

Research of pedagogical conditions for the development of students' educational independence

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Suggested Citation:

Sadykhan, K., Azizkhoja, K., Gulnar, K., Nurlan, K., Askar, M. & Azimkhuzha, P. (2022). Research of pedagogical conditions for the development of students' educational independence. *Cypriot Journal of Educational Science*. 17(5), 1838-1851.
<https://doi.org/10.18844/cjes.v17i5.7348>

Received from January 15, 2022; revised from April 09, 2022; accepted from May 16, 2022.

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to seek the opinions of primary school teachers in order to investigate the pedagogical conditions for the development of educational independence of primary school students. The research was prepared in accordance with the qualitative research method. Research data were collected with a semi-structured interview form developed by the researchers. The participant group of the research consists of 80 primary school teachers working in various primary schools in Kazakhstan in the 2021–2022 academic year. As a result of the research, it was revealed that the majority of primary school teachers found students' independent learning skills partially sufficient. Primary school teachers determined the role of families in the development of students' independent learning skills as encouraging role, directing role, participation role and modelling role. Primary school teachers determined the role of teachers in the development of students' independent learning skills as the role of providing independent learning skills, the role of developing

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independent learning skills, the role of approaching the right method, the role of supporting independent learning with in-class activities and the role of implementing technology-supported activities. Primary school teachers' suggestions for the development of pedagogical conditions for students to gain independent learning skills are divided into five categories, i.e., creating a suitable school environment, creating a suitable classroom environment, teacher–parent cooperation, organising in-service trainings for teachers and organising seminars for families.

Keywords: Independent learning, pedagogical conditions, primary school students, teacher opinions;

1. Introduction

Independent work habits consist of working status, motivation, focusing on goals, self-management, time use, attitudes towards teachers, attitudes towards education in general and the level of preparation. Study habits form the basis of academic competence. High-level study habits reduce failure and enable students to take advantage of learning opportunities. In order to be effective learners, it is necessary to have very broad and regular study habits (Gettinger & Seibert, 2002).

1.1. Theoretical and conceptual framework

Knowing how to study and learn effectively in a successful school life has a very important role in student success. The study methods used by students, learning techniques, habits, desires and attitudes towards the lesson and learning have a great impact (Tus, Lubo, Rayo, & Cruz, 2020). The earlier the necessary and correct behaviours, attitudes and habits are acquired in successful study, the easier and more enjoyable the education and training process in the coming years. Because the fast learner opens wider horizons by combining the new learned with the old ones. The aforementioned mastery, behaviour, attitudes and habits, which are necessary for effective study and learning, are behaviours that can be learned by making a conscious effort (Khan, 2016).

Although classroom learning takes place with a mentor in a social setting, work is a highly personal activity. In this personal activity process, the desire to work constitutes an important dimension (Gettinger & Seibert, 2002). Interest and desire are the prerequisites for success. Nowadays, it is easier to access information. Every individual can easily access information from any library in the world, whenever he wants, by accessing the Internet on a subject he wants (Okesina, 2019). Every primary school student will now be able to benefit from the Internet in the near future. The important thing is to reach the right information and use it by interpreting it in a way that works for us. The problem is how to reach the right information in this much information and how to use it for our purposes by evaluating it correctly (Sakirudeen & Sanni, 2017).

Independent working skills can include a wide range of behaviours and attitudes such as using time, making use of online learning environments, forms of mental storage and organising information, being motivated and concentrating on the tasks undertaken. Everyone has a unique learning style. They learn better by reading visuals and listening to audios (Lucky & Saidu, 2020).

Some may prefer well-structured resources and activities, while others may prefer to work independently, exploring solving open-ended problems. The characteristics of the learning environment, such as sound, heat and light, and the preferences regarding the posture of the body also vary from person to person (Robinson et al., 2019). In the process of learning to learn, students need to know and apply appropriate study methods. In the literature, planned study, note-taking, listening, spaced repetition, reading, testing etc. are under the headings such as study habits/methods and learning strategies. There are many studies and resources that students can use while studying and have proven effects on success (Mendezabal, 2013).

1.2. Related research

When the researches in the field are examined, it is seen that there are studies on the development of students' independent study habits. It is seen that variables such as locus of control, gender and success in individual differences are examined in the studies. In these studies, the differences between the achievements of self-supervised and externally supervised students were examined. In addition, it has been revealed that female students are academically more successful than male students and have better study habits and attitudes (Grabill et al., 2005; Hong & Lee, 2000). However, there are also studies showing that students with appropriate study skills and habits also bring academic success (Lammers, Onweugbuzie, & Slate, 2001).

