

## WESTERN AND EASTERN PEDAGOGICAL SCHOLARS AND INDEPENDENT LEARNING

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There is no doubt that every change taking place in the field of education has a positive impact on the development of our society. Enhancing the intellectual potential of the nation and training competent, competitive specialists who meet the requirements of state educational standards is considered one of the most important factors. In any field, the aspiration to acquire knowledge independently is one of the most distinctive characteristics of student activity within educational institutions and forms the foundation of independent learning. In the education system, independent acquisition and self-monitoring of knowledge are regarded as key components of independent learning. First of all, it is necessary to cultivate in students the need for independent work, free and creative activity, and most importantly, independent thinking.

In the context of the globalized world, students must strengthen their knowledge, skills, and competencies not only through traditional education but also through continuous independent work and a constant desire for self-development. Therefore, independent learning has become an integral part of the modern higher education system and serves as a decisive factor in shaping, developing, and strengthening the future professional competencies of students.

Independent learning is a process of studying in accordance with one's own desires, intentions, and goals, involving careful planning of continuous learning activities, their implementation, and regular evaluation. In this process, learners act as highly active participants: they do not accept knowledge in a ready-made form but instead search for it independently, study, analyze, and most importantly, draw appropriate conclusions.

In the educational system, independent learning activity is understood as the individual and autonomous acquisition of educational materials by students for the purpose of self-spiritual and intellectual development and knowledge consolidation. In this process, students are not limited to the knowledge obtained solely from teachers and professors; rather, through their own independent research, reading, and consistent scientific and practical activities, they continuously expand their knowledge. It should also be emphasized that independent learning, alongside theoretical and practical knowledge, forms analytical thinking, problem-solving skills, free thinking abilities, and serves as a foundation for professional maturity.

The modern concept of independent education and upbringing is based on the historical development of independent learning, its emergence in different periods, and the ideas proposed by pedagogical scholars who pioneered it. In studying the ideas presented in this concept, patience, activity, reliance on experience, and ensuring personal responsibility are of great importance. All these positive actions contribute to educating an intellectually mature individual capable of independent thinking and self-management of their learning activities.

It is well known that history underlies every event and phenomenon. Without studying this history, achieving success becomes extremely difficult. Similarly, independent learning has its own historical development. A review of the history of independent education shows that in the 18th–19th centuries, education was primarily based on memorization and was teacher-centered. However, just as humanity seeks solutions to life's needs, independent learning began to be emphasized by great pedagogical scholars such as J. J. Rousseau, I. G. Pestalozzi, F. Froebel, L.



Vygotsky, and later J. Dewey [1, p. 51], who highlighted the importance of learner activity and independent knowledge acquisition in the educational process. These ideas served as a driving force for introducing independent learning into education.

The thinker who implemented independent learning in the global education system, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, emphasized that “education should correspond to the natural development of the child.” Encouraging independent inquiry and learning through the child’s own experience served as one of the first theoretical foundations of independent learning.

The theoretical educator John Dewey promoted the idea that “education should be active and interactive.” According to him, knowledge is formed through practical activity, problem-solving, and experience. This methodological foundation actively guides independent learning in practice.

Lev Vygotsky (1896–1934) grounded independent learning through the concept of the “Zone of Proximal Development.” This concept suggests that learning with the assistance of others gradually leads to the formation of independent learning abilities. Such an approach facilitates the transformation of an individual into an autonomous learner.

The prominent educator Malcolm Knowles further developed these ideas across time and context, concluding that “in adult education, individuals should manage their own learning process.” This idea introduced the concept of the “self-directed learner” and laid the psychological and methodological foundations of independent learning.

In this regard, the 20th century witnessed increased attention to active teaching methods. John Dewey’s theory that “education occurs through experience” was accepted as one of the key scientific foundations in higher and secondary education systems. Based on this approach, laboratory classes, group work, and research projects were widely introduced in schools and universities. This process emphasized learner activity, inquiry, and independent thinking. In the cognitive process, independently seeking and acquiring knowledge began to play a more important role than passive perception.

In the Republic of Uzbekistan, methods and tools supporting independent learning were also developed, particularly during the 1950s–1980s, when the concept of independent education gained further advancement. During this period, students’ opportunities for active and independent work expanded through the introduction of project-based learning, problem-based learning, differentiated instruction, and critical thinking methods.

