and from sequential study cycles (undergraduate and Master's degrees) is justified in order to ascertain both a retrospective student view of teaching-learning-assessment processes experienced during their undergraduate *self-study* time, and how these are projected to professional situations handled during the internship. The following procedures were used to identify the generation of a lifelong student profile.

In order to collect data regarding undergraduate students' perceptions of teaching-learning-assessment processes, a *questionnaire* was used. This questionnaire was answered by 111 students (68% of the undergraduate students in Education Sciences in 2015/2016); 40 (36%) who were in their first year, 36 (32%) in their second year and 35 (32%) in their third year. Of these students, six (5.4%) were male and the remaining 105 (94.6%) were female.

The questionnaire was submitted in person in July 2016, focused on: i) the processes and assessment instruments most commonly used by teachers; ii) the processes and assessment tools most appreciated by students; iii) the processes and assessment tools that, according to the students, promote greater opportunity for reflection and knowledge construction.

Regarding the students from the Master's course, perceptions of teaching-learning-assessment processes associated with *self-study time* were gathered through a *focus group*. These Master's students were attending the second year of a Master's programme of a professional internship accompanied by a higher education institution supervisor. Five individuals participated, ranging from 23 to 25 years old, and all were female.

The focus group was held in April 2018 and its objective, as mentioned, was to ascertain students' perceptions regarding the contributions of autonomous study time (*self-study time*) to the construction of a post-academic student profile that would serve them throughout the rest of their lives. The discussion was structured around the opinions of each of the Master's students, specifically focusing on: i) autonomous study and learning-to-learn skills; (ii) education policies for lifelong learning; iii) competencies generated in the autonomous study in-context and in the professional exercise of the internship. The questions of the focus group were oriented to identify:

- Students' perceptions regarding education policies for lifelong learning (What perception do you have of lifelong learning? What is your degree of adherence/rejection of policies that point to a lifelong learning profile?)
- Students' perceptions of the relationship between *teachers' pedagogical work* and assessment and *independent study time* (How is autonomous study time operationalised? What is the relationship with assessment processes? Is it related to teachers' pedagogical work?)
- Influences recognised by students between competencies generated during university education (in periods of autonomous study) and competencies displayed in professional exercise during the curricular internship (From your experience as a trainee/future professional, what importance do you attach to the competencies of a lifelong student profile? Did the internship experience make you feel the need to attain knowledge and to develop personal and social skills? Do you consider that you have a lifelong student profile?)

Having been transcribed, the opinions of these students were analysed

using the content analysis technique (Maxwell and Miller, 2008; Bowen, 2009). This analysis was undertaken through the following steps: preparation of data (reading and selecting the *corpus);* defining the unit of analysis (the content was classified into themes represented by sentences); developing categories and coding scheme (the subcategory defined was derived by the source, whereas the main categories were derived by the theoretical framework); coding; drawing inferences.

Ethical issues have been taken into account by requesting authorisation for data collection and the preservation of privacy through anonymisation in the processing and dissemination of the data.

Findings

Given that the study considered undergraduate students' perceptions and Master's students' retrospective views of the teaching-learning-assessment processes associated with *self-study time*, the findings were obtained through analysing responses in the questionnaires and focus group.

Undergraduate perceptions of teaching practices and the learning process

The answers to the questionnaire that was disseminated amongst undergraduate students in Educational Sciences enabled identification of the instruments and assessment processes most commonly used by teachers, as well as students' preferences and perceptions of their facilitation of better learning.