Fahnoe and Mishra (2013) conducted a study on sixth-grade students to investigate the effectiveness of learning environments designed by considering the innovations and competencies of the 21st century in supporting students' self-learning. As a result of the research, it has been revealed that students are more successful in their self-learning when they are offered opportunities to participate in problem-solving issues that interest them collaboratively in the design of learning environments. Birenbaum (2010) developed a measurement tool to evaluate the self-learning of primary school students. Aydede and Kesercioğlu (2009) also developed a 'self-learning skills in science and technology lesson' scale for primary school students. In their study titled 'Comparison of self-learning of primary school students studying in Hong Kong and Macau', Mok and Leung (2005), considering the gender differences of primary school students in Hong Kong and Macau, China, aimed to determine the usefulness self-learning strategies. They aimed to compare their perceptions.

Van Deur and Murray-Harvey (2005) investigated the effect of a research-based programme on primary school students becoming self-learning individuals. The research was carried out with 150 students studying in six primary schools with different characteristics in South Australia. As a result of the research, it was revealed that the self-learning levels of the students participating in the programme increased. Sellars (2006) investigated the effect of internal intelligence areas defined by Gardner on the development of self-learning skills of 8-year-old and 9-year-old children. It is aimed to enable 27 students with low success in English lessons to become aware of their own English knowledge as learners and to use this awareness in developing their self-management skills in English learning environments. As a result of the research, an increase was observed in the students' internal intelligence, which is one of the multiple intelligence areas.

1.3. Purpose of the research

The purpose of this research is to seek the opinions of primary school teachers in order to investigate the pedagogical conditions for the development of educational independence of primary school students. The sub-objectives associated with this purpose are given below.

1. How do primary school teachers evaluate students' independent learning skills?
2. How do primary school teachers evaluate the role of families in developing students' independent learning skills?
3. How do primary school teachers evaluate the role of teachers in developing students' independent learning skills?
4. What are the recommendations of primary school teachers for the development of pedagogical conditions for students to gain independent learning skills?

2. Method and materials

In this section, the method used in the research and the stages of the analysis of primary school teachers' views are given.

2.1. Research method

The research was prepared in accordance with the qualitative research method. While quantitative research is the process of transforming the data obtained from the participants with certain measurement tools into generalisable and universal information by using various statistical analyses, qualitative research deals with the details and depth of the information, rather than the generalisation or universal dimension of the information, and is the best way to express the examined phenomenon. Qualitative research, which is less concerned with objective and directly measurable behaviours and attitudes, deals with the internal (emotional) and conceptual structures behind the events and phenomena they examine (Makatouni, 2002). The opinions of primary school teachers in order to investigate the pedagogical conditions for the development of students' educational independence were carried out in accordance with the qualitative method.

2.2. Participants

The participant group of the research consists of primary school teachers working in various primary schools in Kazakhstan in the 2021–2022 academic year. The participant group of the research was formed on voluntary basis. Demographic characteristics of primary school teachers participating in the research are given in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of primary school teachers

Experience	Gender		Sum
	Female	Male	
1–5 years	2	7	9
6–10 years	9	19	28
11–15 years	17	5	22

16 years and above	7	14	21
Sum	35	45	80

In Table 1, the demographic characteristics of primary school teachers regarding gender and experience distribution are given. 9 of the primary school teachers participating in the research have 1–5 years of experience, 28 have 6–10 years of experience, 22 have 11–15 years of experience and 21 have 16 years or more of experience. 35 teachers are female and 45 are male. A total of 80 primary school teachers participated in the research.

2.3. Data collection tools

Research data were collected with a semi-structured interview form developed by the researchers. The stage of creating the form consists of examining the researches in the field, preparing the questions, getting expert opinion and pre-application. In the first stage, the researches in the field were examined and the pedagogical conditions for the development of educational independence of primary school students were investigated. In the second stage, sample questions were created for the draft form. In the third stage, some questions were revised by taking the opinions of two experts. Finally, a preliminary application was made to two primary school teachers, and it was concluded that the semi-structured interview form was ready for application. In Table 2, a semi-structured interview form prepared to collect the data of the research is given.

Table 2. Semi-structured interview form

Demographic Information				
Gender:	Female ()	Male ()		
Deneyim:	1–5 years ()	6–10 years ()	11–15 years ()	16 years and above ()
Questions on the development of students' educational independence				
1. How do you evaluate students' independent learning skills?				
2. How do you evaluate the role of families in the development of students' independent learning skills?				
3. How do you evaluate the role of teachers in developing students' independent learning skills?				
4. What are your suggestions for improving the pedagogical conditions for students to gain independent learning skills?				

