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Readiness for Self-study and a Temporary Perspective: Results of Cross-cultural Research of Youth in Russia and Japan

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Abstract

Continuing education is one of the dominant educational trends, and therefore, the readiness for self-study becomes a universal discipline, necessary for the successful self-realization and professional development of the individual. According to global educational trends, there is a growing demand for self-study. In this regard, the question of which factors affect the willingness of students to implement it is extremely relevant. The role of the time perspective of the individual in the preparation of readiness for self-study activities is not clear. The study was conducted using a sample of students from regional Russian and Japanese universities.

The results of the study: students from Russia and Japan demonstrate the same readiness for self-study. This fact is confirmed by the results of the comparison, using the nonparametric test, and the analysis of contingency tables. There were differences in the indicators of the time perspective of students, and the differences were specific in each sample.

The results of the study confirm the hypothesis of the connection between the time perspective and readiness for self-study and describe the problem of the relationship between the level and severity of readiness, for self-study activities within the time perspective of each individual. The results allow the authors to design psychological and pedagogical conditions, which ensure the independence and confidence of students in their futures.

The study contributes to the understanding of the factors influencing the formation of readiness for self-education. The results are discussed in the framework of the concept of self-educational activities in the global educational space.

Keywords: self-study activity; temporal perspective; youth of Russia; youth of Japan.

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Introduction

According to the world educational trends, there is a growing demand for self-educational activities, thus, the question of what factors affect the readiness of students to implement it is extremely important. However, this issue has not been studied enough. In particular, the role of the time perspective in the formation of readiness for self-study is not clear.

The state of the information environment of modern society, the availability of infrastructure, conditions of access to information determine changes in the structure of consumption of knowledge and models of research behavior of students. A number of foreign authors note some "shifts" (adjustments) in terms of students' readiness for self-educational activities and self-search of teaching materials.

Literature review

A temporal perspective, in the concept of Zimbardo & Boyd (1999), is defined as a permanent personality trait that includes perceptions of the present, past, and future, and which has situational characteristics, because it can be affected by a person's cultural, social, religious, and age characteristics, family and economic status, level of education, and other factors. In the context of globalization, the temporal perspective becomes an aspect of human existence, which, like no other, highlights social trends and changes (Zabelina, Smirnov, & Chestyunina, 2016).

The reasons for changes in information approaches may lie in the context, but may also be related to internal human processes, information habits, needs, cognitive abilities, learning outcomes and personal characteristics (Halder, Roy, & Chakraborty, 2017). The study of more than 600 students showed that, firstly, individual motivation was positively related to the level of information behavior; and secondly, in order for information to be effective, it must have some qualities such as availability, accuracy, timeliness, flexibility, impartiality, completeness, compatibility, clarity and reliability. As for the need for appropriate skills, there is a cognitive request for teaching staff to transfer the skills necessary for effective information retrieval (Amirkhanova et al., 2015).

At the same time, the skill of information literacy in General and the effectiveness of independent information retrieval are strongly associated with a higher level of academic motivation of students (Ross, Perkins, & Bodey, 2016). The authors note the fact of insufficient study of the relationship between different types of academic motivation and the effectiveness of information literacy of students. Their research shows the importance of the relationship between self-efficacy and academic motivation, especially with intrinsic motivation (the desire to know for oneself), which is a strong predictor of human achievement and functioning. At the same time, there is some uncertainty of students in the mechanisms of finding the information necessary for the educational process.

The results show that although Internet search engines are the main information resource used by students, they still doubt the validity of the information received. As a result, a certain proportion of students remain dissatisfied with their initial findings, leading to the need for more reliable information resources such as digital libraries and online databases (Liyana & Noorhidawati, 2014). However, this is only one side of the information search. Students understand that even with reliable sources, a lack of proper methodology can significantly impair the end result (Asselin, 2016).

It is believed that for the continuous learning of a person and his work efficiency these skills are among those obtained in higher education (O'Sullivan & Dallas, 2017). Here we come close to the problem of self-learning, independent cognitive activity, and motivation because a certain part of the theoretical material issued in the lectures is quite possible to fill from open sources. Subject to proper handling, skills

in filtering and analysis of information, such a replacement may show greater efficiency (Hoi, 2018). The motivation of students for the independent research activity is interpreted in the categories of the main predictors of future success in professional and personal plans. Such a scheme does not detract from the importance of the teacher but makes some adjustments to their roles and responsibilities (Han, 2014).

In the present study, the time perspective of a personality is considered as a factor that could affect self-study activity. Originally the concept of “time perspective” appeared in the works of Levin (2001) who understood it as a vision of own future or past in own present. The ideas proposed by Levin were developed by Frank (1939), Nuttin (2004) and Zimbardo & Boyd (1999) who included all temporal aspects into the motion of time perspective, namely the past, the present, and the future. From the point of view of Zimbardo & Boyd (1999), the time perspective can be interpreted as a constant personality trait with its situational characteristics, based on the fact that the cultural, social, religious and age-related characteristics of a person, his family and economic status, the level of education and much more. In Frank's study (1939), the time perspective is defined as the current influence of past experience and plans for the future both on the decision-making process and our behavior. Thus, the stability of the time perspective as characteristics of the personality determines its ability to predict human behavior, including self-educational activity.