Students' responses suggested that written works, carried out in a group, represented the most popular assessment instrument, as well as being that most often used by teachers. Individual written assignments were also often used by teachers, which, according to these students, promoted considerable learning. In contrast, research papers, self-assessment processes, final exams and fieldwork were least appreciated by students and were said to promote less learning. Figure 1 systematises, in frequency, undergraduate students' responses.
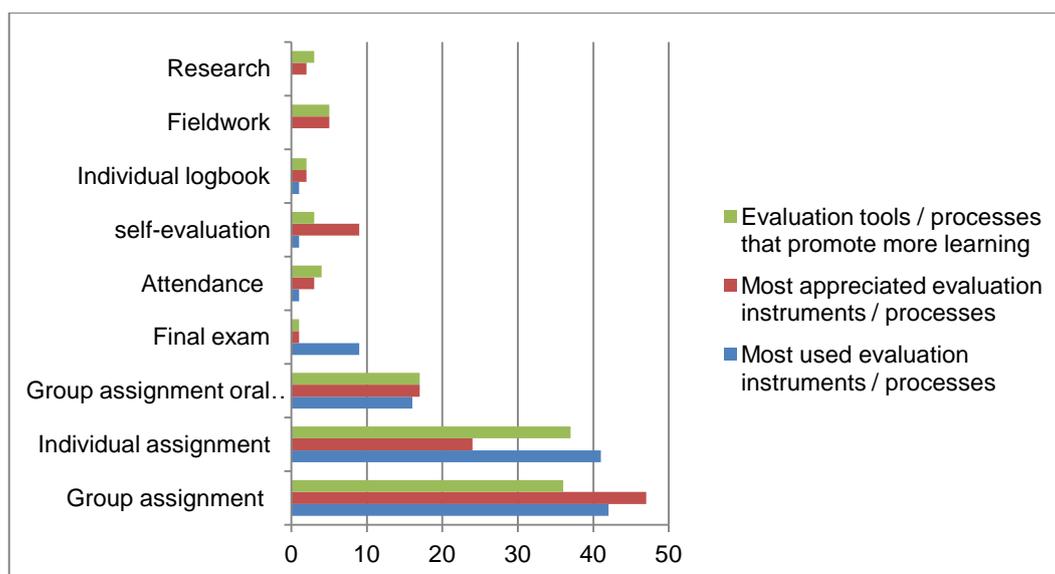
Figure 1. Students' perceptions of the assessment instruments used by teachers

It was useful to compare students' perceptions based on their academic year. First-year students suggested that written work as a group is the most common procedure used by teachers, and also the most appreciated. Second-year students believed that individual written work was most common, and also appreciated its usage. The third-year, i.e. final-year undergraduate students, stated that the procedures most used by teachers comprised group written work and individual written work, and most appreciated the former as an assessment procedure. According to the students' answers, these assessment procedures are those that promote more learning. Tables 1, 2 and 3 show these results in a year-by-year comparison.

Table 1. Most used assessment tools/processes

| | | Academic year | | | Sum |
		1.º	2.º	3.º	
	Group assignment	**25**	5	**12**	42
	Individual assignment	8	**23**	10	41
Most used assessment instruments / processes	Group assignment oral presentation	3	6	7	16
	Final exam	2	2	5	9
	Attendance	1	0	0	1
	Self-assessment	0	0	1	1
	Individual logbook	1	0	0	1
Total		**40**	**36**	**35**	**111**

Table 2. Most appreciated assessment tools/processes

		Academic year			Sum
		1.º	2.º	3.º	
Most appreciated evaluation instruments / processes	Group assignment	**23**	8	**16**	47
	Individual assignment	7	**10**	7	24
	Group assignment oral presentation	4	7	6	17
	Final exam	0	0	1	1
	Attendance	3	0	0	3
	Portfolio	0	1	0	1
	Self-evaluation	1	5	3	9
	Individual logbook	1	1	0	2
	Fieldwork	1	3	1	5
	Research project	0	1	1	2
Total		**40**	**36**	**35**	**111**

Table 3. Assessment tools/processes that promote more learning

		Academic year			Sum
		1.º	2.º	3.º	
Assessment tools / processes that promote more learning	Group assignment	**15**	5	**16**	36
	Individual assignment	14	**19**	5	37
	Group assignment oral presentation	3	4	6	13
	Final exam	1	0	0	1
	Attendance	1	1	2	4
	Portfolio	3	1	1	5
	Test	0	0	2	2
	Self-evaluation	0	2	1	3
	Individual logbook	1	0	0	1
	Fieldwork	2	2	1	5
	Research project	0	2	1	3
Total		**40**	**36**	**35**	**110**

