

Students' independent work: researches and future development



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Abstract

Notions of the place for independent work in the system of specialist professional training are presented in the article. The results of investigation of connection of independent work and students' time management are lightened. The ways for improvement of students' independent work organization are defined.

Key words: INDEPENDENT WORK, PROFESSIONAL TRAINING, LIFE TIME, SELF STUDY SKILLS

Translation into the native higher education system the principles of European educational system necessitated the reassessment of traditional components of professional development program of specialists. Modern higher education in Ukraine requires training of specialists, who are able to provide transfer from industrial society to the informative-technological one through the innovation in teaching, education and instructional research [1, p.87]. Modern socioeconomic environment makes demands to the specialist of any branch to have the opportunity to act in flat space, uncertain terms, in conditions of complex professional desiccations. That is why the main aim of modern higher education should be professional preparation of personality, who is able to organize independently and fulfill professional activity. Already on the stage of study, there should be created such conditions for the

specialists, under which he would acquire appropriate skill. It is critically important to analyze the organization of actual academic activity, to reveal in it the effective, "working" structural elements, and also to reveal ineffective ones, which do not provide appropriate educational level.

The problem of organization of independent work during professional development of specialists was investigated in the works of O.M. Leontev, G.P. Lesnaya, A.V. Zakharova, I.I. Ilyasov, V.Ya. Lyaudis, P.I. Pidkasisty, V.A. Kazakov, V.T. Danilenko, E.D. Chernov; independent work in the aspect of its control and self-control was considered by B.Ts. Badmaev, A.O. Belyaeva, V.M. Karandashov, I.I. Shabdur, O.K. Dusavitskiy, V.P. Shishkin, technological aspect of the problem was studied by Yu.Z.

Gilbukh, M.G. Garunov, E.M. Oleksandrov, G.G. Getsov, M.K. Tutishkin and others.

Independent work of the students as part and parcel of the plans concerning students' preparation is the basic way and mean of digestion of educational material during free time. Study time, allowed for independent work is subjected by lesson plans and makes almost a half of all stipulated time allowed for the study of academic. Into the content of extracurricular independent work there usually included preparation to the seminars, lectures, writing of reports and terms papers. It is considered that such work may be fulfilled in reference rooms or with the help of Internet. In such a way the students are learned to get theoretical skills not only at lectures and seminars but also by means of independent digestion of educational material.

At lectures educational activity of students is characterized considerably by susception of educational material, sometimes even without proper apprehension. As opposed to lectures, independent work supposes active search and digestion of educational material. Psychologically-pedagogic researches confirm that only by such a way there acquired practical skills of educational and professional activity during study [5, p.157]. It is obvious that systematic study of educational material guarantees the students strong knowledge. Studying discipline during all the term, equidistributing own forces and time, the students adopt factual material deeper, they remember it. Elemental, not properly organized digestion of disciplines allows only to pass the material formally. There is no real digestion in this case.

College professors mark that in the beginning of study at the university, students' progress is lower than among elder students. This is conditioned greatly by the inability to work independently. As it happens the experience of study at school, where education material is worked out with the teacher at the lesson, hometask is analyzed in a detailed way and that is why the skills of independent work are being developed very slight, because the algorithm of educational activity is specified externally.

Inability to work independently often leads to impossibility to learn lesson plan at the university. It is known that the main reason of students' expell from junior courses is academical failure in one or several disciplines. Educational experience shows that not all the students quickly overcome mental stumbling block between study in general school and university and are able to make effective educational pace of life. Degree of

student's independence while study increases as fast as he learns the means and ways of organization of independent work.

From the psychological point of view under independence of study at the university one should understand the achievement of such level of education self-regulation and other forms of activity and relations during digestion of educational material, which provides development of personal characteristics, creeds and behavior [6; 3]. A person comes through his process of establishment, acquires own experience, as this experience cannot be passed as the knowledge set. In such a way, independent training activity promotes experience of individual in study and cultivates a taste for self-education.

One of the ways for increase of independent work is the acquirement of means for organization of study time, which promotes also the regulation of human life and activities. The ability to organize and regulate own activity fulfills not only secondary, service function in educational activity. Acquirement of such skill gives grounding for students' realization of contents and aims of educational activity in common, forms positive attitude to the process of study [4].

