

# Student's Individual Educational Route: Problems and Challenges

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**Abstract.** There are obvious contradictions in modern educational system: on the one hand, we can see accentuating the educational individualization necessity in the era of changing the traditional pedagogic paradigm to the student-oriented one, and on the other hand, it is certain strengthening central forces in the domestic school (state standards, common exams, state certification, Federal Internet-exam, etc.). That is why all the teachers face the dilemma to demonstrate their students' success during uniform testing which is unable to identify the student's individual achievements and to implement an individual approach in the educational process at the same time.

The analysis of providing individual-oriented teaching possibilities in higher school shows that at this stage of the domestic education development the individualization may be based on the activity level: in the dialogue form between a teacher and a student. The authors' teaching experience of organizing the students' work to design educational route for the academic discipline "Business foreign language" is to strengthen the students' role in the selecting textbooks, topics (according to their own research interests) and in following the individual educational path based on their training level and psycho-physiological features.

The authors' study showed that self-projecting the education route of academic discipline can significantly increase the students' responsibility, develop their awareness of goal-setting, adequately assess their capabilities, activate the motivation and enlarge their self-learning amount in the educational process. In addition, during this teaching experiment the pedagogical terms "educational trajectory" and "educational route" were concretized and the definition of "educational vector" was formulated.

## 1. Introduction

In modern pedagogical practice, there is a serious contradiction: on the one hand, we notice enlarging attention to the humanization of the educational process based on the students' individual learning needs which is reflected in scientific researches and included pedagogic experiments on person- and individual-oriented learning [30], respectively, the publications amount about this theme is increasing. The state policy of the Russian Federation in the educational sphere bases on the principles of humanism and freedom choice, moreover even the Law "On education in the Russian Federation" gives the definition of individual learning plan designed to ensure the acquisition of educational program based on the individualization of its content with the learners' features [9]. On the other hand, there is a centralization tendency in our teaching practice: educational standards determination, the unified state exams at school, a Federal examination in the professional education sphere, etc. Impersonal training, overloaded with tests and reproductive teaching methods, negatively influence on students' educational motivation formation. It is interesting to mention Maurice Holt [12] who figuratively compared nowadays education with a hamburger, after eating which a student filled full with calories but without

satisfying a cognitive hunger. Moreover, George Ritzer [24] identified our modern educational system with "McDonaldization" – that could be characterized as a process in which fast food methods began to dominate not only in the gastronomy areas, but also spread to other life spheres (including even teaching), and this phenomenon causes formalism and stereotypes in training process.

## 2. Methodological foundations and methods

The prerequisites for the theoretical foundations development of the individual educational route are:

- philosophical and psychological works on the problem of individuality [4], [1], [5], [20], [23], [2], [11].

- psycho-pedagogical study of the individuality problem in education [13], [22], [27], [28], [15], [8], [3].

- orientation in professional education at the student's mastery educational process, at the formation of his person-oriented technologies, at changing the system of teachers and students interaction, creation of individual educational systems of teachers and students [6].

Introduction and analysis of the concept of "individual educational route" allows one to approach from other positions to the problem of obtaining professional education. These positions are associated with the consideration of education in conjunction with students' life, with its attitudes, goals, plans; identifying possible types, kinds, variants, and routes; with the disclosure of the mechanisms and regularities of the route formation and implementation; with the analysis of the system of teachers and students interaction in its implementation; with consideration of the route of a supporting nature.

This issue's study objects were the first and second year students learning English as a foreign language (the Institute of Management and Business, Tyumen Industrial University).

Authors used the following methods in their research: included pedagogical observing and experimenting, a diachronic review of experience, pedagogical diagnostics, the conversation (interviews), public discussion, students' tests and creative works analysis.

## 3. Problem statement

There are certain difficulties in teaching a foreign language as an academic discipline relevant to the cohort of general education, and more over having humanitarian character at a technical University. First, it is not a special subject taught by professors from graduate chairs and, therefore, the vast number of students does not consider it to be very important and that is why they do not want to exert much effort to learn it. Secondly, the analysis of students' knowledge and skills shows significant heterogeneity, and their learning degree is different as well. Therefore, a great role to ensure qualified language education at high school should be assigned to the formation of positive students' learning motivation, which is an integral traditional side of the educational process. Working with freshmen at high school a pedagogue must necessarily rely on the achievements of the previous age period: a secondary school graduate must be able to analyze his learning style, have an interest in theoretical and creative thinking methods and methods of self-education and control - evaluation actions. Professional and life self-determination motives arise at this age.

