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Carmen ALEXANDRACHE

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Progressing, Individualizing and Monitoring of the Students' Learning. Tools and Methodological Benchmarks

Carmen ALEXANDRACHE¹

Abstract

Our study starts from the premise that knowing particular characteristic of each student is a better way to develop own his personality. But, using the modern learning strategies that are centered on the student is not enough for it. On the other hand, using them is very possible to neglect the registration of the real progress of student learning. In this respect, we propose some education modalities which are able to develop learning individualized and to monitor the progress of student learning in the higher education. These methodological aspects are presented from a permanent education perspective. Additionally, for a learning performance enhancement. we propose a few efficiency monitoring tools of students learning . We will focus on the importance cultivating the student's responsibility in own professional training, also in own learning progress. For this reason, we consider that for individualizing and monitoring of learning process it is better to use some reflection and evaluation tools in the learning activities.

Keywords: *Learning Tools; responsibility; individual progress; reflection; adapting education.*

¹ University "Dunărea de Jos" of Galati, (ROMANIA) E-mail carmen.enache@ugal.ro.

1. Introduction

Generally, scholar learning represents an accumulation of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values which are necessary for student's social and professional integration. Also, it is well-known that the university teaches students to be professionals in a specific occupational domain for their successful working integration.

On the other hand, the society is more and more confronted with the problem of the attitude towards those that are different: should it accentuate the differences in order to pinpoint the potential of each individual or should it emphasize the common aspects so as to diminish the differences? As can be noticed both attitudes may easily be turned into extreme behaviors which will affect the democratic principles.

Therefore, the school learning needs to find out a correct pedagogical way for use and develop the student' potential in the learning process and give him responsibility for having positive learning results, also.

Certainly, it is difficult having a good connection between both the strategies which allow to student to use own learning potential and the strategies which appreciate / evaluate him learning progress.

2. Problem Statement

The most of specialists in the education issues proposes strategies, tools and scientifically contents for improving the cognitive and practical experience of student. From this reason, some of them are focused on learning collaboration and cooperation strategies and the others on development of students' autonomy and responsibility in learning process. But, the real personal empowerment and enhancement of learning capabilities of students can be realized if the students are encouraged to follow their learning results and reflect upon them. This process is named the learning monitorization and it is connected with the self-reflection, self-evaluation and the self-direction of own learning.

Unfortunately, in the higher education the learning monitorization is neglected. In this educational system there is conviction that the students have the self-evaluation competences and they are able to organize own learning process. In fact, if ever these competences do exist, they must be developed and adapted to the specific of the higher education.

3. Research Questions

The paper starts from the premise that in order to cultivate the student autonomy in the learning process, it is important to organize one's reflections regarding the value of an already accomplished action or of a potential one. In this way, the reflection is subordinated to the learning actions which are represented both at the level of the own conscience of the cognitive experience and individual responsibility of learning. Thus, we are pinpointing the importance of the individualizing learning process in the higher education using the reflection and monitorization tools. It is underlining the importance of both reflection and evaluation in the learning process in the higher education, like an efficient way of individualizing learning process. This means a new attitude of teacher to the students learning, also. The learning tools are very useful, but the teacher must concept them correctly and use them for develop students' responsibility and autonomy in own scholar learning.

Avoiding the need to clarify these aspects, the paper has focused upon some practical means by which the reflection process done by students can support the development of individualized learning and monitorization of own learning progress.

Our proposal intends the following objectives:

- identifying the learning progress problems of the students from the perspective of individualizing and monitoring perspective;
- insisting over the aspects that prove the importance of using monitoring tools in the higher education;
- offering even some recommendations for students and teachers to encourage the organization and monitorization learning activities respecting both the own potential of students and the particularity of own scholar learning of students.

4. Research Methods

Having intention to verify the premise abovementioned, we analyzed the opinions of a student group (24 students on the second year of the academic studies from the socio-human and technic specializations) which were expressed during on 12 weeks of the didactical activity. These opinions were focused on the learning modalities which they frequently used, analyzing the impact and significance of the results of individual learning and the relation of their professional training. Their answers defined some

explicit situations that can become permanent, making their improvement to be impossible.

