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INDEPENDENT LEARNING IN THE CONTEXT OF BOLOGNA PROCESS

The article covers some of the aspects connected with an increasing role of independent work of students in the context of transition to the standards of Bologna system of education. There has been proved the necessity to improve the efficiency of students' independent learning. A special part in the successful organization of this process is played by teachers. The article pays a special attention to the problems which are faced by educational establishments, teachers and students on the way of increasing the role of independent learning. The lack of hours is considered the main obstacle to the development of the system of independent learning that takes into account individual peculiarities of all students.

Key words: *independent learning, Bologna standards, continuous learning.*

The statement of the problem in a general way and its connection with important scientific and practical tasks. The problem of independent thinking is closely connected with the change in the paradigm of the modern education. The problem stems from the fact that the amount of knowledge a specialist needs to obtain exceeds greatly the possibilities of the modern educational system, which is quite limited. Thus, the previously exercised model of universal education needs transformation into some other type, which is now more and more often called continuous learning. In this connection the priority of higher educational establishments now must be the orientation at teaching students how to study and their self-education. So, not teaching but studying must come into the forefront of educational processes and systems.

That is why the independent work of students has become a priority in the context of reforms started by Bologna process. And it is certain that Ukraine, having started the process of European integration in the educational sphere, needs to change the vector of traditional education towards the independent work of students.

The analysis of research and publications that have started the discussion of the problem and that the authors base upon. Many prominent researchers in different fields have developed the questions connected with independent learning. Candy Phillip devoted one of his works to this problem and attempted at giving a definition to the notion of independent learning. [1] Marshall, L. and Rowland, F. [2] state the necessity of organizational development of independent learning in order to implement any changes. The extent to which independent learning is culturally situated has been hotly debated. Some describe learners from particular cultures as passive and dependent learners (discussed in Kingston & Forland, 2008). Conversely, others are more positive, such as in a study on self-directed learning by Gieve and Clark (2005) in which Chinese students expressed as much appreciation of the benefits of autonomous learning as their EU counterparts.

In Ukraine the problems of organization and control of independent learning is researched by such scientists as Kaydalova L.G. (2004), Yashchishina Y.N. (2006) and Buriak V. (2008) [3].

The allocation of the unsolved aspects of the problem. The question of independent learning is especially urgent in the conditions of modern Ukrainian educational space, as our country has quite unique problems. Unfortunately, proper organization of individualized independent work is not a priority in the conditions of survival of educational establishments. Taking into account European experience academics and authorities can solve some problems on the way of transition to the Bologna standards.

The aims of the article. The article is aimed at giving an overview of the existing state of independent learning in Ukraine and the lack of adequate support to solve this problem alongside with characteristic challenges higher educational institutions and academicians face during this process.

The main body of the article. According to Regulations on the independent work of students developed by Kyiv national university Shevchenko it is stated that there is an urgent need to modernize the current system of higher education. However, this needs to consider a number of factors including development of skills of independent work and professional development of teachers at higher educational establishments. [5]

The definition of independent work is a rather complicated task, as it is necessary to include a number of aspects. Philip Candy, in the now classic text 'Self-direction for lifelong learning' [1, p. 13], quotes Forster to define independent learning/study:

1. 'Independent study is a process, a method and a philosophy of education: in which a student acquires knowledge by his or her own efforts and develops the ability for inquiry and critical evaluation;
2. it includes freedom of choice in determining those objectives, within the limits of a given project or program and with the aid of a faculty adviser;
3. it requires freedom of process to carry out the objectives;
4. it places increased educational responsibility on the student for the achieving of objectives and for the value of the goals'.

This definition clearly places the responsibility for learning in higher education on students, aided by teaching staff and defined by the limits and objectives of the programme.

Independent work of students is an integral part of educational process, when students obtain necessary skills, knowledge, competencies. And one of the most important and positive factors is that students develop independence as a characteristic feature of their personality. The students develop skills that help them further their own learning by using their own ideas to form opinions; solving problems and using a range of strategies in their learning.

As a result of analysis and generalization of literature on the question of the benefits of independent learning, the following can be listed among them:

- improved academic performance;
- increased motivation and confidence;
- greater student awareness of their limitations and their ability to manage them;
- enabling teachers to provide differentiated tasks for students; and
- fostering social inclusion by countering alienation.

As the key ingredient in independent learning one can see the shift of responsibility for the learning process from the teacher to the student. This involves students acquiring an understanding of their learning, being motivated to learn and collaborating with teachers to structure their learning environment. Another important point to make is that independent learning does not merely involve students working alone; teachers have a key role to play in enabling and supporting independent learning through structuring and organizing students' work.

It should be added here that the role of teachers cannot be overestimated. It is in assisting students to become independent learners by ensuring that students are involved in learning. One of the 'external' elements that supports independent learning is, alongside with the establishment of an 'enabling environment', the development of a strong relationship between teachers and students. The positive relationship between teachers and students based on trust is an essential element of independent learning. Being welcoming, responsive and explicit can motivate students in the classroom. Whilst not necessarily directly affecting students' skills in independent learning, these positive connections in the classroom can motivate students to learn outside the classroom.

