METHODS AND TECHNIQUES FOR SELF-REGULATED LEARNING IN THE CONTEXT OF THE LIFELONG LEARNING CONCEPT

Elena Rizova
University "Ss. Cyril and Methodius", Faculty of Philosophy – Skopje,
Institute of Pedagogy, Republic of North Macedonia
elenarizova@fzf.ukim.edu.mk

ElizabetaTomevska-Ilievska
University "Ss. Cyril and Methodius", Faculty of Philosophy – Skopje,
Institute of Pedagogy, Republic of North Macedonia
beti@fzf.ukim.edu.mk

Alma Taseva
University "Ss. Cyril and Methodius", Faculty of Philosophy – Skopje,
Institute of Pedagogy, Republic of North Macedonia
alma@fzf.ukim.edu.mk

Abstract

The time in which we live today, with all the changes it brings with it in the various areas of life and work, conditions the need for constant learning and education. At the same time, it means that the modern system of education must be built on the basis of a new type of learning - learning to learn or self-learning. In fact, it arises in response to the social and political question: Do our youth possess sufficient knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for a productive life in a post-industrial society? Self-learning per se is the answer to this question, because it gives great autonomy to individuals and the introduction of power into their lives - personal, educational and social. In such conditions, the still present state of "encyclopedic knowledge" is re-examined, *vis á vis* the affirmed need for students at all levels of education to get acquainted with the methods and techniques for independent learning, i.e. to be trained for self-learning. (Rizova, 2021)

The main purpose of this paper is to point out the deficiency of educational programs that include elements of self-learning, the lack of manuals for teachers that would help prepare students for this type of learning, as well as the insufficient readiness of teachers to apply Innovative teaching methods and techniques in teaching - are an everyday obstacle that is still present in the education system in most countries, including ours. The paper also aims to present some of the methods and techniques for successful self-learning that will greatly contribute to the training of new generations of lifelong learners.

Key words: *learning to learn; cooperative learning; lifelong learning; interactive models of learning.*

INTRODUCTION

1. Self-regulated learning an learning how to learn

Self-learning (slowly but surely) should become part of any modern conceptualized education system, enabling both children and adults to become managers of their own education and learning and to keep pace with rapid changes in a knowledge-based

society. The term self-learning is not new and appears in the second half of the 19th century in Great Britain, where the author Smiles (Smiles, 1859) published his work "Self-help" in which he talks about the value of self-learning for personal development. This notion (self-learning) was first associated with distance education in which the student is largely independent and self-taught. Other names have been and still are used for self-learning, such as: self-directed learning, self-planned learning, autonomous learning, independent learning, open learning, self-learning, etc.

There are many attempts to define self-learning and its characteristics. Thus, Malcolm Knowles defines self-learning as "a process in which the individuals are the initiators of learning that diagnoses needs, formulates goals, localizes resources, applies learning strategies, and evaluates results" (Knowles, 1990, p. 29).). Furthermore, the same author singles out the skills or abilities for successful self-learning that every student should possess:

- Curiosity, i.e ability for divergent thinking;
- Self-knowledge (knowledge of their "strengths" and "weaknesses" in learning);
- Ability to successfully diagnose one's own learning needs;
- Ability to successfully identify learning resources;
- Availability of modern learning techniques and methods;
- Ability to plan the learning process.

In the "Pedagogical Encyclopedia", self-learning is defined as a cognitive activity aimed at a specific goal, which is managed by the individual and which acquires systematic knowledge in various fields of science, technology, culture, political life, etc.

Contemporary authors dealing with educational issues, believe that a person who is capable of self-learning should have basic knowledge, skills and habits for independent work, which means independent handling of various learning resources, such as: Internet, databases (files), books, encyclopedias, dictionaries, manuals, maps, sketches, etc. Common to all these definitions is that everyone considers self-learning to be a form of learning that is largely subordinated to the individual needs and desires of students, as well as their ability to manage their own time and information.

This form of learning also depends on the student's self-activity, which results in the development of knowledge, skills, habits and abilities in goal setting, as well as the organization, efficiency and evaluation of the learning process. In doing so, self-learning presupposes a great deal of awareness of the person about the weaknesses and strengths of their own skills and qualifications, as well as awareness of upgrading and applying the already acquired knowledge in different contexts - at home, at work, in education, etc. Self-learning, as an important component of lifelong learning, can help people successfully organize the learning process, while adapting it to their own capabilities and potentials. (Rizova, 2021)

Of course, in order to obtain competencies for self-learning one must possess certain fundamental skills, such as the ability to read and write, use of information and communication technology, etc. Based on these skills, the person should further acquire, assimilate and process new knowledge and skills. To a large extent, self-learning also relies on the self-discipline of the person in the context of learning, as well as seeking advice, information and support when needed. Self-learning should be seen as a long-term process that connects the past with the future of a particular society. Therefore, self-learning is seen as a driver of future economic progress, as a chosen tool for combating unemployment, as a driving force for scientific and technological progress, and as a visa for individual success.