As a result of the observations and discussions at the seminars, the students evinced a series of problems occurring in the monitoring learning results, they think that:

- there is not enough time to reflect in an organized way at one's own learning activity results and at the necessary actions to be improved;
 - the social rank and progress learning are dictated by the immediate results;
 - they were not encouraged and taught to use tools and methods which can help them to individualizing and monitoring own learning activity.
- Therefore, the capacity to self-learning must be methodically build-up and developed.

5. Findings

Individualizing of the learning process is an educational objective for ensure the learning optimization [1], especially in the academic educational system, because it allows the orientation of learning activity according to interests, desires, potential of students. From this understanding perspective, we can include the reflexivity in the individualizing learning strategies, as a metacognition and self-evaluation shapes.

Certainly, *individualization* is a concept really useful for scholar learning [2]. It can be express through the two components:

- a. from the *student particularity* to the expectations of the higher education which are respected by the teachers. This bottom-up way of individualizing learning process implies the student's efforts to know own developing potential, also the needs and interests of own learning. According to awareness of own potential, the students reflect and choose the appropriate learning modalities and strategies.
- b. from the objectives of the higher education to the *expectation of students*. This is an up-bottom way of individualizing learning process, but the teacher chooses and applies some educational methods for develop the students cognitive and practical experience. In this respect, the teacher have to know what the student can learn, what is he/she able to do, what is his/her training needs. In this way, the teacher can adapt the learning resources and didactical strategies, also to develop the personal implication of student in the own learning process.

The scholar progress is a result of the individualization and monitorization of students learning process. The representation of their interdependence at the structure level can be illustrated as it follows (see Fig 1):

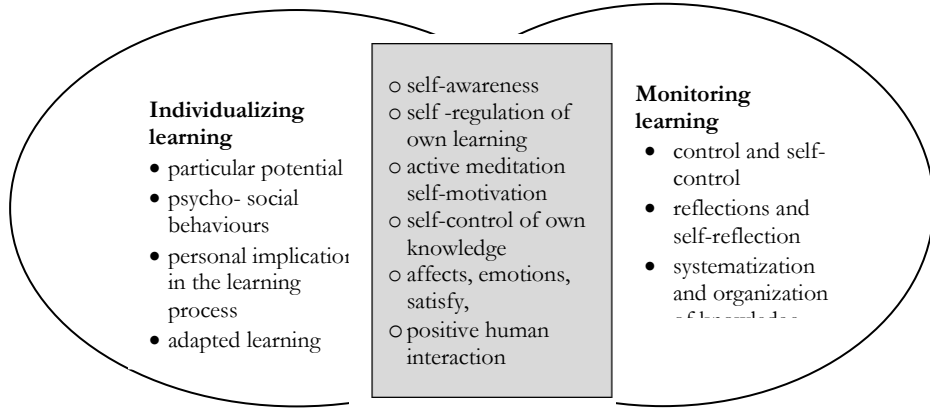


Figure 1 The relation between individualizing and monitoring learning

As it can be seen in the above diagram, the learning progress represents not only the knowledge, the cognitive learning results. The learning progress in the higher education includes attitudes, emotions, reflections and actions that can improve the student learning. Also, it is included all motivational aspects that can be a support of own learning and professional training. From these reasons, knowing and controlling the cognitive and professional learning progress must be a priority of the higher educational system.

According to the degree of manifesting of learning progress in the higher education, it should be analysed from two perspectives:

a. *teacher perspective* that allows to improve the efficiency of strategies used, modality of learning activities organized, teaching style. This is a useful way to perfect his / her didactical activity starting to student's individuality.

b. *student perspective* that allows to have a learning style adapted to own potential; If the teacher uses the individualizing learning strategies, the student will be able to control and stimulate own learning and professionalizing process.

Both perspectives of understanding the individualization of learning process need to use different tools as an organizing learning resource [3]. Of course, between these perspectives must be an interdependence relation because, for instance, neglecting one of them would affect the whole structure of learning process.