The survey of students' motivational characteristics in a studying group demonstrates bipolarity: individual and group, this is a necessary condition of any social action. Such circuit formation makes effective cooperation be possible. The link lack defines demotivation. According to M. Weber [29] focusing on any social group is of great importance for a person, since it encourages an individual movement to a higher-level result. Based on the humanistic approach, personality self-actualizes only then when basic needs (physiological, safety, love and belonging ones) have been satisfied (in accordance with Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs) [19].

We consider two main factors influencing on students' motive sphere. The central core in the learning motivation formation with the student's active role is a pedagogue because he or she, without imposing his or her own opinion, focuses on goal setting, promoting the creative thinking development, clearly structuring the available knowledge arsenal, guiding the research activities, creating a stimulating educational environment, providing the increase of students' cognitive activity. We will not dwell

on only didactic tools, but focus on the most important resource: as noted by Carl Rogers, this is – the teacher's personal knowledge and experience [25]. In this case the relations in the group is really built on mutual respect, the teacher can be properly understood not as an instructor and a supervisor by students, who can seek advice or share their individual experiences and knowledge if it is necessary.

#### 4. Research questions and discussion

First of all it is necessary to clarify the content of the term "educational route" [18], [10], some of the authors use the phrase "educational trajectory" [14], [21]. In addition, the authors of this article say *an educational vector* (italicized by the authors). We consider education as a special, multi-faceted system, characterized by the combination of individual, public and state values, openness to the changes caused by the needs of the individual in a variety of educational services; including binary interrelated processes of educational content: learning and teaching, upbringing and self-education, development and self-development, health protection and healthy lifestyle; having high-quality results on a student-spiritual, public and multicivilizational level.

The investigation of the word "vector" shows that in its Latin etymology it has the meaning "carrying, bearing", and possesses (in its broadest sense), the direction and even purpose; so in a pedagogical context this term can be defined as the activities direction to achieve certain educational goals. Therefore, the educational vector of a student and a teacher's joint activity to design an educational route is to achieve high results or to improve the effectiveness of students' educational and/or scientific-research work in a particular direction.

As a trajectory is just a traffic line, a route is considered to be a moving line according to the coordinates, educational points what are already included certain preparatory work. Although the word "route" is borrowed from German, but it comes from two French words: *marche*, meaning "moving forward" and *route* – "a road, a way". Consequently, the educational route, in its broadest sense, means planned progressive movement towards achieving specific educational goals. The route may bifurcate; then it is necessary to conduct psycho-pedagogical counseling and support, taking into account all the available opportunities range to further moving along the educational route. When the educational vector is carefully selected and the educational route is thoroughly projected, the student's trajectory from his/her ignorance to knowledge, from his/her incompetence to competence is more direct and shorter, in other words, the educational process efficiency is being constantly increased. Thus, an educational vector shows a certain direction and helps to achieve learning goals much faster because students spend less time and efforts. The educational route designing is similar to planning lessons as a pedagogue's mandatory function, obviously this activity has got a lot of difficulties to carry out an individual approach, taking into account individually-personal characteristics of all students, but, nevertheless, it becomes an easily solved problem when traditional and innovative technologies and techniques are used in teaching process.

To use the students' potential during planning their own educational route is uncommon, although there is a real possibility to implement individual-oriented learning. The individualization concept has come from antiquity, from the word "*individual*", i.e., one particular person's distinctive features are particular accented. The idea of respecting a person, in a broad sense, and individualization of the educational process, as a particular manifestation of it, is not new, let us remember the Renaissance, when by relying on the concept of ancient Greek and Roman philosophers, Renaissance creates a new culture, the core of which is a free person. Jakob Burckhardt stresses that concepts of individualism and personality begin to form and develop only then when a person starts to comprehend his inner self [7]. This historical excursus demonstrates the origin and development of humanistic ideas as evolving the movement of our civilization, so it is a mistake to tie the emergence of humanist pedagogy and humanistic psychology to the United States [19], [25] - appeared only in the second half of the twentieth century.

