

Educational Characteristics of Learner Autonomy

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According to many scholars, learner autonomy is a direction in higher professional education, which contributes to the formation of students' independence as the primary personality trait that helps build their educational process without outside interference. The research goal was to identify the characteristics of the concepts of "independence," "learner autonomy," and "autonomous educational activity," and their relationship to each other. We obtained the following results: independence is a personality trait, which is formed in the process of carrying out activities with a gradual transition from external management to self-management. Learner autonomy is the highest level of a person's independence, manifested in the readiness to create their educational product. From our point of view, autonomous educational activity is a technology of formation of readiness for further continuous professional education based on the obtained skills of independent goal setting and ways of achieving it. The study allowed us to more accurately define these concepts, which contributes to the scholarly literature and the possibility of further research on learner autonomy.

Keywords: personality trait, independence, learner autonomy, autonomous educational activity, technology, abilities, skills, autonomous approach, process, result

INTRODUCTION

The relevance of studying the phenomenon of learner autonomy, its place, and role in higher professional education is due to the economic, social, and even psychological changes taking place in modern Russian society. From the point of view of economic development, the nation needs a new type of professional, ready for (1) a quick change of profession, (2) mastering new types of activity, and (4) self-development (in the situation of economic instability and uncertainty). The most prominent example is

pandemic and self-isolation – the reality of today. Due to the lay-offs and even cessation of various businesses, many people lose their jobs. They need to look for a job, the essence of which is sometimes not related to the previous education, profession, or type of activity. On the other hand, the extinction of some professions can stimulate the emergence of new technologies, such as robots taking up humans' workplaces. Psychologists suggest that one of the consequences of self-isolation will also be a revision by many people of their former profession and even their former way of life. One can acquire a new profession and improve skills in a distance format using modern information technologies. However, the problem is that not everyone can independently shape their learning process, master new knowledge and types of activities. Mastering information, knowledge, and new types of activities also require specific knowledge about the ways and methods of their uptake. One of the main tasks of higher professional education is not only to prepare a student for a specific profession, giving them specific knowledge but also to teach them to master them independently and determine how to manage their educational activities. We propose the development of technology or technologies through which it will be possible to form universal skills in students to obtain knowledge independently. In the context of modern (technological) education, we propose the universality in education, which has the characteristics of integrativity, which, in turn, requires a revision of technologies, methods, and forms that ensure the effectiveness of the educational process.

The research **goal** was to substantiate the understanding of such categories as independence, learner autonomy, and autonomous educational activity and their relationship to each other in the educational process.

To achieve this goal, we solved the following **tasks**:

- To analyze the categories of independence, learner autonomy, autonomous educational activity;
- To determine the relationships between these concepts and their role in the educational process.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

We carried out psychological and educational literature analysis by many Russian and foreign scholars, including journal articles from the Scopus database, to solve the research tasks. Since the concept of “learner autonomy” first appeared in the studies of Western scholars, in particular, it was introduced by Holec, (1981), at the first stage, we turned to the analysis of the works of foreign authors, such as Dohmem, (1999); Holec, (1981); Mariani, (1994); Trim, (1994); Chik, (2017); Hu & Zhang, (2017); Lin & Reigeluth, (2018); Liu, Huang & Xu, (2018); Palfreyman, (2018); Shaosen, (2018). At the next stage, we studied Russian scholars' papers dealing with the issues of learner autonomy and autonomous educational activity (Koryakovtseva, 2009; Nasonova, 2010; Solovova, 2004; Ternovykh, 2007; Milutinskaya, Brim, Beck, Vartanova & Miftakhutdinova, 2011). To conduct a comparative analysis, we considered approaches to the concept of “independence” in the works of Russian authors (Bim-Bad, 2002; Ilyin, 2012; Parnikova, 2016; Pidkasisty, 2003; Rubinstein, 2001; Shurmanov, 2016; Syrtsova, 2007). At the final stage, we accomplished a comparative analysis of the definitions mentioned above, as a result of which we revealed their distinctive characteristics and their role in the educational process.

RESULTS

Analysis of the works of Russian and foreign scholars (Chik, 2017; Dohmem, 1999; Holec, 1981; Hu et al., 2017; Koryakovtseva, 2009; Lin & Reigeluth, 2018; Liu, Huang & Xu, 2018; Mariani, 1994; Nasonova, 2010; Palfreyman, 2018; Shaosen, 2018; Solovova, 2004; Ternovykh, 2007; Trim, 1994) engaged in the study of learner autonomy allowed us to identify the primary features of this concept. We noted that the scholars' definitions of learner autonomy correlated with each other. The following primary characteristics are highlighted:

- The ability and readiness of the student to independently carry out their educational activities;
- Readiness to independently manage all aspects of their educational activities;
- Taking responsibility for own actions;

- Monitoring and evaluating completed tasks.

