

Ewa Lemańska-Lewandowska
Uniwersytet Kazimierza Wielkiego
Wydział Pedagogiki i Psychologii
Instytut Pedagogiki
Zakład Dydaktyki

Independence of thinking and taking actions versus sense of competence

Abstract: Requirement of unit in modern world about high sense of personal competence in reflection independence characterizing and operation. Text is attempt of indication of operation, it is possible to employ which in school teaching, in order to form such units.

Key words: independence of thinking, independence of taking action, sense of competence, ZPD, ZAD, studied helplessness

Not long time ago, the practice of school didactic was: the teacher was in the center of a whole teaching process, his task was to fill the student's mind with appropriate knowledge for good. The student, was acting like a vessel, being passive, waiting for that knowledge to sink in his memory. In such circumstances, being active in thinking and acting in student's performance was unnecessary, their acting and thinking was stimulated by the teacher, and it was enough.

Contemporary didactic, which uses in practice the knowledge coming from psychological research, introduces the new perceiving of the teacher's and the student's roles in the teaching process. The teacher becomes an animator of the exploring system and the development of thinking and the student's acting. He/she helps the child to gain knowledge in cooperative way that case a directed participation (Schaffer, 2005, s. 376).

In that way teaching process is move like exploring process, because the independent thinking and acting of student's in solving problems situations lead to exploration of the surrounding world and influencing gradually on its changes. The child, when planning his/her actions and having in mind particular aim, may modify them freely to achieve that aim. So, it is the independent and active searching for best acting in emotional and social aspect. Such

acting at school age leads to achieving the central development change at the field of sense of competence and self-esteem by the individual (E. Erikson theory, 1997).

Starting at that time the education process is an important probation for child's independence of thinking and acting thanks to which student may learn better and in move permanent way about the world, he/she may develop his/her exploring abilities, interests and thinking. However, the key feature, which may help in achieving that are other people. So that, it is necessary to have a constant and frequent contact at the child with the teacher, who introduces the child to the world. He/she is a significant person, because he/she makes possible and easy to fulfill the child's important needs, there is an emotional relationship between them and it is also a specific pattern of behavior and it might be an authority for the child (Brzezińska, 2005, s. 35-36).

The Zone of actual and proximate development of child versus her/his independence

The change of the teacher's and student's roles in the teaching process has been clearly drawn. The change of roles and relationships between them led to the change of arrangement of power in the space of time due to child's independence. That problem should be perceived in cultural development theory context by Vygotsky (1971), which goes by two paths. On one hand the key word is Zone of actual development (ZAD), on the second Zone of proximate development (ZPD).

ZAD is, as written by E. Filipiak (2002, s. 141) the existing level of competence of a particular child. It includes actions, abilities habits already "transformed", those in which the child achieved some competence, but he/she still improves it and works on its quality. In that context we can talk about independence, self-control, self-correctness, mastery and proficiency of the child. The cognitive role of the student is to know the meaning of particular knowledge, to give it the "internal significance", and so ability of self-assessment, self-evaluation and then to include that knowledge to the data of already gained knowledge and experiences. The child at this particular stage of development begins to realize that "I know that", "I can do it myself", "I am still not so sure of that". He/she knows what competence and to what extent he/she can use it on his/her own. Establishing by the student the degree of independence in thinking and taking action is only possible in assistance of the sensitive teacher, who can observe the abilities of the child and to adapt the quality and quantity of the tasks to the actual level of competence of that particular child.

ZPD indicates how far can the student use the help while solving the tasks so that zone presents the difference “between the level of solving given tasks under the management and help of the adults and the level of solving given tasks in the independent action” (Filipiak, 2002, s. 139). The cognitive roles of the child and the teacher in the context of Zone of proximate development we can consider taking into account varied tasks given to the individual stimulating the overcoming of his/her own developmental restrictions. The teacher in the didactic process going from subjective experiences of the child, his/her knowledge, should support the child in learning process and solving problems due to his/her achievement of competence which is still developing. At that stage of development the child is an active and searching subject, who understands what the words “I can, but with your help” mean.

The above theoretical context indicates the developmental-didactic tasks which may encourage to the development of independent thinking and acting. Being realized, in the ZAD they build the consciousness of own level of knowledge and abilities. The child knows what he/she can learn and perform on his/her own without the help from the outside. He/she knows his/her own competence he/she can deal with a lot of tasks “automatically”, furthermore those tasks are being done fully consciously. The children should be provided with a variety of searching materials and tools.

