

INDIVIDUAL LEARNING PLAN OF A SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENT: THE BASIS FOR DESIGNING PROFILED EDUCATION AND A CONSCIOUS CHOICE OF PROFESSION

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Abstract. *In the 21st century, the search for a new educational paradigm is characteristic of all countries of the European Union. The predominance of the traditional information approach, which is mainly focused on the transfer of knowledge to learners, creates a passive person (Thoresen, 2007). Profiled education represents a new model of the system of education with a student as a subject of the educational process in its center. Within this model, the educational process is organized in accordance with learner's interests, abilities, and capabilities, i.e., it has a natural character. The key quality of a student within profiled education is his/her subjectness. This quality is formed under the conditions of student's active, conscious position in the educational process (Čehlovs, 2011). An individual learning plan developed by the student together with the teacher becomes the basis for designing profiled education, which contributes to a conscious choice of profession. The subject of research is the individual learning plan of a senior secondary school student as the basis for designing the content of profiled education and for the conscious choice of profession. The aim of the study is to consider the structure of student's individual learning plan and to determine its role in the design of profiled education and in the choice of profession. The research methods include theoretical analysis, observation, and survey. As a result of the research, the structure and content of the individual learning plan of a senior secondary school student were determined, and the analysis of the role of the individual learning plan in the design of profiled education and in the conscious choice of profession was carried out.*

Keywords: *basic general education subjects, individual learning plan, profiling subjects*

Introduction

Topicality of the research problem

The history of pedagogy testifies that changes in the system of social relations actively influence education, requiring it to be mobile and able to respond adequately to the tasks of the new historical stage (Ross, 2006; Thoresen, 2017). In the 21st century, profiled education is becoming increasingly relevant.

The transition to profiled education is a requirement of the time, the current stage of the development of society. A contemporary student needs to be provided with a wide choice of educational programmes, an individual learning plan, as well as various study profiles, which contributes to the student's personal and professional self-determination. The level of students' personal development, the breadth and flexibility of their professional training, the desire for creativity, and competence in solving non-standard problems turn out to be some of the most important factors in the development of society (OECD, 2018; Alijevs, 2021). Profiled education is a progressive direction of education, enabling its renewal and improvement, thus reaching a new level in the development of education in Latvia (Aliyev, Chekhlov, Cehlova, & Kevisa, 2022). The development of student's individual learning plan is of particular importance in this process (Solberg, Phelps, Haakenson, Durham, & Timmons, 2012). The individual learning plan determines the content of profiled education and a conscious choice of profession.

The research problem is the individual learning plan of a secondary school student as the basis for designing the content of profiled education and for a conscious choice of profession.

The aim of the study is to consider the structure and content of student's individual learning plan and to determine the role of the learning plan in the design of profiled education and in the conscious choice of profession.

The research methods include theoretical analysis, observation, and survey.

Characteristics of the individual learning plan of a secondary school student

An important feature of the individual learning plan is its nature-appropriate character. The individual learning plan is developed considering the needs, inclinations, abilities, and cognitive interests of secondary school students. Thus, the individual learning plan is nature-appropriate, i.e., it corresponds to the nature of each student. This is the implementation of the humanistic concept proposed by J.A.Comenius in the real pedagogical process in accordance with universal human values (Comenius, 1907).

The individual learning plan is developed based on an individually oriented approach which embodies the ideas of a humanistically oriented educational paradigm. The essential characteristics of the individually-oriented approach include the following:

- consideration of a student as a subject of the educational process;
- the development of his/her abilities as individual potentialities;
- interaction between a teacher and students based on moral values;

- the development of educational technologies that ensure the development of student's subjective experience in accordance with socially significant experience (Čehlovs, 2011).

Within this new humanistically oriented paradigm of education, the influence of teacher's personality does not decrease in profiled education; on the contrary, it increases. The teacher as a bearer of value orientations acquires the greatest importance. The nature of teacher's interaction with students also changes. It is based on moral values (Čehlova, & Čehlovs 2010).

The transition of an educational institution to the implementation of an individual learning plan involves different forms and methods of interaction between teachers and students; promising forms of work are tutoring, consulting, and modelling.