The concept of time perspective has been widely studied in world science in recent years. Techniques for diagnostics of time perspective are being developed, adapted, and permanently improved (Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999; Sircova, 2008; Sircova et al., 2014). Moreover, cross-cultural research into time perspective has been conducted as well (Bonniwell, Osin, Linley, & Ivanchenko, 2010; Sircova et al., 2014). Considered evidence of the influence of culture on time perspective has been collected (Graham, 1981; Levine, 1997; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1997; Vale, Flynn, & Kendal, 2012). For example, the cultural and social environment in which individuals are embedded have been found to influence their (a) time perception and functionality (as a value: Levine, West, & Reis, 1980), (b) the extent to which they focus on the past, present, or future (Doob, 1971), (c) their average overall future time perspective (Milfont & Gapski, 2010) and orientation toward the future; future time orientation (Hofstede & Bond, 1988; Spector, 2001; Nevins, Bearden, & Money, 2007; Venaik, Zhu, & Brewer, 2013). Despite considered research on time perspective in various countries, there has been practically no comparative research involving Russia. This study is intended to partially fill this gap by comparing the time perspective as a factor of self-educational activity of students in Russia and Japan.

Purpose and objectives of the study

The purpose of this study is to identify how the readiness for self-educational activities, such an internal factor as the time perspective of the individual, and such an external factor as a culture. The hypothesis of the study was the assumption that students with high and low levels of readiness for self-education, both in Russia and in Japan, the time perspective has its own characteristics.

Methodology

The study was conducted on a sample of students from regional Russian and Japanese universities. The sample size was 540 people: 293 students aged 18 to 23 years from Russia, 75 male, 218 female, studying at various entities (law, economics, information technologies, management, journalism, Eastern studies) were the first group. Another group consisted of 247 students, aged 18 to 24 years, studying in Japan in the following areas: liberal arts and social study, 121 male, 126 female.

To study the features of the time perspective we used the Zimbardo's Time Perspective Inventory, adapted by Mitina & Syrtsova (2008). This technique allows estimating the following five components of the time perspective: (1) past negative. It reflects the general pessimistic, negative or with an admixture of disorder attitude towards the past. It presupposes trauma, pain, and regret. This attitude can be due to real unpleasant and traumatic events, due to the negative reconstruction of positive events, or because of both together; (2) present hedonic. It reflects hedonic, risky, "I don't care" attitude to time and life. It presupposes orientation to pleasure, excitement, agitation, enjoyment in the present and lack of concern for future consequences or sacrifice in favor of future rewards; (3) future. It reflects the general orientation to the future. It presupposes that behavior is in a greater degree determined by the pursuit of the goals and rewards of the future. It is characterized by planning and achieving the future goals; (4) past positive. It reflects the warm, sentimental attitude towards the past. This factor is characterized by a nostalgic, positive reconstruction of the past that is painted in the glowing colours; (5) present fatalistic. It reveals the fatalistic, helpless and hopeless attitude to the future and life. This factor reflects the absence of a focused time perspective. There is no focus on the goal, as future-oriented people have, no emotion on anxiety, as in the hedonists, as well as no nostalgia or bitterness like in those who have high scores on both scales of the past. It reveals the belief that their future is predetermined and cannot be influenced by individual actions; the present must be tolerant with humbleness and humility, as people are under the sway of capricious (whimsical) fate.

Readiness for self-educational activity was revealed on the basis of expert assessments of teachers on the criterion of independence as the desire to think and act independently, the ability to qualitatively perform independent tasks. A 6-point scale was used.

To reveal statistically significant differences in readiness to self-educational activity in two groups, the crosstabs, and a chi-square criterion were applied. To reveal statistically significant differences in time perspective indicators in two groups, the Mann-Whitney U test statistical criterion was used. The calculations were made using SPSS Statistics 24.0 (IBM Corporation, Armonk, NY, USA).

Results

Initially, according to the criterion of expert assessments in both groups were identified students with high and low levels of readiness for self-education. Among Russian students, the ratio of people with high and low levels of readiness for self-study was 55.97% to 44.03%, and Japanese students 61.65% to 38.35%. The analysis of contingency tables revealed no significant differences between the groups ($X^2 = 1.9$, $p=0.168$), thus, the number of students with a high level of readiness for self-study among the Japanese and Russians do not differ significantly. A little more than half of both Russian and Japanese students are characterized by a high level of readiness for self-study.

Then the comparison of indicators of the time perspective of students with high and low levels of readiness for self-study in both groups was carried out.

The results of the comparison of indicators in the group of Russian students revealed differences in three parameters out of five: hedonistic present, future and positive past (Table 1).