The autonomous educational activity is the productive educational activity of the student organized and managed together with the teacher, aimed at creating a personal, educational product, including reflection of this activity, constructive and creative interaction of the student with the educational environment and subjects of the educational activity (Koroznikova, 2016; Koryakovtseva, 2009; Milutinskaya et al., 2011).

The autonomous educational activity is characterized by independent management of students' learning activities, intellectual independence, interaction and cooperation in solving educational problems, implementing strategies as effective ways of obtaining and storing information, and the ability to reflect on their actions (Milutinskaya et al., 2011).

From the point of view of psychology, "independence" is a generalized characteristic or personality trait, manifested in the ability to consciously and independently carry out and regulate their activities and manage all its aspects (Bim-Bad, 2002; Rubinstein, 2001; Shurmanov, 2016)

From the perspective of education, "independence" is the implementation of activities without assistance based on internal motivation and assurance (Ilyin, 2012; Parnikova, 2016; Pidkasisty, 2003).

Therefore, we consider independence as a trait or characteristic of a person that develops in the process of independent activities.

To conclude, independence, from the point of view of psychology, is an essential personality trait, from the point of view of education – an active tool for improving the educational process (Shurmanov, 2016).

DISCUSSION

In our opinion, J. Trim expressed the most generalized interpretation of learner autonomy as the desire and ability to act independently as a socially responsible person, to direct or manage their education (Trim, 1994). J. Trim's approach most accurately defines learner autonomy components: psychological, cognitive, activity-related, social. It is also reflected in the works of other scholars. The psychological component includes the following: the desire, need, motivation for independent implementation of their educational activities, responsibility for decisions, and performed actions. The cognitive component is the knowledge of methods and techniques that allow one to acquire new knowledge independently. The activity-related component is the ability to acquire new knowledge independently. The social component is the relationship with society, the ability to organize joint activities, solve educational and professional tasks, work together in teams.

We point out that in the definition of educational autonomy, the keyword is "independence" – independently implement, independently determine, independently manage, and evaluate.

In the context of personality traits, the terms "learner autonomy" and "educational independence" are identical, synonymous with each other, since they feature the same component composition.

In granting the student the right to act independently, one takes into consideration the position of the teacher in the logic of the educational process, and also on subject-subject relations between the teacher and the student (how to control the process when control of the teacher gradually transformed into self-management by the student). In this case, one can describe learner autonomy as an educational environment in which certain organizational-educational, psychological-educational and didactic conditions are created, under which the transition from external management to self-management of the student's educational activities is carried out.

V. V. Davydov stated that educational activity is the assimilation of theoretical (scientific) knowledge, while the formation of educational activity is the formation of the ability to study independently and creatively. Therefore, the task of the teacher is not to give ready-made knowledge, but to teach students to navigate independently in scientific and any other information. It is necessary to organize such an education with a developing character (Davydov, 1999).

We rely on the opinion of A. M. Novikov that educational activity is aimed at mastering other types of human activity-practical, cognitive, value-oriented, aesthetic, etc., as well as at mastering the educational activity itself ("learn to learn"). He also believes that intelligent people sometimes can not give anything

back to society or themselves. Therefore, skills defined as the ability to perform a particular activity (and actions) is the highest, ultimate goal of an educational activity (Novikov, 2005).

As has been noted, considering the learner autonomy from the point of view of the educational process, it acquires activity-procedural nature and goes into the category of the autonomous education activity, which in turn, in our opinion, represents the technology of formation of readiness for further continuous career development and self-education. It is manifested in the skills of making independent choices and setting and step-by-step achieving goals.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we can consider learner autonomy as the following:

- A personality trait;
- Means of providing students with the right to act independently, demonstrating their individuality;
- One of the ways of organizing the educational process is aimed at the formation of “independence.”

The autonomous educational activity is a technology aimed at forming independence as a personality trait, manifested in the desire and ability to carry out their educational activities without outside interference. Independence is a necessary condition for further self-improvement, self-education, and career development.

Learner autonomy can serve, on the one hand, as an educational environment in which the necessary psychological-educational and organizational-educational conditions are created, giving students the right and opportunity to act independently, starting from choosing an educational goal and ending with obtaining the planned result. On the other hand, learner autonomy can demonstrate the highest level of independence.

In confirmation of our assumption, we rely on the propositions of P. I. Pidkasisty that independence is an acquired personality trait. It forms as the person grows up in the presence of many conditions, the most significant of which is the expansion of types of activities and spheres of communication where a person can manage themselves without outside help, relying solely on the existing personal experience (Pidkasisty, 2003).

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