

SPECIFICITY OF INDEPENDENT WORK AT THE HIGHER MEDICAL SCHOOL

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Abstract Independent work of students is an integral part of the overall process of training in the higher medical school due to the fact that it aims to increase the professional training of students by acquiring a system of fundamental and professional knowledge, skills and habits that they can apply independently and freely in their practical activities. The aim of the present study is to determine the importance of independent work in the process of training for the formation of lasting knowledge, skills and habits in students of the specialty of rehabilitation. The growing need for quality professional training of highly qualified future rehabilitation therapists implies the improvement of students' independent work, which in turn appears to be an integral part of the modern pedagogical process.

Keywords – Independent Work, Professional Training, Students, Skills and Habits

I. INTRODUCTION

Taking into account the specifics of the educational process in the higher medical school, it is necessary to note that the education of students from the professional field "Health care" is considered as a means of forming a number of qualities [1][2][13]. Among them are: the ability to think analytically, to interpret the received information and to work independently to improve the general cultural and professional competences of students [4]. Independent work stands out as an important means of increasing the professional and cognitive activity of future specialists. In its process, students show their creative motivation, form goal-setting skills and an individual style of study and research activity. They improve their self-control, achieve independent development of personal qualities important to them, which are necessary for the initial assimilation of practical

experience during the period of study at the higher medical school [5].

Independent work is multi-layered and multi-factorial. This is the reason why in educational theory and practice different signs are considered and applied for its classification [6]. Clear boundaries between different types of independent work do not exist because they overlap and are interconnected.

In the conditions of medical education, for example, the following types of independent work can be distinguished:

- for training purposes
- to perceive new knowledge;
- to consolidate and expand already acquired knowledge;
- for the formation of skills and habits in connection with the application of the acquired knowledge in practice.
- by number of participants

- individual
- group (subgroups)
- frontal (the whole group, course).

Independent work is carried out most often in individual and group form. Individual independent work is determined by the need to know the individual characteristics of students, which should be taken into account in the learning process, when learning the same educational content [7]. The individualization of education takes into account the presence of a huge variety of intellectual personality qualities that each student possesses [5]. The individualization and differentiation of training are mutually related and conditioned, which gives reason to define general didactic functions such as [8]:

- preventing students who have difficulties in their studies from falling behind;
- compensating or preventing the backlog;
- revealing the cognitive perspective and applying various pedagogical activities to the students, which show better results.

There is a need to comply with the organization of independent work with a number of requirements [9]:

- observing and ensuring the unconditional achievement of a certain fixed minimum of independence by each student during classroom classes, as well as to foresee more complex tasks for the better prepared students;
- carrying out regular control regarding the successful performance of independent work;
- correlation with the subject and the specific content.

The main goal of individual independent work is connected with developing the creative potential of the student's personality, according to the needs, wishes and possibilities: setting individual tasks for students' classroom and extracurricular work; inclusion of students in forms for studying freely chosen and optional subjects, in programmed training and in scientific research work; preparation of an individual training plan [10].

In the organization of independent work, it is appropriate to comply with certain requirements: ensuring the unconditional achievement of a certain fixed minimum of independence by each student during classroom classes; setting tasks of greater complexity to advanced students; to carry out regular control regarding the results of

independent work; to relate to the specific content of the study subject [11].

In the process of education in higher medical schools, independent work is conditioned by the features of the established basic organizational forms for theoretical and practical training: lectures, seminar exercises, laboratory exercises, educational - practical classes, educational practices, summer and pre-graduate internships [12].

With regard to the problem developed by us about independent work as a means of forming lasting knowledge, skills and habits in the students of the "Rehabilitator" specialty, in the present work we consider its application in the forms of practical training: Educational-practical lesson and educational practice. As the main organizational form for practical training of the students of the "Rehabilitator" specialty, the educational-practical session aims to consolidate the theoretical knowledge of the students; to form practical skills and habits and to form professional competence. It is carried out under the direct supervision of a teacher. The educational practice takes place in real conditions and has its own specific goals, tasks, organization and implementation methodology, determined by the presence of the patient in the educational process, who is his third subject [13][14][15]. The main goal of practical training is the strengthening and deepening of the skills, habits and competences formed in the conditions of the educational and practical occupation. The educational practice provides an opportunity to significantly increase the degree of independence of the students in the performance of various professional tasks and together with this reduces the leading role of the teacher [10] [16].

The summer and pre-graduate internships are held in departments or clinics, of the student's choice, ensuring conditions for the final consolidation of acquired practical skills and habits, by providing extremely high independence for professional development. The teacher has the task of implementing indirect control, through communication with a mentor or other health professional [12][17].