Implementation stages of the individual learning plan

Individual learning plan → individual educational curriculum → individual educational strategy

An individual learning plan refers to a set of basic school subjects selected for studying from the curriculum of a general education institution, profiling subjects, specialized courses, research work, and various kinds of practice. Three conditions must be met for a conscious choice of profession:

- correspondence between the choice of subjects and the interests of a secondary school student;
- the knowledge of one's abilities and capabilities;
- the assessment of the correspondence between one's abilities and capabilities and the requirements of a particular profession.

Functions of the individual learning plan

The individual learning plan performs several functions (Figure 1). This plan:

- fixes the set of education subjects (basic subjects, profiling subjects, and specialized courses) selected for acquiring by students;
- defines the educational profile;
- determines a specific educational result that a student must achieve by finishing secondary school;
- allows the student to practice self-determination and choose the right profession in accordance with his/her interests and capabilities (Dautova, 2006).

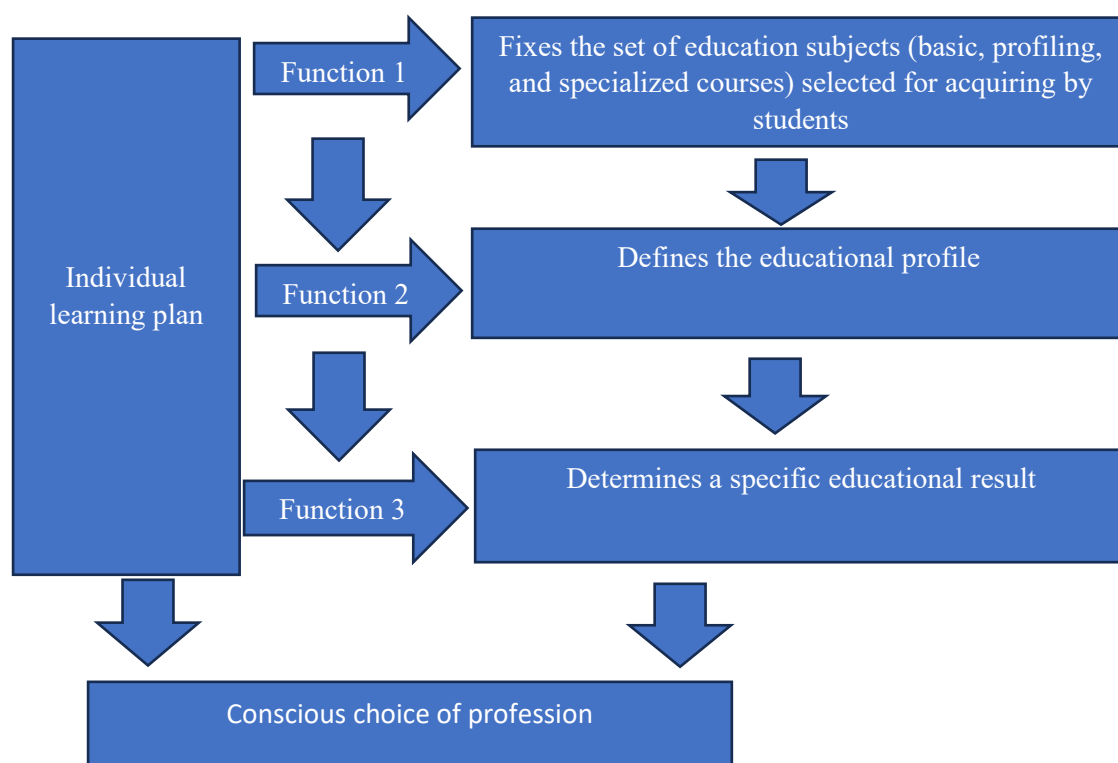


Figure 1 Functions of the individual learning plan (made by authors)

Individual learning plan as the basis for a conscious choice of profession by a senior secondary school student

Individual educational programme

The individual learning plan is the basis for the development of an individual educational programme. The individual educational programme is created based on the interaction between the student and teachers, and it involves their close collaboration. The individual educational programme performs several functions, namely, the regulatory, informational, motivational, organizational, and self-determination functions.

Implementation of the individual learning plan

The implementation of the individual learning plan and the individual educational programme is carried out in the process involving the interconnection of various types of activities in accordance with the educational needs and cognitive capabilities of a senior secondary school student, as well as the specific conditions of the process of education in an educational institution, always taking into account the requirements of contemporary society. This is an activity strategy (see Figure 2). Thus, it can be suggested that the individual learning plan performs

the function of forecasting for a senior secondary school student - “I choose the subjects to study”, whereas the individual educational programme performs the function of designing for a senior secondary school student - “I am creating a programme of educational activities”; the individual development strategy, however, constructs educational activity - “I determine in what sequence, in what time frame and by what means the educational programme will be implemented”.

