

STUDENTS' INDEPENDENT WORK IN HIGHER EDUCATION: ESSENCE AND METHODOLOGY

Gulboyeva Shohista Ismat qizi

Researcher at the Karshi Institute of Irrigation and Agrotechnology of the National Research University "Tashkent Institute of Irrigation and Agricultural Mechanization Engineers"

shohistagulboyeva1994@gmail.com

Abstract: This article substantiates the significance of students' independent work in higher education. The educational process at universities imposes specific and higher demands on independent learning, driven by the necessity for students to acquire complex general cultural and professional competencies. One of the most critical tasks of higher education is to develop students' ability to self-organize, self-actualize, and establish themselves as active participants in the educational process. The article examines the objectives of independent student work, emphasizing creative forms of learning. It argues that the effectiveness of independent work largely depends on methodological approaches, with the most important being the subject-personal and activity-creative approaches.

Keywords: independent work, types of independent learning, creative activity, subject-personal approach, activity-creative approach.

Introduction.

In the rapidly evolving landscape of higher education, independent student work has become a cornerstone of the learning process. Universities worldwide are shifting their focus from traditional, instructor-led teaching methods to student-centered learning, where independence and self-organization play a crucial role. This transformation is driven by the increasing demand for graduates who possess not only fundamental academic knowledge but also the ability to think critically, solve complex problems, and adapt to new challenges in their professional careers.

Independent student work is not merely an additional academic requirement but a fundamental element in developing essential cognitive, research, and creative skills. It fosters self-motivation, enhances problem-solving abilities, and prepares students for lifelong learning in a constantly changing global environment. As higher education institutions continue to emphasize the importance of independent learning, there is a growing need to explore effective methodologies for organizing and supporting student autonomy.

This article examines the essence of independent student work, its classification based on creativity levels, and the methodological approaches that underpin its effectiveness. By analyzing different types of independent learning and their impact on student development, this study highlights the significance of fostering creativity and self-directed learning in university education. Through the subject-personal and activity-creative approaches, universities can create an academic environment that nurtures both intellectual growth and professional competence, ensuring students are well-equipped for the demands of the modern world.

Materials.

According to the requirements of relevant regulatory documents in the field of higher education, independent student work is an essential component of the educational process. This form of

academic activity is designed to reinforce and deepen previously acquired knowledge, skills, and competencies. The increasing relevance of independent learning in domestic higher education is driven by the following trends in societal and educational development:

- **The modern socio-cultural landscape** necessitates the practical implementation of lifelong learning, which requires students to engage in continuous creative self-improvement.
- **The conditions of the information society** call for fundamental changes in the organization of the educational process in universities. These changes are characterized by a general reduction in classroom hours, a shift away from passive perception and absorption of lecture material, and, consequently, an increased emphasis on students' independent work.
- **The focus in education is gradually shifting** from teaching to learning, with independent student work in universities playing a central role in this transformation.

Research and methods.

These factors highlight the need for higher education institutions to develop methodologies and support systems that enhance students' ability to work independently, ensuring their adaptability in an ever-changing academic and professional environment.

Independent student work in the university educational process encompasses a set of in-class and extracurricular activities and assignments. These activities ensure the effective mastery of the higher education curriculum, strictly adhering to the normative requirements established by national educational standards.

Objectives of Independent Student Work

Independent student work in higher education serves the following key functions:

Reinforcement, expansion, and deepening of knowledge, skills, and competencies acquired through both classroom and extracurricular activities, enabling their transformation into habitual intellectual and practical actions.

Development of additional knowledge and skills relevant to the studied disciplines.

Formation of research competencies, equipping students with the ability to conduct scientific investigations.

Enhancement of academic motivation, fostering a strong commitment to mastering the educational program.

Promotion of self-directed learning, initiative, creativity, self-organization, self-improvement, and self-realization within the educational process.

Classification of Independent Student Work

Independent student work is categorized based on the following criteria:

By location:

Classroom-based independent work

Extracurricular independent work

By educational objectives:

Determined by the specific learning goals outlined in the course syllabus

By organizational format:

Individual independent work

Group-based independent work

By implementing diverse forms of independent learning, universities create an environment that fosters student autonomy, deepens intellectual engagement, and prepares students for lifelong learning and professional success.

Classification of Independent Student Work Based on Creativity

When classifying independent student work in higher education, it is essential to consider it from a creativity perspective. In this context, independent work can be categorized into various types, each requiring a distinct methodological foundation for effective implementation.

The methodological basis of independent student work is shaped by relevant pedagogical approaches. The functional significance of a methodological approach in education lies in constructing a structured model for analyzing, understanding, and interpreting pedagogical phenomena, events, and facts. It is important to recognize that the methodological framework of the educational process always consists of a combination of multiple approaches.

Below, we explore the fundamental methodological approaches to organizing independent student work in higher education.

Results.