Among some other strategies that can be used by teachers to support independent learning the following can be mentioned:

- providing students with opportunities to self-monitor: teachers encourage students to self-monitor by using internal and external feedback to see whether the chosen strategies are successful or not;
- offering models of behavior: encouraging students to model the behavior of their teachers;
- focus on learning: to help students to become more aware of the steps involved in learning, understand their own learning styles;
- providing feedback on the homework: it is necessary to improve students' confidence in working independently and help them develop the reflective aspect.

Taking into account a great importance of this part of educational process a special profound and systematic approach should be developed as a basis for its implementation. The organization of independent work the following factors must be clearly defined: the content and objective of independent work, its plan, forms of its control and assessment criteria.

According to the current state standards independent work must cover from a half to two thirds of hours allocated by the study plan for each subject. Moreover the proportion of independent work must constantly increase. [4]

According to latest changes in educational paradigms any specialist must exercise not only fundamental knowledge and professional skills, but also some experience in social and evaluating activity. The researchers claim that this experience is formed during students' independent work. And here one should mention that this social and evaluating experience is formed first of all due to the subjects of humanitarian and social sphere, such as philosophy, politics, sociology, history of culture, etc.

The question of independent learning is of topical importance for Ukraine during the period of transition to Bologna standards and in Donetsk national technical university in particular in the light of the programme '1000' (which aims at attracting foreign students to the university). The experience of major European universities is very important in order to take working models and adapt them to the conditions of the university. For example, some of the tools for independent learning and self-organization include:

- e-portfolios (which are collections of multimedia including texts, images, audio, blogs) that can be compiled by students to demonstrate their learning during a period of time;
- study skills sessions (goal setting, time management, self-appraisal, reading);
- ongoing training in using online information. Unfortunately, these crucial to independent learning skills of using online information present a particular difficulty for a lot of students.

And here one should point out the biggest obstacles on the way to successful organization of independent work:

- the conditions of material and technical resources;
- allocation of studying hours on organization and control of various types of independent work;
- the quality of educational and methodological resourcing;
- student-centred individualization and variable individual work;
- motivation of independent work and its control;
- formation of academic load according to Bologna standards etc.

One of the above mentioned factors needs special attention – student-centred approach and variable individual work. A traditional set of individual work types for any teacher of humanitarian subjects is preparation to lectures, seminars, tests, writing projects, preparation to credit tests and exams. However, this poor choice quite often does not take into account individual peculiarities of students, neither intellectual, nor psychological or physical. It seems natural that a wider range of individual work types is needed to obtain a more efficient work. For example, it is sensible to provide the most successful students with additional tasks that are graded additionally. Instead of oral answers at seminars such students can research a particular topic and prepare a written report. A wider variety of individual tasks is also necessary because not all students can be asked at a seminar and they all need to have a chance to receive necessary grades. Experienced teachers understand that. However, they face the problem of lack of time even for the most obligatory individual tasks. Moreover not always the policy of a high educational institution encourages teachers' creativity. Teachers have to write reports that do not practically reflect their pedagogical, methodological and other achievements in order to conform to some standards that do not usually have any practical value for the improvement of efficiency of educational process.

Conclusion on the research. Further development of the problem. Thus, university study presupposes a high level of independent learning. It can be sometimes a challenge for all participants of the educational process. It requires from students to take responsibility for their own studies, to be more self-directed, to make decisions that will influence the outcome of their study. This trend can present a difficulty for teachers as well, who are still used to more 'parent-like' relationship with their students. They need to adopt new vector of the teaching process when students need to play a more active role in their own learning and will require more self-motivation and greater self-awareness of their learning needs. And only with coordinated work and organization at every level – ministry, higher educational establishment, educational departments, faculties, chairs, teachers and students – it is possible to carry out one of the most important requirements of Bologna process – efficient individual learning. So, further research in this sphere is topical.

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Самостійне навчання в контексті Болонського процесу

У статті висвітлені деякі аспекти, пов'язані з підвищенням ролі самостійної роботи студентів у контексті переходу до стандартів Болонської системи освіти. Доводиться необхідність підвищення ефективності самостійного навчання студентів. Специфічну роль в успішній організації цього процесу грають викладачі. Особливу увагу приділено проблемам, з якими стикаються навчальні заклади, викладачі і студенти на шляху до підвищення ролі самостійного навчання. При цьому, відсутність достатньої кількості годин є основною перешкодою до створення більш продуманої організації самостійної роботи студентів, яка повинна враховувати індивідуальність кожного, хто навчається.

Ключові слова: самостійне навчання, Болонські стандарти, неперервне навчання.

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Самостоятельное обучение в контексте Болонского процесса

В статье освещены некоторые аспекты, связанные с повышением роли самостоятельной работы студентов в контексте перехода к стандартам Болонской системы образования. Доказывается необходимость повышения эффективности самостоятельного обучения студентов. Особую роль в успешной организации этого процесса играют преподаватели. Особое внимание уделено проблемам, с которыми сталкиваются учебные заведения, преподаватели и студенты на пути к повышению роли самостоятельного обучения. При этом отсутствие достаточного количества часов является основным препятствием к созданию более продуманной организации самостоятельной работы студентов, учитывающей индивидуальность каждого обучающегося.

Ключевые слова: самостоятельное обучение, Болонские стандарты, непрерывное обучение.