Next, we propose approaching the learning progress in the higher education from three practical directions. Here are some intellectual tools that might be used in every academic activity.

a. Tools of the systematically learning (*Organizers graphics*)

The aim of this kind of academic learning process is teaching the students to have some permanent education competences like organizing, controlling and improving own learning by themselves. From this perspective, using the intellectual tools it can be realized the following objectives:

- to realize of recapitulative schema, individual / on working group;
- to organize independent the knowledge in the scholar activities or like homework;
- to elaborate the individual plan for learning experience development;
- to increase the awareness of the importance of adapting learning process to individual particularities of students.

In this respect, we propose some intellectual tools and recommendation regarding on using of them (see *Tab. 1*)

Table 1. Systematically learning tools

Tools (various models)	Notices and recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Working sheets</i> (,Problematic of theme.../ The matters such as...) • <i>Recapitulative Table</i> (schema of important ideas) • <i>Noticing Sheets</i> (for tests and practical works, like a table or schema, diagram) • <i>Sheets / schema of collective / reciprocal evaluation</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the sheets must be filled by student and these tools refer to the notions thought in formal activities and individual studies; • information which need to be written in the sheets are referred to scientific contents and ambiguities, controversies different theories, also; • Recapitulative schema must be discussed, compared, analysed at the collective level, students are being encouraging to find the better shape of information organized.

b. Learning and reflecting tool, as an intellectual support.

Limiting to the educative process, reflexivity will be attributed two defining components: the capacity to meditate over one's own abilities and the methodological approach which favors the critical analysis of activities [4]. For knowing the level of learning and representing correctly and realist of learning results and for improving systematically of didactic process, it can be used some learning tools like a graphic organization sheets, diagrams, correlating schema, tables of comparison etc. In this case, using the intellectual tools it is possible to realize a some of educational objectives, like the following:

- concepting and completing of evaluation grilles and criteria;
- completing *Working sheets* with data referring to behaviours, capacities and skills which the students have its or have not it;
- to use the programmes and spaces for storage and communication on-line, the space for reflection and for personal expression (the oracle, the shows, essays, interviews, ePortofolios, on-line diary etc.).

In this respect, we propose some intellectual tools and recommendation to use its (see *Tab. 2*).

Table 2. Learning and reflecting tool-support

Tools (various models)	Notices and recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Marking and correcting grills</i> • <i>Descriptors of performance</i> • <i>Control sheets</i> • <i>Noticing sheets</i> • <i>Reflecting grille</i> • <i>schema of students' feelings, emotions, motivations which are aware of students to use the intellectual tools like a support of own leaning and reflect on it</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • student correct himself personal work, immediatly or after one time and evaluate it himself; • it is important having a reserved space for students' arguments, justifications of their appreciative decisions; • every activity must to encourage students to find himself own gaps learning and to accept the importance of learning for self-development; • the content of Sheets can be oriented to write some notices about skills, capacities, behaviours, feelings; these notices must be ordinated, graded according to frequency of them in student activity / existence or inexistence of them in time / acceptance or unacceptance of them by students / level of agreed or unagreed of them by students

c. Tools as a learning reflexive organizer

Generally speaking, the school offers enough situations to realize personal reflection, but it is not all of them are being well used [5]. This situation is generated by the priority one gives to the development of the cognitive competences, and by the fact that this type of activity presents the risks to become time consuming and hard to evaluate. In order to increase the teachers' belief in the usefulness of the students' reflexive activities [6], it is can noticed in the table below some activities and tools which stimulate the student's efforts for improving own learning results. This presentation we hope will represent an example of best practices for students and teachers who are interested in using of intellectual tools for develop personalized learning in the higher education. The educational objectives are the following:

- completing by the students of sheets or sequences of a journal with reflection notices or date;
- encouraging students to analyze the personal learning results from different perspective;
- systematizing information and organizing it on different schema, graphics, tables, diagrams etc.