That is why in the fulfilled research (2013) we supposed that attitude to students' independent work is in certain association with the ability to organize their life time. The aim of research was to reveal the level of formedness of organizational skills and also the character of connection of attitude to independent work and individual peculiarities of life time organization. In the research there supposed to solve a range of tasks: to study the levels of realization the necessity of independent work at the university, applied means of self-study; to investigate the ability to plan time, which in students' hands; to compare the level of realization the necessity of independent work and organization of lifetime of students of the 1st and 5th year of studying at the university. In the research there took part 97 students of full-time course of various specialties. Dnipropetrovsk. Data received in result of fulfilled research allows to reveal some peculiarities of educational activity in the groups of students of the 1st and 5th year of study.

Attitude to independent work of the students under test started with the help of questionnaire "Students' independent work" (authorized variant), the questions of which are directed on the reflection of individual style of study, peculiarities of organization of extracurricular study work, general attitude to

independent study. The ability to organize your own time was investigated under methodology "Organization of lifetime", which allows to reveal the peculiarities of life planning, time distribution, understanding the necessary amount of time for certain activities, ability to structure the events according to their importance [6, p.235-238]. All the answers of students under test according to corresponding methodologies could be referred to high, middle or low ability to organize lifetime and also the level of attitude to independent work.

During comparison of attitude to independent work of students of both groups and their abilities to organize lifetime there marked that in the group of students of the 1st course the middle level of attitude to independent work was 74 % and among students of the 5th course – 57%. In both groups to the middle level of attitude to the independent work there also corresponds middle level of abilities to organize lifetime. That means that students' attitude to independent work is supported by their skills to organize independent work. So it is probable to suppose converse – the ability to organize time forms adequate attitude to independent work.

Under the students under test of the 1st year of study (16%) there marked higher level of ability to organize lifetime as compared with the level of attitude to independent work. These students probably are able to organize their time, but realize this ability in any other activity, but not in independent one. It is interesting that on the 5th year of studying there twice more of such students (33%).

Despite that groupwide index of the level of attitude to independent work on the 5th year of studying is slightly lower as compared with this index on the 1st year of studying (10%), common group index of the skill to organize own time on the 5th year is significantly higher. Probably, the ability to organize own life among the students of the 5th year of study is directed on the working practice: with the help of questionnaire it was revealed that on the 5th year of study there work 25% more students than on the 1st course. So their ability to organize lifetime is directed on the solution of material problems. There also observed the following tendency: high level of attitude to independent work bears to low level of abilities of lifetime organization (on the 1st year of studying among 10% of students under test, among 5th year students – 15%). These students behave to independent work rather responsible, but cannot organize it.

In the research it was interesting for us how the students use their extracurricular study time.

Independent study activity of students turned out to be rather multifarious, as opposed to time for attendance of class hours, which are specified in content. Primarily this is the search of scientific data in Internet; secondly, search of study materials in the library, its processing; thirdly, independent work concerning adaptation of notes and lections for revision of study material and preparation for seminars, fulfillment of individual tasks, etc.

In the research there also supposed to specify knowledge source of students. Students of the 1st (65%) and 5th (70%) year of studying prefer to use lection notes, herein both groups have low index of supplementary literature usage. Let us mark that in educational process there provided compulsory use of textbooks and besides teachers always recommend supplementary literature on the subject, that is why as a rule there is no lack of information among the students.

It is known that for firm digestion of knowledge there is a need in arrangement work, generalization and repetition of study material. Analysis of answers of the students under test revealed that 65% of students of the 1st year of study work out lecture material during preparation for seminars or practical lessons and 65% of students of the 5th year of study make this only during preparation for the exam.

One of the important tasks of investigation there was a question of determination of the level of attitude to independent work of students of the 1st and 5th year of study. Questionnaire results showed the following: only 20% of students of both groups consider that independent studies are necessary in educational activity. Most of students answered that independent work is necessary in isolated cases, mainly during measures of control. Students both of the 1st year of study (75%) and 5th one (95%) make preparations extracurricularly only if necessary, but not permanently, parallel to lecture course.

Averaged time expenditures per week for independent work in both groups are very low. Significant amount of students of the 1st year (50%) and 5th year (65%) reported that they made self-preparations less than 5 hours per week. And this is under the conditions of 30 hours of individual work per week planned. Such organization of free time may witness about low level of self-regulation of educational activity.

As shown in research, the students of younger and elder years of study mark the following circumstances, which prevent to achieve better results in educational activity:

- Overwork in other disciplines – on the 1st year 45% of students, on the 5th – 60 %;
- Students of the 1st year (30%) mark “labor of love”, hobby;
- 5th year students (20%) mark “family circumstances”.

It was important to determine in the research whether the students know the means with the help of which it would be possible to improve the level of class and individual educational activity of students.