2. Methods and techniques for successful self-learning

All stakeholders in the educational process, as well as experts dealing with the problem of learning and teaching - are unanimous in the view that the ability to learn independently and at their own rresponsibility is one of the most important features and competencies in the concept of lifelong learning. But despite the fact that each person has a huge, innate ability to learn, there are still individual differences. In the opinion of many experts in the field of didactics and methodics, many difficulties in youth and adult learning arise precisely because they have not learned how to learn during their previous schooling.

Even those who have attended high school and enrolled in higher education do not always have optimal teaching methods and techniques. Unfortunately, in the schools, where the basis for training the students with the basic learning techniques lies, the traditional teaching techniques still prevail, i.e the oral transfer of knowledge and the use of textual sources for that purpose. Based on this, many of the learning strategies in schools are based on memorizing the material (which is not a strategy at all). This pedagogical problem is closely correlated with another pedagogical problem - the evaluation, ie the assessment and evaluation of students' achievements. We believe that as long as there is a dominance of testing students' knowledge (which, by the way, is not implemented properly in most cases), and not their skills, abilities and attitudes, we will not get rid of the shackles of traditional pedagogy. (Rizova, 2021)

As early as the 1950s, the American scientist F. Robinson publishes his study aid book (intended for students) where he makes an interesting comparison: non-swimmers (people who are not trained in a particular learning technique) thrown into the water uncoordinatedly threaten and move in the water, as opposed to trained swimmers (people who are trained in a certain learning technique) who have systematically mastered multiple swimming styles.

The fact that people learn with different styles and that there are individual differences between them in terms of learning potentials, where learning is not an individual activity, but also a social process of establishing relationships, different in their dynamics, require appropriate didactic models to function through the application of the multimethod and polymorphic approach, which will be accompanied by activities of various kinds, which may have different functions, but not strictly divided on that basis, because many activities are multifunctional and overlap. (Tomevska-Ilievska, 2015)

In the literature we can find activities that are classified according to different criteria, but the most common is the division into: "introductory activities, warm-up activities and, conditionally speaking, main activities". The function of the first and second types of activities can be relatively easily defined, as participants can easily get to know each other, motivate themselves to work and create a socio-emotional climate conducive to work (introductory activities) or warm-up activities, whose function is partly coincides with the function of warm-up activities (relaxation, creating a good mood, raising energy). Special are those activities through which the participants are introduced to the topic and goals of teaching, setting personal goals and establishing rules for work, which due to their focus on the work itself, can be separated as special activities. They, in a way, represent a direct introduction to the realization of the so-called "Leading" (central) activities that achieve basic educational goals such as: knowledge acquisition activities, application activities, review and repetition activities, and planning activities. (Tomevska-Ilievska, 2015)

3. Methods and techniques for cooperative learning

In today's European pedagogical literature, the problem of the concept of lifelong learning is often associated with cooperative learning methods. However, the application of these methods and techniques in the educational practice is very little discussed. The results of recent research speak of the inability of traditional teaching to prepare students for active participation in modern societies, as well as for lifelong learning. The solution to these problems is seen in the application of cooperative learning in teaching.

Cooperative learning builds on the constructivist theory of learning, according to which the acquisition of knowledge always takes place in a constructive way. Namely, the human brain does not accumulate knowledge, but sorts, transforms, re-creates, etc. As with all other active forms of learning, in contrast to traditional learning methods, cooperative methods not only allow, but also accelerate the stimulation of the creative-constructivist functioning of the human brain. (Rizova according to Ohidy, 2021).

Cooperative learning undoubtedly changes the role of the teacher, i.e the educator, to whom the following tasks are assigned (Green, 2005):

- To be able to make decisions. This task involves setting a learning goal, forming groups, setting a learning environment, and so on.
- To be able to manage the learning process. This task refers to the ability to set tasks for groups, explain the rules, develop students' cooperation skills, etc.
- To observe and "intervene" when necessary. Monitor student behavior and assist in solving tasks, if necessary.
- To be able to perform evaluation and evaluation. The teacher should be able to evaluate the group work, make an individual evaluation and assessment of the students.

The authors of Johnson & Johnson (1994) summarize the basic benefits of cooperative learning in the following points:

1. Successful mastering of the material and long-term memory;
2. Higher level thinking and critical thinking;
3. Increased focus of students on the set problem/task;
4. Acceptance of one's own person (possibility to perform introspection);
5. Forming a positive attitude towards learning and the educational process;
6. Increased motivation of students;
7. Achieving better learning outcomes;
8. Increased tolerance of the views and attitudes of others.