The elaborate reflexivity is focused on the assimilated knowledge, the representations and the built-up skills and very little on the emotional-volitional feelings. A few examples can be seen in the *Tab.3*

Table 3. Learning reflexive organizers

Tools (various models)	Notices and recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Self-evaluation sheets</i> • <i>Reflecting questionnaire</i> • <i>Personal/group/ collective Journal</i> • <i>Double entrance journal</i> • <i>Reflexive journal</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • after these tools (Writing sheets, questionnaires, pages of journals) was filled, teachers must give to students a feed-back; • journal must be presented to students both as an individualising modality of their academic and professionalizing training, as a modality of self-control of own learning and personal and professional development;
<p><i>Progress learning Analyse Sheets (personal or collective level) with multiple marks</i></p> <p>– <i>Results learning Analyse Sheets that centralize results of many evaluation tools used.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reflecting tools can allow students to make reflection about their learning level, their attitude towards own learning process and results, needed resources for own better learning, opinions, own feelings and others

personal notices which can contribute to understand some aspects like a notion, different mental processes developed during a learning activity;

- the reflecting sheets can encourage students to mention the level of their satisfaction about what they learned, what feelings they had in a learning activity, what are realized in activity and what they expected / unexpected in this activity, what were their objectives, desires, feelings before the activity and after it;
- the evaluation and reflection sheets / graphical tools allow identify personal ranks (intellectual, practical skills progress / regress / mentioned.

6. Discussions

As it can be noticed in the above tables argue that the learning, evaluating and reflecting tools are an excellent way to develop both the individualized learning and the stimulation of the academic learning and professional progress of students. All of them must be read and analyse periodically to give relevant date for own learning progress.

For monitoring the students results it can be used a large example of statistics tools and teachers could adapt them with their own content. It makes it much easier to follow up on students and their learning progress. Using them, it can be seen their students' grades and give feedback and get some important statistics. In this respect, we propose the following:

- *progress scales* that allow to include the learning result in a table for a long time. In this case, the scales encourage the students to reflect about evolution / involution of own results. In this category we have included the “grades and reporting” tab, the average score per evaluation question also.
- *Progress tables* that include the student’s capacities formed in a long period of time
- *Reflecting Grilles* that show such a table of questions the student impressions and convictions referring to own learning process
- *Page of journal* that contents some impression about efficiency of own learning activities.

All of them can have different shapes, but it is very important showing the progress and improvement in the learning material. These tools must allow underlining the levels of knowledge in a period of time and reflecting about progress of it. Also, these tools allow to be included in some statistics methods, if it is necessary.

The other modalities to monitor student progress are used by teacher like a statistics sheets over the duration of the year or years [7]. These statistic tools are such a component of the evaluation tests.

7. Conclusions

For building up and exercising the monitoring learning competences, the didactic occasions are not very few; analysing each experience, encouraging the development of the students' thinking of the personal learning results, their getting used to perceive learning results from different perspectives, finding solutions of improving own learning, all of these are just a few synthetic proposals which can be applied in the Romanian school. According to them, we can state that the students learning progress is a side of student-centred learning, linked to the development of the reflecting thinking and with the active participation of students at their own education.

Filling of the intellectual tools, the students become more responsible for own intellectual and practical training. On the other hand, the learning, evaluating and reflecting tools help students to know and use own developing potential. Implicitly, using this kind of tools, it is possible to individualize students learning in the higher education, respective to apply the efficient and self-regulate learning strategies. All of them conduct to adapt and personalize learning process for improving students training results in the university. Certainly, the intellectual tools need to be adapted to the aim of students individualized learning. In this respect, the students will be trained to use the learning tools and teacher have to prepare some activities for develop students' capacities to learn themselves, to be more responsible for it.

In order to students individualizing learning in any academic activity (individual / on groups / collective, formal / nonformal), we consider that it is essential encouraging using the training and reflecting tools. In this way, we consider that the interest and the attitude of those educating towards the act of learning improve substantially. In the same measure, this kind of the intellectual tools are important for anticipate both the students' academic results and the efficiency of individualizing learning.

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