The purpose of the present study is to determine the importance of independent work in the learning process for the formation of lasting knowledge, skills and habits among the students of the "Rehabilitator" specialty.

II. MATERIALS AND METHOD

The object of the study are the students studying in the "Rehabilitator" specialty at the Medical College - Varna.

The subject of the study is: the importance of independent work in the learning process for the formation of lasting knowledge, skills and habits among the students of the "Rehabilitator" specialty.

A total of 93 respondents were included in the study:

- 78 students (from first, second and third year)
- 15 teachers leading the main disciplines in the "Rehabilitator" specialty

The study went through several stages:

First stage: Preparing a literary analysis.

Second stage: Orientation to empirical study of the problem. Development of a questionnaire and a plan for its implementation.

Third stage: Conducting the survey, analysis and summary of the results.

Fourth stage: Formulation of conclusions and recommendations for optimizing the training of students from the "Rehabilitator" specialty.

A proprietary toolkit was developed for conducting the research with two groups of respondents using survey cards:

Questionnaire No. 1 for studying the opinion of students about the importance of independent work in the learning process for the formation of lasting knowledge, skills and habits, which contains 20 questions, of which 15 are closed and 5 are open.

Questionnaire card No. 2 for the study of the teachers' opinion about the influence of independent work on the formation of lasting knowledge, skills and habits in the students of the Medical College - Varna from the "Rehabilitator" Department containing 14 questions, of which 11 are closed and 3 are open.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The student's independent work is a purposeful and conscious activity, as a result of which he performs a number of individual mental actions, which can be combined with practical actions, and has the expected result of reaching a higher cognitive level. It is an essential component of the educational process and occupies an important place in the formation of lasting knowledge, skills

and habits in the students of the "Rehabilitator" specialty.

In the current scientific study, the opinion of 78 students of the "Rehabilitator" specialty (71%), out of the total number of students in the specialty (110), was studied, divided into three groups: first year - 21 (58%) out of 36, second year - 25 (71%) out of 35 and third year - 35 (89%) out of 39.

The results of the study allow to establish the opinion of students regarding the importance of independent work in the learning process for the formation of lasting knowledge, skills and habits.

It was important for us to establish, to begin with, what the students' understanding of the nature of independent work was. The results of the answers show that, regardless of the course of study, more than half of the surveyed students define independent work as "the student's work without the involvement of a teacher, but under his instructions" (72%). Students clearly understand the meaning of independent work, which is extremely important, since this type of activity is a necessary condition for the formation of lasting knowledge, skills and habits.

One third of the surveyed first-year students (35%) accept that independent work is carried out under the direct supervision of a teacher, in contrast to third-year students (10%), who consider it more beneficial to solve the set individual tasks independently. The result is not surprising, because in the learning process, the student realizes the essence and specificity of independent work, as well as the role of the teacher, not only as a lecturer, but also as a consultant and organizer.

It is necessary for the teacher to create conditions for the formation of skills for independence in mastering knowledge and skills. It was important for us to find out to what extent the opinion of the teachers coincides with that of the students in terms of determining the nature of independent work. The results of the survey show that teachers to a greater extent (73%), as well as the majority of students, understand the essence of independent work as "student work without the participation of a teacher, but under his instructions"

The students from the "Rehabilitator" specialty included in the study express a positive attitude in relation to the way of conducting independent work in the various disciplines, regardless of the course of study. A positive attitude towards independent work implies awareness of its

importance for acquiring new knowledge and forming personal qualities, such as independence, responsibility, teamwork, empathy, tolerance, etc.

The data obtained from the study allow us to conclude that the ratio between the time allocated for independent classroom work and extra-auditory work should be well balanced. Taking into account the didactic potential of this type of educational activity contributes to the deepening and expansion of knowledge, the formation of interest in cognitive activity, mastering the methods of the knowledge process.

Tasks for independent work can be set for classroom and extracurricular activities, which will help to form lasting knowledge, skills and habits in students.