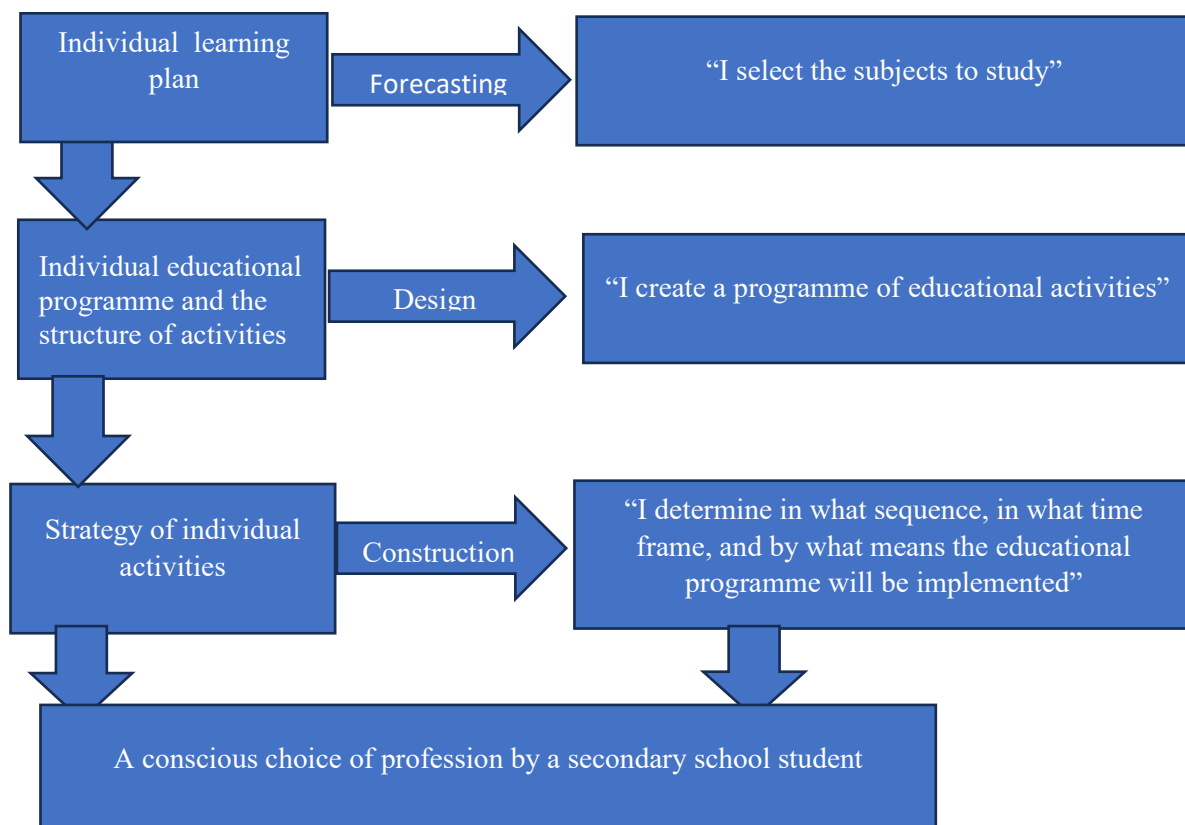


Figure 2 Individual learning plan as the basis for a conscious choice of profession by a senior secondary school student (made by authors)

Thus, the implementation of the individual learning plan is aimed at the personal and professional self-determination of senior secondary school students and at a conscious choice of profession.

The individual learning plan of a senior secondary school student

The content, structure, and specific features of the individual learning plan of secondary school students are analysed in the profiled education implemented at the Department of Psychology and Pedagogy of Pushkin Lyceum. The concept of profiled education at the Department of Psychology and Pedagogy of Pushkin Lyceum was elaborated by Zoja Chehlova, Professor of the University of Latvia.