The students of the 1st year (40%) would like the content of lectures to be changed (simplified). Some group of students of the 5th year (30%) would like to learn how to plan own time better. The other part of 5th year students (30%) would like to change the content of lectures and other lessons; the third group (25%) would like to “intensify the control of individual work from the side of teacher”. Probably that at the end of term on the 5th year the students have not yet formed the mechanism of inner control of independent educational activity.

According to our assumptions the level of interest to individual work depends on the fact how much the student likes his profession: the more he likes his profession, the higher the interest to independent work. The research revealed that 90 % of 5th year students and 65% of 1st year students like their profession very much. But herein there was revealed rather low level of students’ attitude to independent educational activity. The reason of this phenomenon, probably, requires explanation in further researches.

One of the following tasks of our research was to investigate not only the presence or absence of extracurricular independent work in students’ educational activity but also to determine how the students use their free from class hours time. So according to our data more than a half of students under test of both groups in their free time sometimes work and this probably prevents them to find more time for individual lessons.

Some peculiarities concerning organization of students’ lifetime in general should be marked. Almost all the students under test of the 1st and 5th year of study mark the presence of the stated objectives in their life. Along with this most of them point at certain difficulties during planning for a year. In general students plan only priority

cases and do not give any attention to matter of indifference (according to their notions). It remains unclear whether the students correlate stated goals with the necessity to plan their actions, which would promote them to the goals. Besides, it is unknown whether there exist the system of goals among the students: main goal – macro-goal, secondary – mini-goals, etc. It is obvious the presence of such system helped a young person to coordinate his aims, plan their realization at definite time.

In the research some questions concerning organization of time reflect age characteristics of students under test. High percentage of students of both groups mark that they communicate with friends longer than they would like to do it. Such data indirectly shows that during organization of own activity young people are rather ruled by situational circumstances, but not by the desired goals (if only by mini-goals).

The fact that greater part of students of both groups do not know approximate time expenditures for each daily activity says for rather low level of lifetime planning. But half of 1st and 5th year students confirm that they know how much time they need for preparation for the seminar; the other group of students does not defined how much time they need.

Research results obtained allows only to make some generalizations about the character of connection of student’s attitude to independent work and individual peculiarities of lifetime organization:

1. Among 1st and 5th year students there marked low level of realization the necessity of independent work at the university.
2. In both groups of students under test there marked low level of execution of independent work concerning arrangement, generalization and repetition of educational material;
3. In the groups of students of the 1st and 5th years there appears to be low level of formedness of life goals system and also planning of actions concerning their realization;
4. Middle level of attitude to independent work of 1st and 5th year students corresponds to the middle level skills to organize own lifetime;
5. The level of abilities to organize lifetime of the 5th year students higher than the level of their attitude to independent work.

Lesson plans in the system of higher education are directed on the modern tendencies of correlation of class and extracurricular lessons, where the leading role plays independent work of students during digestion of education program. That is why it is very important to consider some important factors during organization of educational activity.

It is necessary to discover for students the value of independent digestion of knowledge, extensively form independence in educational activity, and teach the means and ways of time for independent work organization.

It is important to pay attention of the students on the differentiation of own free from lessons time: time for independent educational activity and actually free time. It is clear, that students, except the task to become a professional in any field, are designed to solve other age tasks. For example, gaining experience of establishment of familiarity with the partner during early youth period (students period) is no less important. But for successful solution of different tasks it is necessary to determine exact time for them ("All in good time"), and this moment is often underestimated by young people [2].

That is why it is especially useful to hold educational activities at the beginning of study at university, form among students the concept of value and obligation of individual educational activity and also the ways of its organization. It is important that the necessity in individual work would appear not under the influence of external pressure but in result of inward impulse of the student.

Along with this course of study of each discipline should be strictly determined not only by the volume of educational material, but also there should be developed detailed plan of deadlines (and also, probably, penalty scheme). Such organization of educational process should promote formation of more responsible and disciplined attitude of students to their study, including individual work.

Along with this in the research there discovered the connection between the level of lifetime organization and level of attitude to independent work probably dictates the necessity

to develop in students all the educational skills. In the educational process the values of skills to organize own time is often underestimated. It is considered that they cope with the task successfully. However the absence of formedness of this skill leads to nonfulfillment of lesson plan and expel. That is why we believe it is necessary not only to diagnose the level of formedness of skill to organize lifetime, but develop it actively during study.

Development of these educational skills during professional study of specialists may be assured not by single conversation, explanation, but the whole system of various methodic ways, which carry constant character. The system of corresponding means should bring the students to high level of self regulating educational activity and give the opportunity to organize effective individual work.

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