Master's students' perceptions of teaching practices and the learning process

In order to advance analysis of the processes and assessment tools used by teachers, the Master's students' opinions were also explored two years after the questionnaire survey. During the focus group, they were asked about the pedagogical work of their teachers and how it contributed to their development of *learn to learn* competencies, generating opportunities for autonomous knowledge construction. It is possible to say that these Education Sciences students attending the same institution as their undergraduate degree (hereby referred to as 'Stu1'; 'Stu 2' and so forth), deemed that the pedagogical teacher work modes,

both in the Master's and undergraduate degree, were oriented towards the development of competencies related to learn to learn. As one student claimed:

> Autonomous work, in my opinion, was a constant throughout the Bachelor's and Master's degree, because all teachers, instead of following an exposed method, suggested that we do our own research and our reading. (Stu. 1)

It was also emphasised that the teacher's expectations are oriented towards the development of autonomy and that students should be less dependent on the teacher's prescriptions. Nevertheless, it was recognised that teachers' assessment processes influence and condition students' levels of autonomy during their autonomous work: 'fear of not meeting the teacher's expectations' when presenting the work was mentioned. However, these Master's students considered that throughout the course these fears are attenuated, in part because they know their teachers better, thus enabling them to perceive of fluctuations in their autonomy levels.

The students reported that autonomous study time involved reading the texts requested by the teachers in contact time, or through their own initiative deepening their knowledge or increasing their understanding of the content taught in class. As one student argued:

> The class time is short, there are some topics and perspectives that teachers cannot, in class, deepen. Therefore, when I am interested, I research in my autonomous study time, to deepen or to know more, or, if I have any doubt, to be able to clarify with the teacher. (Stu. 2)

These Master's students perceived that it is easier to organise autonomous study time through individual assessment processes than through group work, although it was recognised that this enables the development of teamwork skills that are essential for professional situations, such as those encountered in the internship context. They deemed it necessary to learn to listen and to participate in dialogue, defend their point of view, confront perspectives, and review bibliographic resources, for example.

As per students' perceptions regarding the effects of assessment modes on autonomous study time in both academic and professional contexts, and their contributions to the construction of a lifelong student profile, these Master's students considered lifelong learning education policies a constant requirement, as they understood that they are always learning. They also believed that learning takes place in both formal and informal training contexts, the latter including personal life situations, relationships with family and friends and professional situations.

In general, the focus group participants perceived lifelong learning positively, seeing it as something that makes sense, a process of natural evolution that contributes to their present and future personal fulfilment (Rayner and Papakonstantinou, 2015). However, they felt that this positive representation is influenced by their personal contexts, hence they were aware of the fact that their ideas resulted from their being Educational Sciences students. They also recognised that lifelong learning encompasses on the one hand the professional and social demands for change, and on the other hand personal interests and tastes. This detail results from strong commitment, linking employability to knowledge. In this view, lifelong education stops contributing to making 'every man [and woman] a self-taught person in the full sense of the term (...) who calls

his destiny intellectual, moral and spiritual', as Paul Lengrand quoted. Instead, it corresponds to a need and to the acquisition of competencies that are directly related to the labour market, that is, instrumental skills for obtaining and maintaining employment. As one student claimed:

> Educational policies increasingly address these issues of lifelong education for professional training. This is the perception I have. I believe that the intention is not so much for personal valorisation as for professional training. (Stu. 3)

In the opinion of these Master's students, awareness of the importance of continuous education was evident in the internship situations. For these students it became clear that the significance of knowledge is continuously updated and shared as a team. They felt that this experience also contributed to the development of a lifelong student profile, namely to have felt the need for personal and social development, as well as a constant desire for self-improvement (Knapper and Cropley, 2000).