The content of the individual learning plan includes basic school subjects chosen by lyceum students from the lyceum curriculum, profiling subjects, specialized courses, academic research, and various kinds of practice (Chehlovs, & Chehlova, 2015). The individual learning plan does not define a rigid set of subjects for each lyceum student and a rigid educational profile. Each lyceum student has the right to independently determine the educational profiles that are of interest to him/her, a set of education subjects (basic, profiling, and specialized ones) from those offered by the lyceum in accordance with the permissive student workload. This approach allows each student to formulate their own individual learning plan, their own individualized educational programme, and an individualized strategy.

The content of the individual learning plan also includes practice, which is regarded as the basis for a conscious choice of profession. The main methods of studying students' work during the practice included observation, the analysis of students' teaching activity, their relations with children, with other lyceum students, and their teacher. There was also used a questionnaire aimed to determine the motivation of senior secondary school students for the choice of a teaching profession.

At the Department of Psychology and Pedagogy of Pushkin Lyceum, the practice starts in form 10 in a children's creative studio. The studio is attended by children who are 5-6 years old. The lyceum students (ages 16-17) observed children's activities according to a definite programme, analysed the children's attitude to workshops and activities and to their teacher. The lyceum students independently developed questionnaires and tests and analyse the obtained results. They described the progress of their study in observation diaries. The students analysed the teacher's work, the children's activities and drew their conclusions, of course.

The most important point, however, is communication with children. The children's enthusiastic attitude to the lyceum students in the role of young teachers created the atmosphere of creativity. The lyceum students became different in their role of teachers – responsible, wise, trying to answer all children's questions and help them.

In the 10th form, the practice lasts for two months. At the end of the school year, there was held a seminar session "My Pedagogical Achievements". The lyceum students talked about their work in the creative studio, the changes they observed in the six-year-olds at the final stage of work, and, most importantly, about the changes that occurred in themselves. This involved the pedagogical analysis of the results of their work in the creative studio, and the most serious results they identified were related to the changes in the relations of the lyceum students with their teachers. These transformed into relationships between colleagues interested in a common cause that was significant to everyone. More restraint also appeared in students' mutual relationships: brusqueness

disappeared, and teacher intelligence appeared in students' speech. It is interesting that the lyceum students themselves noted these changes in their observation diaries.

Moreover, the pedagogical practice had a crucial role in the choice of profession. For example, three students changed their educational profile. After the practice, they moved to a group specializing in psychology. "It is difficult to communicate with children"; "the children simply annoyed me", "the role of a teacher is of little significance, and this can be observed by the attitude of parents towards school." These were their comments about the reasons for moving to another department. All in all, 70% of the lyceum students were confident in their choice of profession - becoming a teacher or an educational psychologist. On the other hand, 30% of the participants expressed a certain degree of doubt. "I'm an introvert, and I think it will be difficult for me to work as a teacher, but I'll try to improve myself. I still have time to think it over."

In the 11th form, the students (ages 17-18) had their teaching practice at the primary school of Pushkin Lyceum. Its goals and objectives were more complicated. The lyceum students studied the working methods of primary school teachers. They recorded their observations and conclusions in observation diaries. They already knew different concepts of learning: developmental, personality-oriented, problem based, and modular learning. The main objectives were to develop interest in the teaching profession, strengthen students' desire to become a teacher, and develop the correspondence between the requirements of the teaching profession and the individual characteristics of the lyceum students. It was also important that the lyceum students were engaged in research activities in primary school. Each of them worked on a problem concerning the teaching and educating of junior schoolchildren that was of interest to them, e.g. "The development of creative abilities in primary schoolchildren", "The development of communication skills", etc.

An important factor regarding the development of interest in the teaching profession was the transformation in the relationship between the lyceum students and the teachers. Changes could be observed both in the positions of the teachers and the lyceum students. These transformed into the relationships of like-minded colleagues, both having professional pedagogical knowledge. The teachers conducted the classes and then analysed these classes with the lyceum students. According to the lyceum students, the pedagogical practice contributed to their self-knowledge. In the classes of pedagogy and psychology, the students had to deal with the situations and tasks that contributed to the development of reflection and self-esteem, e.g., analysing the teacher's methods of work and their style of communication with children.