In the semi-structured interview form given in Table 2, there are two questions about the demographic characteristics of primary school teachers and four questions about the development of students' educational independence.

2.4. Data collection process

During the data collection phase, face-to-face interviews were conducted with primary school teachers. During the interview, the ethical principles of the research were explained to the teachers. The teachers filled the semi-structured interview forms in 40–45 minutes. Teachers who agreed to

participate in the study were asked to fill in a semi-structured interview form. It took approximately 6 weeks to complete the interviews with all the teachers participating in the research.

2.5. Data collection analysis

The data obtained from the research were analysed by content analysis method. Since content analysis is an inductive analysis type, it focuses on the origins of the investigated phenomenon or event. Through coding, the concepts underlying the data and the relationships between these concepts are revealed. In qualitative research, the researcher is in an effort to discover the themes related to the problem based on the descriptive and detailed data he has collected, to transform the data he has obtained into meaningful and systematic structures, i.e., to form a theory based on these data or to verify a theory. In the absence of a theory that can form a basis for the event or phenomenon examined, inductive analysis, i.e., content analysis based on coding, is required (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). The answers given by the primary school teachers to the questions in the semi-structured interview form were transformed into research findings by categorising and using the coding method.

3. Results

In Table 3, the views of primary school teachers participating in the research on students' independent learning skills are evaluated.

Table 3. Primary school teachers' views on students' independent learning skills

Categories	Teacher opinions	Sum	
		F	%
Sufficient	<i>I think that students develop their individual and independent learning skills in the home environment.</i>	6	7.5
	<i>Today's primary school students are students who use the internet actively and are open to learning. They can develop their independent learning skills in this way.</i>		
	<i>I find it sufficient. Students now have the ability to meet their own learning needs at home without the need for guidance.</i>		
Partially Sufficient	<i>Students partially possess independent learning skills. But I think it needs improvement.</i>	63	78.75
	<i>I believe that students should be developed in terms of independent learning. They can achieve this to a certain extent.</i>		
	<i>The students' independent learning skills are moderate. I think an important acquisition that needs to be developed is independent learning skills.</i>		
Insufficient	<i>I think students are inadequate in this regard. Learning habits are externally controlled. Under the direction and control of the family.</i>	11	13.75
	<i>Students' self-learning habits are very poor. Internet usage rates</i>		

*are high, but they do not use the Internet for learning purposes.
I find it very weak. Generally, students are closed to learning in non-school environments.*

In Table 3, the views of primary school teachers participating in the research on students' independent learning skills were evaluated. The opinions of primary school teachers were gathered in three categories as sufficient, partially sufficient and insufficient. 7.5% of the teachers stated that students' independent learning skills were sufficient, 78.75% stated partially sufficient and 13.75% stated insufficient.

In Table 4, the views of primary school teachers participating in the research on the role of families in the development of students' independent learning skills were evaluated.

Table 4. Primary school teachers' views on the role of families in the development of students' independent learning skills

Categories	Teacher opinions	Sum	
		F	%
Promoting role	<i>Families should take a role in encouraging students to learn independently. In particular, this situation will positively affect the motivation of the students.</i>		
	<i>Families should guide students correctly, encourage them and motivate them positively.</i>	68	85
	<i>The perspective of parents is very important in independent learning. Encourage the child to learn independently</i>		
Forwarding role	<i>Parents need to guide the student correctly. They need to avoid an oppressive attitude.</i>		
	<i>In order to develop their children's independent learning skills, parents should both have knowledge about this subject and guide their children correctly.</i>	41	51.25
	<i>Families who direct their children correctly at home usually enable them to develop independent learning skills.</i>		
Participation role	<i>In my opinion, families should organise participatory activities together to provide children with independent learning skills.</i>		
	<i>The child and the family need to be able to learn together independently. The family should participate in some activities of the student.</i>	33	41.25
	<i>While children are learning independently, their families should be with them.</i>		
Modelling role	<i>Parents need to be open to independent learning and realise independent learning.</i>		
	<i>I think the effect of the parents on the child as a role model will also be effective in this regard.</i>	15	18.75
	<i>Children model their parents' behaviour at home. If families consist of individuals who are prone to independent learning and realise independent learning, the child will also adopt</i>		

this situation.

