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Planning as a learning skill of students

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate the features of planning skills among master degree students (N=54). The results show the low level of learning strategies of planning in comparison with other cognitive and metacognitive learning strategies. The study revealed a lack of correlations among planning strategies and cognitive abilities, academic performance, research activity, which confirms insufficiency of planning skills. The possible reasons of inefficiency of planning were discussed.

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1. Introduction

The development and diagnostics of planning skills are among the topical problems in psychology of education. These skills are the key to the solution of different types of tasks and they function in accordance with rules and so on (Owen, 1997). The level of planning skills is essential for student's performance on the whole and especially for undergraduates due to high engagement of planning skills in their learning process.

One of the effective ways to study students' planning skills is to research them within the framework of learning strategies conception (Weinstein & Mayer, 1986) considering learning strategies as complexes of the educational

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actions which are purposefully organized by a person (Dvornikova & Kostromina, 2009). As one of the universal learning actions, planning is an invariant part of learning. Planning skills are required for digestion of new information and competencies development including the organization of learning process in general.

2. Problem statement

This study is based on the conception of learning strategies by C.F. Weinstein, R.F. Mayer (Weinstein & Mayer, 1986). Learning strategies can be defined as persistent sets of actions activated automatically for solving different tasks. Variety and sufficiency of learning strategies increase depending on experience in getting education. Learning strategies are developed on the base of students' habitual methods of information processing, control, regulation and assessment of their own activities. However, the structure of learning strategies can be changed. That is, some operations, actions or their sequence may be refined or extended. But the final goal is maintained. Thus, learning strategies are the orienting and performing part of learners' activities.

These strategies can be divided in cognitive and metacognitive strategies (Dvornikova & Kostromina, 2009). Cognitive strategies are applied to study the learning material (to assimilate, to combine, etc.) as long as metacognitive strategies are applied to manage the learning process (to plan, to control the result, etc.). Cognitive strategies comprise strategies of repetition, elaboration and organization of training material. Metacognitive strategies comprise strategies of planning, observation and regulation.

As well as other metacognitive strategies, learning strategies of planning are universal characteristics providing the managing of persons' own activity. Metacognitive strategies start up with learning activity requiring purposeful, voluntary and effective actions. Thus, learning activity develops metacognitive learning strategies through formation of special learning skills which provide understanding the meanings of tasks and chains of actions for problems solving, correcting the mistakes, assessing the results and so on. But these skills are applicable not only to learning process. Indeed, learning activity is a powerful resource for general development of self-organization skills essentially increasing effectiveness of all human activities. Current studies within this framework prove that students' planning skills are crucial for efficiency of learning activity in all stages of education (Kostromina, 2013).

3. Research Questions

The research questions were focused, firstly, on the level of planning strategies in comparison with other learning strategies and, secondly, on the features of correlation among planning strategies and cognitive abilities, academic achievements, implementation of research potential.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to reveal whether planning skills are applied sufficiently in the educational process in the higher school. The investigation of planning skills among master degree students demonstrates if students have the efficient level of strategies of planning or not and why. Furthermore, the predictors of strategies of planning level are supposed to be revealed in this study.

5. Research Methods

5.1 Participants

The sample was formed among master degree students (N=54, mean age 25 years, median 23 years) of Psychology Faculty and History Faculty, St. Petersburg State University.

5.2 Research Methods and Instruments

According to research questions, the level of planning strategy and cognitive abilities were measured by the set of psychological tests:

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