Regarding the tasks for classroom independent work, the respondents, depending on the course of study, express a different opinion. According to the surveyed first-year students, the most frequently set tasks are related to learning new learning material using an algorithm (65%), working with Internet sources (50%) and collecting and registering information in databases for educational practice (65%), and less often: solving tests (65%), problem-oriented tasks (75%) and 50% belong to independently developed complexes in the conditions of educational and practical work and the setting of typical and situational tasks. The data are not surprising, since they are still in the early stage of their training, which implies a basic assimilation of knowledge

Among second-year students, an opinion is reported, according to which the tasks for independent classroom work are perceived with greater frequency, such as: independent compilation of schemes and complexes (95%) and their application in the conditions of the educational-practical lesson (80%). Accordingly, a frequency of 50% is noted in relation to: solving tests and problem-oriented tasks, independent analysis, synthesis, summary and evaluation of a text. Among the studied persons from the III course, there is a tendency to increase the share of independent work in the classroom (over 50%). These results show that it is gradually becoming a leading and effective form of organizing the educational process, which increases the quality of the process of acquiring, structuring and consolidating knowledge and applying it in

practice. The results have also been established by other studies [10].

According to the teachers, the problem-oriented tasks and the independent compilation of schemes and complexes are outlined with the highest frequency (73%). As the application of the complexes in the educational - practical lesson is determined at 67% frequency, and the share of typical tasks - at 60%.

Table 2. Frequency of assignments for independent class work given to students by lecturers)

| Types of independent work, according to the tasks to be performed | Often | Rarely | Don't know |
|--|-------|--------|------------|
| Learning new material by algorithm | 33% | 53% | 13% |
| Working with internet sources | 40% | 53% | 7% |
| Solving tests | 20% | 73% | 7% |
| Solving problem-oriented problems (case studies), role-plays | 73% | 20% | 7% |
| Self-compilation of schemes and complexes | 73% | 13% | 13% |
| Independent analysis, synthesis, summary, evaluation of text | 40% | 53% | 7% |
| Collecting and registering information in the databases for study practice in the specialty profile | 20% | 67% | 13% |
| Development and presentation of behavioral models for communication with different types of patients | 53% | 33% | 13% |
| Application of self-developed complexes in the context of a teaching practice session | 67% | 13% | 20% |
| Setting typical tasks | 60% | 40% | 0 |

We asked students to determine the form of independent work that, in their opinion, has a more effective impact on the acquisition of lasting knowledge, skills and habits. As the most effective form, the students indicate - work in a small group (2, 3 or 4 people) - 80%, followed by the frontal (15%) and individual form (12%). The interviewees probably realize that as a result of the group's joint activity with regard to the set tasks for independent work, certain social and interpersonal relationships develop, which leave their mark on their development as future health professionals. Personal commitment increases, as well as responsibility towards the entire group, which leads to an increase in internal motivation under external pressure. Students' creativity and communication skills increase. Similar conclusions have been drawn by researchers who have conducted studies on the subject [18].

Extremely low results are reported regarding the individual form of independent work on the part of the students (1st year-5%; 2nd year-15% and 3rd

year-5%), which is also observed among the teachers (20%). The form of independent work must also be adapted to the personal characteristics of the student. It is possible that at the beginning of the training some of the students do not have the necessary experience to work in a group or that their skills for a similar way of working are insufficient for the new environment and need enrichment or change. For this reason, learners may need some time to practice and develop skills related to achieving goals, giving and receiving individual feedback. Numerous studies in the field reach similar conclusions and testify to similarities in results [19].

Teachers as well as students largely support working in small groups (73%). The organization of students' independent work in a small group allows the teacher to make them interdependent and to relate their successes or failures. Bonding between them contributes to increasing teamwork skills and a sense of belonging.

When the small group is heterogeneous in terms of learning and motivation, then the student with sufficient motivation and knowledge is placed in a situation where he will be interested in the success of the whole group. On the other hand, a student with low motivation and level of knowledge will be placed in conditions where he has additional motivation - not to fail the group, because a negative reaction of the other members towards him is possible. This will give him an incentive to work and a sustainable external motive.

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. A large number of students and teachers define the role of independent work as a leading and effective form of forming the professional skills and competence of future medical specialists.
2. According to students and teachers, the preferred form for organizing and conducting independent work is working in a small group in the conditions of practical training.
3. We found that at the end of their studies, students increase the time for independent work, as a result of forming professional maturity and assuming responsibility in terms of mastering their future profession.
4. The results confirm the importance of independent work and its place in the learning process for improving the professional competence

of future health professionals and show the need for more extensive research and application of opportunities for independent work.

5. Encouraging the independent work of students directly correlates with confidence in their own capabilities and the manifestation of self-initiative.

CONCLUSION

The results of the conducted survey represent a significant basis for the rational planning of students' independent work, development of special forms and methods for its implementation, corresponding to educational, methodological and technical requirements. The growing need for quality professional training of highly qualified future rehabilitators implies improvement of students' independent work, which in turn is an indispensable part of the modern pedagogical process.

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