At the international level, special attention to the organization of independent learning has increasingly become a focus of Uzbek scholars as well. This is especially evident in the development and improvement of digital technologies and online platforms.

Changes in the education system are characterized by the consistent development of modern educational processes based on innovative approaches and the principles of independent learning. In particular, Uzbekistan’s gradual adaptation to the Bologna Process and the introduction of the credit-module system have created new opportunities for students to acquire independent knowledge, develop practical skills, and strengthen research activities. This process necessitates the improvement of pedagogical methodologies and the active use of interactive approaches in education.

Online and distance learning opportunities also play an important role in the effective organization of independent learning. The development of digital technologies enables the



widespread implementation of online and distance education systems. Today, students and educators can enhance their professional and academic qualifications through international platforms such as Coursera, EdX, Udemy, and Stepik. In addition, national platforms such as Ziyonet, MOOC.uz, and other electronic libraries provide expanded access to quality distance education in the Uzbek language. These platforms offer open and convenient learning opportunities not only within universities but also for the wider public.

Projects aimed at organizing independent learning are being implemented by both public and private sectors to encourage youth engagement in self-directed education. Presidential academies, specialized training centers, and technoparks provide innovative educational opportunities for students. In particular, within the framework of projects such as IT Park and Digital Generation, online and offline courses in information technology are organized to enhance the modern professional competencies of young specialists.

Alongside effective approaches to organizing independent learning, several challenges remain. These include insufficient development of digital infrastructure, especially in remote regions where limited internet access negatively affects the effectiveness of online and distance education. Another challenge is the lack of reliable and scientific resources in foreign languages, which complicates integration into the global educational space and restricts students' and specialists' access to international scientific and informational sources. Additionally, insufficient development of independent learning skills among students leads to decreased interest and intrinsic motivation for self-directed learning.

To address these challenges effectively, it is essential to improve modern infrastructure within the education system, enhance teachers' competencies in digital technologies, and implement comprehensive measures aimed at guiding students toward independent learning. The rapid development of digital educational resources and their open accessibility serve as key factors in this process.

In this context, independent learning is becoming increasingly significant in Uzbekistan. To further enhance its effectiveness, developing online education platforms, training pedagogical staff in accordance with modern requirements, and implementing advanced methodological approaches are considered priority areas of the national education system. Today, many Uzbek pedagogical scholars are conducting extensive research on the effective organization of independent learning. A review of recent studies reveals that dozens of scientific research projects have been carried out in this field, clearly indicating that independent learning has become one of the most relevant topics in contemporary education. Uzbek pedagogical scholars, particularly in foreign language teaching methodology, have substantiated various theoretical and practical viewpoints regarding independent learning. The conclusions of selected researchers are summarized and analyzed from a scientific and practical perspective.

According to pedagogical scholar N. Hamidova, "Independent learning enhances critical thinking and problem-solving abilities."

Analysis: This emphasizes the importance of independent learning in developing critical thinking skills.

Researcher-methodologist S. Rahimova states that "Information technologies play a crucial role in independent learning. Online platforms and electronic resources should be used effectively."

Analysis: This highlights the enrichment of independent learning through the use of online platforms and electronic resources.



According to educator A. To'xtayev, "To develop independent learning, it is necessary to introduce independent tasks into curricula and improve assessment systems."

Analysis: The author emphasizes strengthening the pedagogical foundations of independent learning by incorporating independent assignments and refining evaluation mechanisms.

Methodologist N. Yo'ldosheva notes that "Innovative methods develop students' independent thinking and problem-solving abilities."

Analysis: This underscores the role of innovative teaching methods in fostering independent thinking and problem-solving skills.

Initiative-driven educator J. Karimov argues that "It is necessary to develop goal-setting and time-management skills through personal responsibility and motivation."

Analysis: This highlights the importance of increasing motivation and teaching self-organization skills during student preparation.

In conclusion, based on the analysis of perspectives from Uzbek and foreign pedagogical scholars, we propose the following definition of independent learning:

"Independent learning is a process in which an individual, guided by motivation and consciously defined goals, independently acquires knowledge, skills, competencies, and experiences shaped within a socio-cultural and educational environment and creatively applies them in practice."

Independent learning creates a foundation for integrating professional knowledge with practical skills. In modern education, independent learning plays a crucial role in ensuring that students understand their responsibilities and are prepared to solve professional problems encountered in real-life situations.

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