The debate to understanding whether this perception solely depended on the situations lived during the curricular internship revealed that training during the undergraduate degree represented critical preparation and provided the basis for the autonomous work required of the professional context. This preparation also enabled students to overcome their initial fears and helped them to make the right decisions. As one student claimed:

> If we had not gone through this training [undergraduate] that makes us more autonomous, we certainly would not be prepared in the same way when we started the internship or when we entered the job market (...) I think that the undergraduate degree and the Master's have finally prepared us to be more autonomous, to be more capable. If we had not had this training, my perception is that in the internship nothing would be the same way, the result would not be so positive. (Stu. 1)

In sum, according to these Master's students, the training obtained in the undergraduate degree at the same institution provided the autonomy skills that were deemed essential for the activities they were now undertaking in internship contexts. As one student stated:

> The internship place itself allows us to develop our autonomy, recognising us as an asset. We are given autonomy to organise our work, which implies more responsibility, but also influences us to deepen competencies and knowledge. All this motivates us to learn to learn, without very specific guidelines. (Stu. 4)

Overall, modes of teaching work that are oriented towards building students' autonomy are recognised as more essential amongst these Master's students than their undergraduate counterparts. However, in their claims, the Master's students stated that this was a competency that they had already started to develop during their undergraduate degree, with the support of their teachers. This position, which was not conveyed by undergraduate students when answering the questionnaire, may lead to the belief that the work undertaken individually and in a group plays an important role in students' development of autonomy. In turn, this shows that teachers may be using these work modes in line with Nóvoa (2012) proposal when he mentioned that the Bologna Process should stimulate, among other aspects, 'reading and using

libraries' to promote autonomous study and supervised study, as also claimed by Torres and Leite (2014).

Final considerations

The higher educational polices of the Memorandum on Lifelong Learning, which was rectified in 2000 by the European Commission in the Lisbon Strategy, state that 'lifelong learning is not only one aspect of education and learning; it should become the guiding principle that guarantees everyone access to education and training offering a wide variety of learning contexts' (Commission of the European Communities 2000, p. 3). It is common knowledge that higher education institutions that follow these teaching, learning and assessment processes play a key role in building students' autonomy and competencies for lifelong learning. This became even more evident with the Bologna Process paradigm, which views students as being their own learning constructors. Given this notion, the aim of this study was to understand how *self-study time* can generate a *lifelong student* profile.

As stated, in the aforementioned teaching paradigm, the concept of learning assessment was replaced by assessment *for* learning (Gibbs, 1992; MacLellan, 2001; Gibbs and Simpson, 2004; Crisp, 2007), so that assessment can become a vehicle to promote learning.

Following on from these educational perspectives, the study collected data that permitted analysis of the opinions of higher education students enrolled on Educational Sciences courses regarding their teachers' pedagogical methods, their preferences, and their perceptions of their utility. The study also gathered data pertaining to student perceptions regarding the ways in which teachers' work modes and assessment methods influence their autonomy, and thus create the conditions for a *lifelong student* profile.

The data collected revealed that students perceived *lifelong learning* positively, although they were critical of its close relationship with the labour market (Alheit and Dausien, 2006). The data also highlighted a tension between modes of pedagogical work used by teachers that appeal to students' autonomy (especially among Master's students) and procedures in which teachers have greater regulation (a perception more prevalent among undergraduate students). However, Master's students recognised that the autonomy they have exhibited during the professional internship had its origins in their undergraduate degree. Thus, as mentioned in this paper, the study confirms that the pedagogical work modes and the learning assessment followed by teachers can provide an opportunity to develop *lifelong student profiles*. This opportunity is contingent on the pedagogical work modes followed by teachers, the importance they assign to the learning evaluation process, and what they most value. The concept of evaluation that is followed can contribute to the development of students' autonomy, but it can also inhibit it. When assessment becomes the matrix that justifies the type of student involvement with knowledge, and when it determines how students use autonomous study time, it can generate the risk of dependency on teachers' rules and regulations, in contradiction to the construction and development of a *lifelong learning student profile*. Therefore, it is very important that *self-study time* is structured and appeals to students' initiatives and decisions. It is important to value assessment procedures that break from a

traditional conception of the mere reproduction of knowledge transmitted by teachers. Indeed, it is necessary to make assessment a learning device that requires both diagnostic situations as well as research and learning process planning from teachers and students. These processes, when worked into students' autonomous study time supervised during contact hours, can facilitate the development of competencies inherent to the logics of learn to learn.