When conducting an experiment in the 12th form, the students (ages 18-19) relied on what had already been achieved: a changed attitude towards educational activity (as an educational professional one), a changed attitude to one's place in

the class (as a valuable personality), an attitude to oneself (as an individuality, a person capable of mastering the profession of a teacher-psychologist), an attitude to the teacher (as a like-minded person, a colleague in a common socially significant cause). Classes in pedagogy and psychology and the teaching practice were of great importance in the development of professional interests and students' attitude towards themselves as respected individuals.

In the 12th form, the practice lasted for a whole semester. For a month, the lyceum students observed teachers' lessons once a week, studying the characteristics of children's behaviour, getting acquainted with the teachers' working methods, and their style of communication with children. After that, the lyceum students acted as teachers for two months, each teaching their own class (forms 3-4), conducting classes in the Russian language, literature, and mathematics. It was a real pedagogical experience in the role of a teacher. They experienced both success and failure, the main achievements being the joy of communicating with children in the role of a teacher and the significance of new relationships with the teachers.

Interacting with the lyceum students on the basis of common values, the teacher treats the student as a unique and full-fledged partner in pedagogical activities. By opening up to the students and gaining access to their inner world, the teacher thereby pushes the boundaries and enriches the content of his/her own "I". This results in the formation of unity with another person, a spiritual community, which is the basis for the development of student's creative abilities, communication and collaboration skills, a truly wonderful gift of revealing their inner world and introducing them to the world of another person. The human essence only appears in communication, in the unity of a person with another person, in the unity underpinned by the reality of development between "I" and "you". At the same time, educational relationships are enriched by moral relationships. It is not so much the school marks that become valuable, but the process of cognition itself, the person himself/herself in all the richness of his/her individuality.

At the final stage of the experimental work, all the lyceum students possessed the following characteristics. Each student recognized himself/herself as being a subject of educational activity and a person worthy of respect. The students strived for the most complete self-expression and the fullest self-realization. Their activity was underpinned by various motives, and the leading ones were those of professional self-determination. The students had definite ideas concerning their future related to their vocation and purposefully prepared themselves for the profession they were interested in, organizing the conditions for developing themselves as subjects, personalities, and professionals. There could also be observed the development of reflection, self-esteem, self-realization, and educational competence. All this was pointed out by the lyceum students at the

conference “My First Teaching Experience” organized after completing their teaching practice.

At the final stage of work, we observed an enthusiastic attitude to research activities related to the issues concerning the teaching and upbringing of primary schoolchildren. Students’ research projects had scientific and practical value. The primary school teachers used the obtained results in their work with children and parents. This contributed to the development of cognitive and professional interest. The profession of a teacher-psychologist became attractive and necessary for the students. Studying at the Department of Psychology and Pedagogy” helped them to understand themselves, find their calling, and determine their future.

The analysis of the educational system implemented at Pushkin Lyceum leads to the conclusion that professional education in the humanities refers to the process of learning whose content represents a harmonious relationship between the fundamentals of the chosen professional specialization and the general cultural education, which corresponds to the main trends in the development of senior secondary school students and determines the development opportunities of profiled education. Profiled education, enriched with humanitarian foundations, is a natural leader regarding the development of new formations characteristic of this age period – readiness for personal and professional self-determination (Vygotsky, 1984). The experience of studying at the Lyceum has shown that the process of learning according to the chosen profile is effective for the choice of profession by the lyceum students.

Conclusions

The individual learning plan of a lyceum student is the basis of the content of profiled education. The content of the individual learning plan includes the basic school subjects, profiling subjects, specialized courses, practice, and academic research. A key feature of the individual learning plan is its nature-appropriate character: it corresponds to the interests, abilities, and capabilities of a particular lyceum student. The individual learning plan is based on the individualized approach to learning, which embodies the ideas of the humanitarian, humanistically oriented paradigm of education. The analysis of the main functions of the individual learning plan has been carried out. The individual learning plan serves as the basis for the development of an individual educational programme. In this way, a strategy for designing profiled education is implemented.

Practice is of particular importance in the personal and professional self-determination of a lyceum student and in the conscious choice of profession. During the practice, a lyceum student correlates his/her abilities and capabilities with the requirements of the chosen profession. A conscious understanding of the correspondence between one’s abilities and capabilities with the requirements of

the particular profession helps to convince the student of the correctness of his/her choice of profession. Thus, educational activity transforms into educational-professional activity. Practice is also related to students' research work. The students of Pushkin Lyceum presented their research projects at a conference held at the University of Latvia and won awards at an international conference.

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