

## ***THE IMPORTANCE OF AUTONOMY OF LEARNING FOR STUDENTS***

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**Abstract:** *Learning depicts the activity that the student performs periodically, in an organized setting, in order to acquire information in the form of theoretical or practical knowledge, to acquire certain skills, operations, as well as to develop various capabilities for understanding, interpreting certain information and phenomena. Academic learning reflects that learning that has certain peculiarities such as autonomy, intrinsic motivation, self-control and self-regulation in student activity. Autonomy in learning is the ability of the student to exercise control, a verification on his or her own learning actions.*

**Keywords:** *autonomy, learning, autonomy in learning, students;*

Contemporary society reflects itself in a continuous and dynamic change, and in order to keep up with the innovation, changes and challenges that take place, students have to study in a continuous and efficient way.

An essential characteristic of these changes is the speed with which they are developing. Nowadays everything is happening very fast that the students have to adapt effectively to these contemporary times. They need to adopt effective strategies to achieve their objectives and purposes, to find the resources they need to go through the changes they are facing and, last but not least, to prepare for active integration into society, for finding a job.

The student needs to be prepared, to be endowed with certain skills to help him/her adapt to the changes that occur both in the social life and in the career he/she is about to have. H/she has to be able to create and then implement his/her projects according to his/her needs, interests. Also, he/she also has to be able to make the right decisions and those which are beneficial to him/her.

A personality trait is the personal autonomy that distinguishes an individual in relation to other people as a general orientation in his or her relations with the physical and social environment.

Albu M. describes personal autonomy as „a personality trait consisting, on the one hand, of the individual’s capacity for self-determination, of his or her ability to make decisions about his or her own life and of his or her ability to carry out these decisions by initiating, organizing, supervision and review of one’s own actions, without being controlled by external forces or constraints, assessing existing options and taking into account one’s interests, needs and values, and on the other hand, in the person’s feeling that he/she has both the ability to make choices about the direction of his/her actions and the freedom to make those

choices. Personal autonomy consists in the ability to control one's own life along with the feeling that there is the possibility of exercising that control"<sup>1</sup>.

Autonomy depicts the ability to feel, to meditate, to decide, to act alone in various situations.

At the same time, autonomy includes a number of attributes, among which we can mention our confidence, our orientation toward identity and also toward work.

Autonomy is a quality that presents the manner in which the individual needs or does not need assistance, namely, supervision in the performance of his or her duties, in the situations and times when they are necessary.,,The ability to act autonomously is a defining attribute of the competence of the individual"<sup>2</sup>.

At the psychological level, the learning process represents a psychic activity that performs a function of integration and adaptation of the human personality to the environment, which is achieved by assimilating information, attitudes, skills, values that rank at a level subordinated to the psychological age and the social status of the student.

If we refer to the pedagogical level, here the process of learning represents a didactic activity that is subordinated to the training activity and its characteristic objectives, produced by the operationalization in the courses and seminars.

Autonomy in learning is described as a competence of self-determination that the student develops with the help of pedagogical interaction and which gives him/her an independence in selecting his/her own actions that are to be undertaken.

This refers to the individual's ability to exercise control over their own learning activity.

Autonomous learning is the learning action that observes the initiative of students to produce learning, with or without the help from other people.

Autonomous learning is a process of reorganizing learning in which the student observes the steps he/she has to make, and then sets out the appropriate methods to prepare, direct and achieve learning.

For example, in Little D.'s terms, the process of autonomous learning is essentially a „matter of the psychological relationship of the student with the content and the process of learning, a capability for detachment, critical reflection, decision making, and independent action,,<sup>3</sup>.

Autonomous academic learning consists of a number of competences that the student must have: self-management capabilities, metacognitive capabilities, intrinsic motivation, specialized knowledge and more, individual study skills, practical skills, and last but not least an open attitude toward knowledge with an important focus on responsibility, initiative and self-confidence.

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<sup>1</sup> Albu, M., *Variations of personal autonomy depending on age*, Yearbook of the George Barit Institute of History of Cluj-Napoca, Humanistics series, VI, 2008, pp. 87-104.

<sup>2</sup> Manolescu, M., *The Referential in School assessment*, University publishing house, Bucharest, 2015, p.59.

<sup>3</sup> Little, D., *Learner Autonomy*, Dublin: Authentic, 1991, p.4.

The student who is autonomous in learning sets certain goals and objectives, is the one who is responsible for the task to be carried out, chooses and combines his/her own resources at his/her disposal, selects his/her methods of action, assessment, is the one who prepares his/her own learning and knowledge and can learn independently without receiving help from another person.

In a very short presentation of autonomy in learning, this is illustrated as being the student's ability to exercise control over his or her own learning activity.

The teacher can facilitate autonomous learning with the following elements: providing the information and materials that students need; help in guiding the search for information according to the needs of the students; supporting students in discovering the right strategies for study; creating educational contexts where they can apply the identified strategies; support in assessing learning needs so that each student can draw up their own activity plan; motivating and stimulating the interest in learning; providing feedback to each student; supporting students in developing attitudes, skills and autonomy in learning; capitalising on critical thinking; implementing activities to develop analytical skills, cognitive and metacognitive skills and self-assessment skills; providing self-reflection moments on learning; the evaluation of individual performance both during and at the end of the program.

The autonomy of the student implies his or her ability to take responsibility for his or her own learning. The student should be able to set his own goals, to gather resources, to select methods and techniques of learning, to evaluate progress.

Stefan M.A. presents in his paper the systemic route of asserting autonomy in academic learning. This includes the following four steps: „Step one - creating a proper environment for independent, self-directed learning; step two – the process of self-guidance requires autonomy from the student; step three – self-guidance, autonomy in academic learning requires self-regulation; The fourth step – self-regulation involves metacognitive, metamotivational and self-management capabilities”<sup>4</sup>.

The autonomous student takes an active role in the learning process, offering ideas and also having the opportunity to choose different learning strategies instead of reacting to the teacher's impulses.

The autonomous student can be seen as an agent or as an active creator of his or her own learning process. In this case, learning is the result of its own interaction with society and is a constructive process that involves an active search for meaning in events.

Autonomous learning is oriented towards the learner. The student is the one who carries out this process on his/her own initiative. The time for learning is flexible, the place or space where the learning takes place may be different, the student is the one choosing the location. The information content that will be

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<sup>4</sup> Ștefan, M.A., *Developing the competence of autonomous learning in students*, Sitech publishing house, Craiova, 2014, p. 29.

assimilated is usually freely chosen because the student has the opportunity to choose what he wants to learn, and the learning outcomes will be established by self-control.

The autonomy in learning involves the following actions for the learner: the process of searching for information, exercising the skills for learning, the awareness of the stage the student has reached in learning and last but not least choosing the appropriate strategies.

Learning is autonomous when the student is aware of his/ her own abilities, competences, skills, attitudes, values, efforts, and he/she manages to control them in an efficient way. This control refers to the possibility of supervising and leading the learning activity in a successful direction, but also to realize through self-assessment when it has not reached the wanted result.

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