The tasks covering the ZPD are more open, they respect the abilities of the child, taking into account the help from the outside. It is good, when we encourage the child to action talking, on one hand those which would match with those he/she already can do (to use in practice his/her already gained experiences) on the other hand to let them increase their cognitive abilities. The student supported by the teacher perceives the tasks as interesting challenge and acting flexibly, using different methods, tries to achieve the aim. The tasks which properly match, perceived as own, transformed and already known are moved “deeper”, the child achieved the sense of competence and the zone of actual development expands gradually. It is a developmental process which is continues, which borders can not be unambiguously indicated.

What encourages to create independent attitudes?

If talking about the conditions which encourage to being independent in the field of acting and thoughts, we should mention the dangers and potential risk in that field, existing in action of school.

Having in mind, that the teacher is the person who creates in students the ability of being independent (needed in modern economics and politics, as well as in everyday life) he/she should be the person presenting his/her own independent actions and ideas him/her self. It isn't possible to create an ability in someone, being opposite to it. Teachers who are too addicted and afraid of their supervisors (direct-headmasters, indirect-educators) paralyzed in their actions with the fear of losing job, whose didactic tasks are strictly based on coverage of a particular workbook, they could never become the first pattern of behavior leading to independence in any context to any of his/her students.

It should be considered if we want to create the individuals characterized with the drive to competence or those who perform so called "studied helplessness" (Fisher, 1999, s. 135)? Both of the styles are characterized as follows:

Drive to competence	Studied helplessness
He/she wants to deal with difficult tasks	He/she doesn't want to face a challenge
He/she perceives problems as challenge	He/she perceives problems as testing his/her abilities
He/she doesn't explain his/her failure	He/she immediately justifies failure
He/she acts flexibly	He/she stiffly follows his/her adapted way
He/she uses different methods	He/she gives up easily
He/she is motivated by the fact of learning itself	He/she demands to be awarded for learning
He/she knows well his own competence	He/she would like to perform well
His viewing the knowledge is positive	His/her self-esteem is low
	His/her viewing the knowledge is low

The differences which can be easily seen in those two styles, involve:

- reacting to difficulties which may appear (children who characterize with a sense of competence, dove to face next challenge and don't give up easily facing difficulties),
- independence children characterized with studied helplessness to a large extent expect and depend on teacher's hints, they show lower self-reliance),
- attitudes toward the teaching process (students with a drive to competence are not afraid of risky and new actions, in their free time given to them, they eagerly choose actions connected with teaching, for instance they read books).

Rutter characterizing more than ten years ago the influence of the family and school on management of cognition writes: "Distant and permanent benefits, which education gives to children, don't come from the content, but from that now (education – E.L.) influences

on student's attitude toward teaching process how it shaped the self-esteem and if it created drive to action taking (Rutter, 1985).

It should stay as open question, what can be done to increase respect of the child for him/her self during the teaching process and to create the attitude of persistence and self-reliance. However when we look up Robert Fisher's book titled "We learn how to teach" we can find there at least three ways of creating self-reliance attitude:

1. self-esteem which is an analysis of own thinking and learning; to create a chance for a student to users learning strategy and own achievements in education; to enable student to make self-correction in order to guarantee him/her greater influence on the learning process,
2. inspection of progress by taking notes, concluding and informing of progress in mastery of content and in learning process; regarding success; help to find the answer to what and in what way student should improve; considering if my students make inspection of progress, they way of working and future plans,
3. adaptable education, which helps to connect education with personal interests, thoughts or ideas of students; which helps to create the feeling of own responsibility for the learning process and feeling of self-control which enable students to understand the relation between what they learn and life in general.

Listed in here developmental-didactic tasks favorable to create independence in thinking and taking action attitude is first of all establishing targets of actions, planning of work, assigning tasks and their consciousness, self-confidence and ability to use help, correct communication and mutual flow of information as well as the big challenge, firstly for creation of independent teacher then for the teacher who guides shaping of students' independence.

After such a brief and general analysis of that problem, a lot of questions can come, questions connected with preparation in that field of to-be teachers and educators, because they are lead the child to independent discoveries.

Summary

Mostly competent people are being appreciated nowadays. Competence is a specific cocktail which is characteristic of every individual and consisting of qualifications these words in (to) strict meaning, social

attitude, ability to team work, ability of being creative and taking risk. What is needed more, is that part of “being myself”, connecting with the knowledge and ability to take action.

Furthermore, the question can be posed: when and how the individual should be shaped, the individual with those particular characteristics?

To shape an attitude towards a competence we should begin that process at the first stage of education, when the child undergoes the process of social-cultural development from the competence to sense of competence (ZPD-ZAD). That transition from the social plan “deep into” the psychological plan of the development of the individual is being made through gaining self-reliance in thinking and taking action gradually.

It is a continuous process in which the teacher should cooperate with parents and they all together should support and monitor different fields of child’s activity.

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