Based on these ideas, Figure 2 systematises a connection, identified within the study, between *lifelong learning* policies, *self-study time* and a *lifelong student profile.*
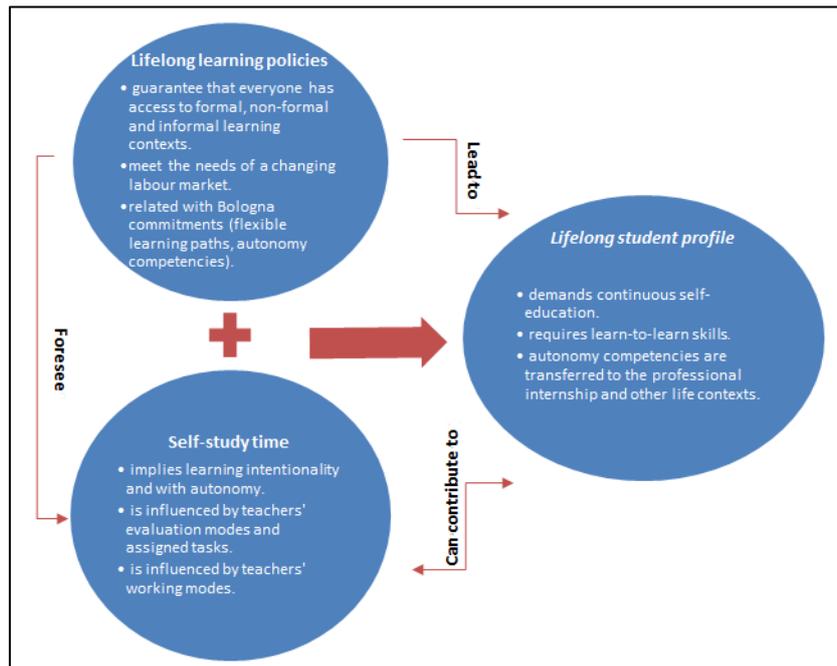
Figure 2. Connections between lifelong learning polices, self-study time and lifelong student profile

As systematised in Figure 2, a dynamic connection exists between *self-study time* and the development of a *lifelong student profile*, and both concepts are intrinsically related to lifelong learning policies. Higher education policies emphasise the importance of lifelong learning and the development of students' skills that promote autonomy. In this sense, the Bologna Process that points to the learning paradigm discriminates *teacher follow-up face-to-face time*, designated as *contact hours*, from *student self-study time,* deeming it *a time to construct learning*. This evidence draws attention to the importance of the relationship between teachers' assigned tasks, assessment modes and students' options in their autonomous study-time. It is important for teachers to have the awareness that *self-study time* can be a great opportunity to develop autonomous students with lifelong learning competencies.

This renewed framework amends conceptions of teacher assessment, as revealed in the questionnaire results. The undergraduate students indicated that teachers prefer to ask for group work and individual work, rather than prioritising final examinations. This opinion was corroborated by Master's students, who

mentioned in the focus group that during their prior degree they acquired learn to learn competencies influenced by their teachers' work modes.

The study also facilitates the conclusion that students' perceptions of the importance they attach to *self-study time*, as autonomous time in which they deepen and broaden their knowledge and cultivate a *lifelong student profile*, are connected to the relationship between teaching-learning-assessment processes, and the ways in which they use individual and group work.

It can also be concluded that the production of a *lifelong student profile* is a dynamic process that expands over time. It includes intellectual and interpersonal competencies and is associated with formal and non-formal learning educational situations. In higher education, this profile begins during the undergraduate degree, before expanding to the Master's degree and also into internship contexts. This profile is influenced by teachers, who appeal to students' autonomy in the autonomous study time, but is also subjective by the students themselves when they are working individually or in groups.

By bringing the issues of autonomous study time and the development of a *lifelong learner profile* to the debate regarding the relationship between lifelong learning policies and modes of pedagogical work in higher education, this study contributes to a greater awareness of the fundamental role of teachers in fulfilling the commitments made in the Bologna Process. As shown, focusing teaching on students' learning does not mean that teachers should relinquish their pedagogical role (Rué, 2007), but rather that they should use it to value the potential of each student, thus contributing to their personal, social and professional development.

Acknowledgements

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