In Table 4, the views of primary school teachers participating in the research on the role of families in the development of students' independent learning skills are categorised. Teachers evaluated the role of families in four categories: encouraging role, guiding role, participation role and modelling role. 85% of the teachers participating in the research stated that families have an encouraging role in the development of students' independent learning skills. While 51.25% of the teachers stated that families have a leading role in the development of students' independent learning skills, 41.25% stated that they have a participation role. In addition, 18.25% of the teachers stated that families play a role in the development of students' independent learning skills.

In Table 5, the views of primary school teachers participating in the research on the role of students in the development of independent learning skills were evaluated.

Table 5. Views of primary school teachers on the role of students in the development of independent learning skills

Categories	Teacher opinions	Sum	
		F	%
The role of gaining independent learning skills	<i>First of all, independent learning as an outcome needs to be transformed into lifelong learning for the student.</i>	71	88.75
	<i>It is necessary to provide a long-term education in order to enable students to learn on their own and to acquire this skill.</i>		
	<i>The role of the teacher in providing students with independent learning skills and how much she undertakes this role are very important</i>		
Independent learning skill development role	<i>Teachers should develop students' independent learning skills.</i>	59	73.75
	<i>Not only is it enough to provide students with these skills, but the teacher has a great influence on their ability to develop independent learning skills.</i>		
	<i>Teachers have a role to continuously develop students' independent learning skills.</i>		
The role of approach with the right method	<i>The teacher needs to apply the right method in order to enable the student to gain independent learning skills.</i>	42	52.5
	<i>Every child and every class dynamic is different. Therefore, the method chosen by the teacher is very important.</i>		
	<i>It is necessary to inform students about independent learning methods and to enable them to implement them.</i>		
The role of supporting independent learning with classroom activities	<i>Ensuring that students learn by doing and experiencing will develop their independent learning skills in the classroom.</i>	27	33.75
	<i>It is very important to provide a suitable environment and to support independent learning with classroom activities.</i>		

	<i>Practices in the classroom should set an example for the child to develop independent learning skills at home.</i>		
	<i>Technology-supported course applications should be made so that students can develop their independent learning skills.</i>		
Technology-assisted event enforcement role	<i>It is necessary to ensure that students acquire the ability to use technology correctly.</i>	13	16.25
	<i>In my opinion, in order for students to gain independent learning skills, it is necessary to first ensure that they use technology for learning purposes.</i>		

In Table 5, the views of primary school teachers participating in the research on the role of students in the development of independent learning skills were evaluated in five categories: the role of providing independent learning skills, the role of developing independent learning skills, the role of approaching with the right method, the role of supporting independent learning with in-class activities and the role of implementing technology-supported activities. 88.75% of the primary school teachers stated that teachers have a role in gaining independent learning skills. 73.75% of the teachers stated that teachers have a role in developing independent learning skills. While 52.5% of the primary school teachers stated that teachers have the role of approaching with the right method and 33.75% of them stated that they have a role of supporting independent learning with in-class activities. In addition, 16.25% of the primary school teachers who participated in the research stated that teachers have a role in applying technology-supported activities in the development of students' independent learning skills.

In Table 6, the suggestions of the primary school teachers participating in the research for the development of pedagogical conditions for the students to gain independent learning skills are evaluated.

Table 6. Recommendations of primary school teachers for the development of pedagogical conditions for students to gain independent learning skills

Categories	Teacher opinions	Sum	
		F	%
Creating a suitable school environment	<i>First of all, it is necessary to create a school environment in order to provide students with independent learning skills.</i>		
	<i>Schools should be equipped with infrastructure to support students' self-learning.</i>	71	88.75
	<i>Laboratories should be established in schools to develop students' independent learning skills.</i>		
Creating a suitable classroom environment	<i>Activities to develop independent learning skills should be organised in classrooms.</i>		
	<i>A suitable classroom environment can be created for students. Students should be encouraged to learn on their</i>	59	73.75

	<i>own in the classroom.</i>		
	<i>In classroom practices, students should be provided to learn by doing and experiencing.</i>		
Teacher–parent cooperation	<i>Parents have a great role in the acquisition of independent learning skills. Therefore, teacher-parent cooperation should be ensured..</i>		
	<i>Teachers at school and parents at home have great responsibilities. That's why we need to act together.</i>	42	52.5
	<i>The fact that families receive teacher support in their approach to children can be effective in helping students gain independent learning skills.</i>		
Organising in-service trainings for teachers	<i>In-service training should be given on how teachers should approach students on this issue.</i>		
	<i>Teachers do not have enough experience in this regard, I think. For this, they need training.</i>	27	33.75
	<i>In-service seminars should be organised for teachers in order to improve pedagogical conditions.</i>		
Organising seminars for families	<i>Families need to be made aware. For this reason, schools should make applications for families.</i>		
	<i>Independent learning skills should be reinforced in the home environment. For this reason, I think it is very important to inform parents.</i>	13	16.25
	<i>It is the duty of schools to raise awareness of families who play an active role in children's acquisition of skills.</i>		