According to the same authors, the basic differences between the traditional group work practiced in educational institutions and cooperative group learning are listed in the following table.

Table no. 1: Overview of Traditional Group Work and Cooperative Group Learning (Ohidy, by Johnson & Johnson, 2008)

Traditional group work	Cooperative learning group
There is no positive dependence within the group	There is positive dependence within the group
There is no individual responsibility	There is individual responsibility

Traditional group work	Cooperative learning group
Homogenous group	Heterogenous group
The chosen group leader leads	Common learning management within the group
Task solving happens in the centre	Task solving and the relationship between the group members are equally important
Social competence does not count	Developing social competences
The teacher does not interfere in the work of the group	The teacher follows the work of the group attentively and helps whenever it is needed
The group does not evaluate and reflect on their work.	Evaluation of and reflection on the learning process is the task of the group.

The professional application of the cooperative learning forms on teaching lessons allows for individual learning and the creation of individual ways of learning for students with different abilities, knowledge and interests. These individual learning forms make use of students' learning and life experiences and their actual knowledge.

In the following paragraphs, some of cooperative learning methods will be presented, which can be used as independent modules, but, if needed, they can also be used as a complete unit or a part of a teaching lesson. Naturally, they can be used in other combinations, and applied for other topics:

- Nametag activity
- Opinion grid (Think-Pare-Share)
- Mind-map
- Graffiti steps
- The Jigsaw method
- The outside circle – inside circle method
- Essay writing, etc.

Conclusion - Assessment and improvement of self-learning skills

The educational evaluation in the past (and today) represents the evaluation of the educational achievements, i.e the evaluation of how well the students master the knowledge and skills, as well as the contents of a certain subject taught according to the curriculum of the educational institution. However, today education faces the challenge of rapid transformations and demands in the sphere of work and life in general, so very often several questions are asked that the evaluation so far could not answer:

- To what extent do the available educational curricula, ie their goals, correspond to the educational needs of the societies?
- What skills from the "learning to learn" competence does education produce and how can we measure them?
- How does education affect students' motivation for lifelong learning?

Therefore, the need to build a new system of evaluation of the educational process, ie educational outputs, which will exceed the limits of existing curricula and answer these frequently asked questions, is emphasized. The purpose of this new evaluation is not to replace, but to supplement the traditional methods of evaluation of student achievement, providing a starting point for improving the educational process and a basis for all reform efforts in the future. (Rizova, 2021)

Hence, the focus of the assessment of students' achievement in relation to the competence "learning to learn" is transferred from the knowledge related to the subjects, to the various cognitive and affective factors that guide the student through learning and through further life. "These factors not only guide the learning process, but are also reflected in the way students apply their knowledge practically and mentally in new contexts." (Assessing Learning to learn: A framework, 2002, p.47) However, developing tools and tools for evaluating "learning to learn" is a very difficult and challenging task, which if successfully implemented will provide essential information for all those who are directly or indirectly involved in the development of education.

REFERENCES

1. Brosnan, K. (2006). *Learning objects and developmental education*. Scotland: University of Stirling.
2. Commission of the European Communities, (2005). *Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the council on key competences for lifelong learning.* London: Commission of the European Communities.
3. Delanty, G. (2002). *Challenging knowledge: The university in the knowledge society*,
   Philadelphia: Open University Press.
4. Field, J. (2001). Lifelong Education in *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 20
   (1 & 2) 3-15.
5. Glasgow, N., Hicks, C. (2003). *What successful teachers do*, California: Corwin Press
   Inc.
6. Hauamaki,J. et al. (2002). *Assesing Learning to learn: A framework.* Helsinki: NationalBoard of Education in Finland.
7. Himstra, R. (1996). Self-directed adult learning. Oxford: Pergamon Press.
8. Jarvis, P. (2001). *The Age of learning: education and the knowledge society.* London:Kogan Page.
9. Johnson, D.W., Johnson, R.T. (1997). *Leading the Cooperative School*. Edina
   (Minn.):Interaction Book Co.
10. Knowles, M. S. (1970). *The Modern Practice of Adult Education: Andragogy VersusPedagogy*. New York: Association Press.
11. Knowles, M.S. (1990). *The adult learner: A neglected species.* Houston: Gulf PublishingCompany.
12. Óhidy, A. (2008). *Lifelong learninig – Interpretations of an Education Policy in Europe.*
    Wiesbaden: GWV Fachverlage GmbH.
13. Ангелоска-Галевска, Н. (2020). *Академско говорење и пишување.* Скопје:Филозофски факултет – Скопје.
14. Ризова, Е. (2021). *Доживотно учење*. Скопје: Филозофски факултет – Скопје.
15. Томевска-Илиевска, Е. (2015). *Интерактивни пристапи во наставата*. Скопје:Филозофски факултет – Скопје.