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### Improve Self-learning Capacity for Learners at Higher Education Institutions

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#### Abstract

The self-learning capacity of learners is a key factor determining their professional competence when graduating and participating in the labor market. Self-learning capacity is influenced by learners themselves and external factors such as teaching quality, school, society, and family. The article has clarified the theoretical basis of self-study methods at the university level, and higher education institutions. The research overview presented in the article

has shown that research on improving learners' self-learning capacity is essential and important. The article also offers some solutions to improve the self-learning capacity of learners: Forming positive feelings of learners with the subject; Promoting learners' motivation for self-learning; Guide self-study methods for learners; and Renovate educational management activities.

**Keywords:** Self-learning, Learner, Higher Education Institutions

#### 1. Introduction

Resolution 29/TW on fundamental and comprehensive reform of education stated "Education and training development is to raise people's knowledge, train human resources and foster talents. Strongly transform the educational process from mainly equipping knowledge to comprehensively developing learners' capacity and quality. Learning goes hand in hand with practice; reasoning associated with practice; School education combined with family education and social education." [10]. The resolution also states that "Education and training development must be linked to the needs of socio-economic development and national defense; with scientific and technological progress; in accordance with the laws of objectivity. Shift education and training development from being quantitatively driven to focusing on quality and efficiency, while meeting quantitative requirements." According to the spirit and objectives of resolution 29/TW, human resources training at educational institutions, especially higher education institutions, must meet the capacity; qualitative; and have practical knowledge. To achieve this goal, educational activities need to be learner-centered and awaken the self-efficacy of each learner. Self-learning capacity is an essential skill that learners must improve when realizing this goal.

There are now many different definitions of self-education. Self-learning is the process of individual learners to achieve certain goals through self-discipline, and independence in research and learning. Self-study is important for all levels of study, especially for university students because of the characteristics of cognitive activity at a higher level. In the process of studying at university, students must be self-conscious and creative in acquiring knowledge and applying knowledge to specific situations. In the face of the challenge of the knowledge economy, self-education is more important than ever. Knowledge changes day by day, if learners still learn according to the old method "Teacher is the center" (The teacher will impart knowledge and experience to students), we will lag behind the development of world knowledge. In the current context, not only learners but also teachers must always self-study to catch up with the changes brought about by the impact of the Industrial Revolution 4.0. Because of these things, in Resolution No. 29-NQ/TW dated 4/11/2013 of the 8th Central Conference of the XI session on fundamental and comprehensive reform of education and training, it was stated that "For higher education, focusing on training high-level human resources, fostering talents, develop learners' qualities and capacity for self-study, self-enrichment, and creativity".

#### 2. Theoretical basis

##### 2.1 Self-study method at the university level

In Circular No. 10/2016/TT-BGDĐT on student work regulations for formal university training programs of the Ministry of Education and Training stipulated in Article 2: "Students specified in this regulation are those who are studying full-time

university-level training programs at higher education institutions. Students are at the center of educational and training activities in higher education institutions, guaranteed conditions for the full performance of tasks and rights in the process of learning and training at educational and training institutions" [1]. Students studying at higher education institutions whose self-study tasks are prescribed "Study and train according to educational and training programs and plans of higher education institutions; proactive, active self-study, research, creativity, and moral training, lifestyle." [1].

So, what is the method of self-study? In the study "Improving self-study capacity of Students of Foreign Trade University", author Concept (2017) gives definitions of competence, self-study, and self-study capacity. Specifically, according to the author, "Competence is understood as the ability to use knowledge, apply skills with necessary qualities to effectively solve problems in ever-changing practice, in accordance with the requirements of a certain activity. Make sure that activity gets results quickly." [2]. Self-study and self-learning capacity are stated by the author "Self-study is an independent, self-disciplined, active and creative activity in self-thinking, discovering and researching in order to capture, cultivate and improve knowledge and skills from many different sources, turning it into the property of learners themselves. Self-learning capacity is the ability to think, use knowledge, apply skills and necessary qualities in the process of independence, initiative, self-discipline, creativity in learning and discovery and research in order to grasp and improve knowledge and skills" [2]. The authors Trinh & Rijlaarsdam (2003) said, "The ability to self-study is shown by the fact that the subject correctly determines his motivation for learning, has the ability to manage his own learning, has a positive attitude in activities to be able to work on himself, adapt their own learning and assessment of their own learning performance so that they can independently work and work collaboratively with others" [3]. Concept (2017) stated, "Improving students' self-study capacity is improving the contents of self-study capacity as well as the quality of factors affecting self-learning capacity. At the same time, know how to exploit and promote their positive impact on students' self-learning capacity" [2].