In Table 6, the suggestions of the primary school teachers participating in the research for the development of pedagogical conditions for the students to gain independent learning skills are evaluated in five categories: creating a suitable school environment, creating a suitable classroom environment, teacher–parent cooperation, organising in-service trainings for teachers and organising seminars for families. 88.75% of primary school teachers suggested creating a suitable school environment, 73.75% suggested creating a suitable classroom environment and 52.5% suggested teacher–parent cooperation. 33.75% of the teachers stated that in-service trainings should be organised for teachers in order to develop pedagogical conditions for students to gain independent learning skills. On the other hand, 16.25% of the primary school teachers stated that seminars for families should be organised in order to develop pedagogical conditions for students to gain independent learning skills.

4. Discussion

The findings obtained from the research reveal that the majority of primary school teachers find students' independent learning skills partially sufficient. Waeytens, Lens, and Vandenberghe (2002) stated in their study that there is no specific and clear definition of what the concept of independent learning means for most of the teachers. Primary school teachers determined the role of families in the development of students' independent learning skills as encouraging role, directing role, participation role and modelling role. Experts working in the field of independent learning also state that teachers' knowledge, attitudes, beliefs and acceptances, values, assumptions and theories about

independent learning are effective in their practices towards the development of students' skills in learning to learn and learning independently (Costa & Kallick, 2003; Ewijk & Werf, 2012).

Primary school teachers determined the role of teachers in the development of students' independent learning skills as the role of providing independent learning skills, the role of developing independent learning skills, the role of approaching the right method, the role of supporting independent learning with in-class activities and the role of implementing technology-supported activities. Yurdabakan (2011) stated in his study that lifelong learning, which is one of the purposes of realising independent learning skills, requires students to be individuals who are aware of their competencies, know what the subjects need to progress, be conscious about how to progress, question, direct and manage their own learning. Sellars (2006) also revealed in his research that it is important for primary school children to offer choices about their strengths and weaknesses in order for them to become independent learners and to realise self-learning.

Primary school teachers' suggestions for the development of pedagogical conditions for students to gain independent learning skills are divided into five categories: creating a suitable school environment, creating a suitable classroom environment, teacher–parent cooperation, organising in-service trainings for teachers and organising seminars for families. Ferreira and Simão (2012) also observed in their research that students' motivation towards self-learning increases gradually when they set goals in line with their own interests and abilities under the guidance of teachers and prepare their activities according to these goals. Leidinger and Perels (2012) also stated in their research that long-term practices are more effective in developing independent learning skills of primary school students.

5. Conclusion

In today's understanding of education, it is extremely important for students to acquire independent learning skills. The ability of learning to continue not only in the school environment but also at home depends on the independent learning skills acquired by the student. Independent learning skills that will lead the student to success are seen as an important acquisition that should be gained by teachers. Therefore, in this research, it is aimed to get the opinions of primary school teachers in order to investigate the pedagogical conditions for the development of educational independence of primary school students. As a result of the research, it was revealed that the majority of primary school teachers found students' independent learning skills partially sufficient. Primary school teachers determined the role of families in the development of students' independent learning skills as encouraging role, directing role, participation role and modelling role. Primary school teachers determined the role of teachers in the development of students' independent learning skills as the role of providing independent learning skills, the role of developing independent learning skills, the role of approaching the right method, the role of supporting independent learning with in-class activities and the role of implementing technology-supported activities. Primary school teachers' suggestions for the development of pedagogical conditions for students to gain independent learning skills are divided into five categories: creating a suitable school environment, creating a suitable classroom environment, teacher–parent cooperation, organising in-service trainings for teachers and organising seminars for families.

6. Recommendations

As a result of the findings obtained from the research, the following recommendations were developed:

1. Informative and training course contents should be added to teacher training programmes to enable students to learn independently.
2. In-service training programmes should be organised for primary school teachers, and practices that support the independent learning of students in these in-service training programmes should be shared with teachers.
3. Activities and seminars should be organised in schools in order to ensure parent–teacher cooperation for students to gain independent learning skills.
4. Schools need to organise appropriate school and classroom environments that will enable students to acquire independent learning skills.

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