Table 1. Results of a comparative analysis of time perspective in the group of Russian students

Characteristics	MR			U
	Group with a high level of readiness to self-educational activity	Group with a low level of readiness to self-educational activity		
Past negative	147	132	8 652.500	142
Present hedonistic	168	104	5 250.500	000
Future	175	93	4 017.500	000
Past positive	160	114	6 475.000	000
Present fatalistic	145	135	8 978.000	325

Students with a high level of readiness for self-study are more involved at the moment; they have a stronger need to enjoy life, to enjoy every moment. At the same time, they are more than students with a low level of readiness for self-education, think about their future, and strive to plan it, expect from it some achievements, significant events. Perhaps it is this ability to balance their attention, focus on the future and the present, to make efforts to achieve success in the future and at the same time have fun in the present, allows students to form a readiness for self-education. The ability to distribute their attention and time, clearly prioritizing the present, promotes independent decision-making about what knowledge and how much you need to get, and also increases the motivation to find information and prepare for classes.

Another important feature of the time perspective of Russian students with a high level of readiness for self-study is a higher score on the positive past scale. These students generally store and value memories more, tend to remember more good events than bad ones, and look for resources (inspiration, attitude) in the past to work in the present. Perhaps the positive experience of past achievements and successes contributes to the formation of students' high level of readiness for self-education.

The results of the comparison in the group of Japanese students are slightly different (Table 2).

Table 2. Results of a comparative analysis of time perspective in the group of Japanese students

Characteristics	MR			U
	Group with a high level of readiness to self-educational activity	Group with a low level of readiness to self-educational activity		
Past negative	136	146	8 531.500	306
Present hedonistic	152	120	7 074.000	001
Future	157	112	6	

			231.000	000
Past positive	145	131	250.000 ⁸	146
Present fatalistic	130	156	482.500 ⁷	009

In the same way as the Russians, the Japanese students with a high level of readiness for self-educational activities are more focused at the same time in the future (making plans, working to future achievements) and currently (seeking to get pleasure from each moment). Probably, this ability to distribute the attention and efforts between the present and the future is the universal (independent of culture) factor promoting the formation of readiness for self-educational activity.

A specific parameter that distinguishes Japanese students with a high level of readiness for self-study is their less focus on the fatalistic present. Fatalism as an attitude to the perception of events in the world is a characteristic feature of Japanese culture. The Japanese, living in harmony with nature, largely dependent on it, have learned to perceive life changes, both positive and negative, as inevitable. Nevertheless, from the results of the comparative analysis, we see that students with a high level of readiness for self-study are less focused on the perception of events as inevitable, given from above, and Vice versa, more believe in their own strength to change the situation. Probably, this attitude that much depends on themselves (their knowledge, efforts, actions, etc.), and not on external factors (for example, the position and behavior of the teacher), allows Japanese students to form a higher level of readiness for self-education.

Discussions

The results of the study extend the notion of time perspective as a factor influencing the motivation and behavior of people (Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999). The obtained differences in the indicators of the time perspective in the Russian sample confirm the importance of a balanced time perspective for success in learning. The combination of a high level of future orientation, positive past and a hedonistic present, characteristic of students with a high level of readiness for self-education, is a sign of a balanced time perspective (Boniwell et al., 2010).

This study is also relevant because in the context of globalization in the interaction of cultures and ethnic groups, due to the sharp increase in the number and density of individual information events, the time perspective becomes the aspect of human existence, which, like no other, highlights social trends and changes (Zabelina, Smirnov, & Chestyunina, 2016). The education activities among students will make it possible to judge social tendencies, as well as to create approaches for applying these tendencies in higher education.

The results indirectly confirm the role of the time perspective as a factor influencing the success of the activity. Moreover, identification of the specifics of the temporary perspective of students with high and low levels of readiness to self-educational activity indirectly confirms the results of cross-cultural research on the temporary perspective.

Conclusion

The results of the study revealed a number of new facts. First, there were no significant differences in the degree of readiness for independent activity among students from Russia and Japan, that

is, students from these countries demonstrate the same readiness for self-education. This fact is confirmed both by the results of comparison using nonparametric criterion and by the analysis of conjugation tables.

Secondly, it was found that within the samples (Japanese and Russian) there are differences in the indicators of the time perspective of students, and the differences are specific in each sample. Thus, in the Russian sample, there were found significant differences between students with high and low readiness for self-study in the following parameters: hedonistic present, future and positive past (Table 1). Students with a high readiness for self-study in Russia have a more balanced time perspective: they are more forward-looking, they make plans, at the same time they are more likely to focus on positive memories that give them energy for new achievements, and they are more likely to have fun in the present moment.

In the Japanese sample, the result is somewhat different: differences are obtained on the scales of the future, hedonistic present, and fatalistic present. That is, Japanese students with a high level of readiness for self-study are also more inclined to focus on future plans, enjoy the current moment; at the same time they are less dependent on the behavior of external events, more convinced that they can influence the current situation.

In general, the study contributes to the understanding of the factors influencing the formation of readiness for self-education. Thus, the results of the study confirm the hypothesis of the connection between the time perspective and readiness for self-education. The results are discussed in the framework of the concept of self-educational activities in the global educational space.

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