The Subject-Personal Approach

The subject-personal approach is grounded in key scientific concepts such as “*personality*,” “*personal development*,” and “*subject*.” The growing interest in personality-related issues has led to their widespread study across various humanities and social sciences, including philosophy, sociology, ethics, psychology, and pedagogy.

In psychology, the concept of personality is widely debated. However, a common understanding is that personality has a strong social context and is defined as an active subject of activity, cognition, and communication, characterized by a unique set of individual and socially significant traits.

Modern scholars argue that development is the fundamental mode of personal existence. Personal development manifests in the intrinsic human need to surpass personal limitations in any activity—academic, professional, or otherwise—reaching new levels of self-improvement. A crucial aspect of this process is the ability to project oneself into the future, driven by aspirations to achieve life goals and sociocultural ideals.

From a pedagogical perspective, the development of a student’s personality in higher education is an ongoing process of preparing them for professional self-improvement through increasingly complex learning tasks. A well-developed future specialist possesses:

- Professionally relevant knowledge and creative problem-solving skills,
- An emotional and intellectual connection to the sociocultural world,
- A strong motivation for continuous self-improvement.

Thus, one of the key tasks of higher education is to cultivate students’ ability for academic self-organization and self-actualization. The internalization of sociocultural values by students defines their professional self-determination and creative abilities, enabling them to continually elevate their professional contributions.

The Activity-Creative Approach

Another essential methodological approach to independent student work is the *activity-creative approach*. To understand this, we must first define the concept of *activity*.

Scholarly literature identifies several fundamental characteristics of human activity:

- It is a specific form of human engagement driven by both individual and societal needs.
- It manifests as selective focus and adaptability, occurring through either reproductive-adaptive or creative-productive cognitive processes.
- It has an *object-oriented nature*, meaning it is directed toward an object or subject that is transformed through activity.
- It is structured around a *goal*, which is shaped by human motives, personal and societal needs, and the means to achieve the objective.

A student’s engagement in independent academic work fosters both external and internal learning motivations. External motivations include pedagogical influences from instructors, whereas internal motivations stem from an individual’s intrinsic curiosity and drive for self-improvement.

Discussion.

Creative Activity in Independent Student Work

Independent student work can take on different forms, ranging from reproductive and adaptive to

productive and creative. Creativity is often characterized by the *novelty* of its outcomes, which can be manifested in two ways:

1. **Objective creativity** – leading to the development of new tangible objects or knowledge.
2. **Subjective creativity** – resulting in personal cognitive and emotional growth.

In the academic context, creative learning outcomes may include both material sociocultural achievements and intangible intellectual advancements. The problem of fostering creative learning in higher education must be considered within the interplay between *reproductive* and *productive* academic activities, as well as *adaptive-normative* and *transformational* learning behaviors.

By integrating creative activities into independent student work, universities enhance students' ability to think critically, innovate, and apply knowledge in novel contexts. Ultimately, this prepares them for continuous professional growth and meaningful contributions to their fields.

Types of Independent Student Work in Higher Education Based on Creativity Level

Type of Independent Work	Description	Creativity Level
Template-Based Independent Work	Involves applying pre-learned methods to solve problems in similar academic contexts. Follows existing problem-solving algorithms demonstrated by the instructor.	Low
Reconstructive-Variative Independent Work	Requires thoughtful application of knowledge in typical situations. Encourages students to analyze facts and develop cognitive skills.	Threshold
Heuristic Independent Work	Allows students to explore creative solutions to problems. Involves constant search for new approaches, generalization, and application of knowledge in unconventional situations.	Advanced
Intra-Subject and Interdisciplinary Research Work	The highest level of student autonomy. Requires transformation of knowledge, independent creative problem-solving, and development of new solution algorithms.	High

Types of Learning Behavior and Their Characteristics

Type of Behavior	Description
Adaptive-Normative Learning Behavior	Occurs in the context of reproductive learning activities. It is externally determined by existing knowledge, traditions, and standard methods of action.
Situational-Transformative Learning Behavior	Involves transformative learning activities, requiring imagination, creativity, and the ability to approach problems from unconventional perspectives.

Conclusion.

Independent student work is a fundamental component of higher education, shaping students into self-sufficient, critical thinkers who are prepared for the challenges of professional and academic life. As universities shift towards student-centered learning, fostering independence, creativity, and self-organization has become a priority.

The classification of independent student work based on creativity levels highlights the progression from basic, template-based tasks to complex, interdisciplinary research activities. This progression not only deepens students' knowledge but also enhances their ability to analyze, innovate, and apply their learning in diverse contexts. Furthermore, the integration of methodological approaches—such as the subject-personal and activity-creative approaches—ensures that independent work is

both structured and meaningful, allowing students to develop key competencies necessary for lifelong learning.

Ultimately, independent student work serves as a bridge between theoretical knowledge and practical application, preparing students to adapt to new challenges in both academic and professional environments. By promoting self-directed learning, universities empower students to become active participants in their own education, fostering a mindset of continuous growth and intellectual curiosity.

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