Despite the pedagogues' vast experience (from antiquity to nowadays) the individualization process has not come to a common denominator, the primary reason of it is students' individual characteristics within the same group cannot be taken into account because of the objective factors [17].

Considering a student as an actor of his or her own foreign language learning process and taking into account students' individual peculiarities a pedagogue can help them to improve and develop individual educational route. The teacher creates an educational environment, organizes the psychopedagogical support for students on their individual route, bases on humanistic principles to implement an educational person-oriented approach. The student performing his own choice of training courses, relating it with his abilities, interests, needs, automatically individualizes his/her educational route, thereby takes responsibility for his own education quality. The personality-oriented paradigm of modern education puts a focus on not only the student's but also the teacher's subjectivity. The activity learning approach involves the usage of educational technologies in teaching, adequate to the modern education vector and purposes and tasks facing a student. The excluding students from creating their educational route makes them disinterested and passive subjects in their learning process. It is necessary to point up the importance of goal setting for developing students' conscious learning motivation.

To teach the second-year bachelors (the program "Advertising and public relations") we organized projecting of an individual educational route ("Business English course"). Learners. The students used the training manual "English for Marketing & Advertising" by Sylee Gore, looked through the textbook (the competence of revision reading in a foreign language is improved to extract the necessary information) and only then they were able to project their learning results (vocabulary, monologue and dialogical speech). Linguistic aspects were determined by a teacher in accordance with the students' training level, which was examined during the first semester and might vary in different groups. Every student determined his/her own learning tempo to cover the proposed material, because according to the full learning concept by M. Klarin [16] 90-95 % of students can be successful, but everyone has his own learning pace. In addition, students planned not only the test tasks date but also predicted the number of points for each language aspect. Thus, students develop their own adequate assessment skills that are of great importance for their future professional career and personal life. Students can influence on the final points sum as they are allowed to suggest their own optional task. Certainly, they feel the pedagogue's trust and that is why they try to do their best to learn the material and to prepare for the final controlling test. That is why we consider self-projecting of the student's individual route to be a quite real educational process.

Our investigations prove that it is possible to algorithmize the pedagogue's activities to organize the student's self - designing of the educational route. Firstly, certain diagnostics are necessary (testing, interviewing, quizzing, questionnaires, surveys, etc.), but they should not be very extensive. An experienced teacher can draw conclusions about the each student's knowledge, interests, and needs during his/her first classes in accordance with pedagogical observations. Taking into account diagnosis it is possible to proceed to the goal-setting stage: students (when it is necessary together with the teacher) formulate goals and objectives of their studying, thereby raising awareness in the learning process. Then the main points, landmarks, points of the educational route (training material, control tasks, deadlines, etc.) are fixed. The systematic monitoring is helpful to observe the student's progress along the educational route and to ensure the quality of the teaching process. The most significant stage is a reflexive evaluation, because it is necessary to provide an opportunity for each student to demonstrate personal educational results. We note that this work puts forward special requirements to the pedagogue, whose role is changed nowadays: he/she is not a knowledge and information translator, but a facilitator creating conditions for learners' successful promotion along the educational route [25], [26, 31].

## **5. Results**

As a result of our pedagogical research we made a conclusion that the implementation of student-centered learning in the sphere of high education is quite possible through the organization of students' self-projecting educational route in a certain academic discipline. The conducted experiment showed that the students' responsibility for their learning effectiveness and research activities is increased, their awareness of goal-setting and the implementation of educational tasks is developed, the

adequate self-esteem is raised, the level of educational motivation and independence in the educational process are risen as well.

The feedback is essential in any research: we analyzed our learners' opinions. The students noticed the advantages of their individual educational route self-designing. So Anastasia C. remarked the particular point that a student had a chance to control his/her time and to decide their own deadlines according to the schedule. She said that all her group mates made English exercises carefully and in peaceful atmosphere, that is why learning English became much more interesting and effective. Tatiana K. emphasized that using an individual educational route allowed to combine one's own studying, work, hobbies and to spare time effectively. On the whole all the students expressed their wish to continue learning English by following their own self-projecting educational route.

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