## 2.2 Higher education institutions

According to the Law on Higher Education amended and supplemented in 2018, Law No. 34/2018/QH14 amending and supplementing a number of articles of the Law on Higher Education stipulates in Article 2 "Higher education institution means an educational institution under the national education system, performing the function of training higher education levels, science and technology activities, community service; Universities and institutes (hereinafter collectively referred to as universities) are institutions of higher education that provide training and research in many disciplines and are organized according to the provisions of this Law. University means a higher education institution that trains and researches in many fields, is organized according to the provisions of this Law; the constituent units of the university are united in the implementation of common goals, missions, and tasks." [4]. Also in this law, Article 7. Higher education institutions stipulate "1. Higher education institutions with legal status, including universities, universities, and higher education

institutions with other names in accordance with the provisions of law. National and regional universities are universities that carry out national strategic tasks and regional development tasks of the country." [4]. Types of higher education institutions include "Public higher education institutions invested by the State, ensuring operation conditions and acting as the owner's representative; Private higher education institutions invested by domestic or foreign investors, ensuring operation conditions. Private not-for-profit higher education institution means a higher education institution that the investor commits to operating not-for-profit, recognized in the decision allowing the establishment or the decision to change the type of higher education institution; operating not for profit, without withdrawing capital, without receiving income; distribution of accumulated annual profits under undivided consolidated common ownership to continue investing in the development of higher education institutions." [4]. Based on socio-economic development capacity and requirements, higher education institutions determine development objectives and operational orientations as follows: "Research-oriented higher education institutions; Application-oriented higher education institutions."

## 2.3 Overview

Research by authors Pham & Dinh (2022) on the content "Current situation and measures to develop self-study skills for first-year students of the Faculty of Foreign Languages, Hung Vuong University". The authors said that "in the era of rapid technological advancement and information explosion, self-learning plays a very important role. Self-learning has been identified as one of the key factors for academic success, as well as the basis for lifelong learning and building a learning society" [5]. In this study, the authors presented the concept of self-study, and the role of self-study skills in students' learning activities and surveyed the current situation of using self-study skills of first-year students of the Faculty of Foreign Languages of Hung Vuong University. "The survey results show that students have a basic awareness of the role of self-study but still face many difficulties and confusion in self-study activities; Most of them do not know how to plan self-study as well as implement this activity effectively" [5].

Author Phan (2009) research "Good organization of self-study for students to improve the training quality of universities in the form of credits today". The author said: "Self-study plays a very important role in the university learning process of students. Self-study aims to promote positive self-discipline, reading, and research capacity of students to fulfill the educational mission in colleges - universities are to "turn the training process into the process of self-training of students". Therefore, organizing self-study for students in order to improve the training quality of universities in the form of credits is now an urgent job" [6].

The author's research (2017) on "Improving the self-study capacity of students of Foreign Trade University" explained the concepts of "self-study capacity", "improving students' self-study capacity", "factors affecting students' self-study capacity, and the current status of self-study capacity of university students, thereby stating and analyzing a number of solutions that contribute to improving their self-study capacity in credit-based training conditions" [2]. In this study, the author also said: "Self-study activities of students are an

essential requirement, which plays a particularly important role in the credit-based training method. The results and effectiveness of self-study activities depend mainly on the learner's self-learning capacity" [2]. However, the author also said that "The ability to self-study is influenced by internal factors belonging to the learner himself as well as external factors such as the teaching of lecturers, the school, family, society, and the surrounding environment." Therefore, when proposing the solution, the author based on the elements of the "conceptual content of self-learning capacity" and "improving the positivity of factors affecting students' self-learning capacity". The results of the study have shown that "Improving students' self-study capacity requires synchronous implementation of a series of solutions from students, lecturers, schools, Youth Unions, Student Unions, families, and society. In it, the students themselves play a decisive role." [2].

Lap's (2008) study on "Developing self-learning capacity in the Vietnamese context" published in the journal "Developing Self-learning Capacity in the Vietnamese Context" said that "self-learning capacity is not only a quality for learners in the Western world, and in essence, non-sectarian Asian students are incapable of self-study; Education systems in Asian countries have not created enough conditions for students to develop their capacity to self-study." The author's research results demonstrate that "in the Vietnamese context, self-learning capacity can be developed through the application of self-regulatory learning" [7].

Authors Khuong & Duong (2020) with the study "Improving management methods of self-study activities of students of Thai Nguyen University of Sciences-University". In this study, the team identified "the current status of students' self-study activities in terms of awareness, skills, conditions for self-learning, teaching methods, and management. Identify factors that influence self-learning including both objective and subjective factors." The authors also "Find out the relationship between self-learning activities and factors affecting self-learning activities, propose measures to manage self-learning activities". The authors' study used descriptive and analytical methods to find "cognitive relevance among target groups, and to find factors that influence students' self-learning activities" [8].

Research by My *et al.* (2024) stated that "Self-study activities are considered a key activity of students, directly affecting the academic performance of students at universities". The authors identified "the theoretical basis, surveyed the current situation of students' perceptions, attitudes and self-study methods, and finally offered solutions to improve students' attitudes and self-study methods". The study sample was collected from 53 faculty members and 453 students at 10 academic units of the study area. "The questionnaire consisted of quantitative questions combined with interviews about the importance and attitude of self-study, as well as the level of interest and implementation of self-study methods of Can Tho University students." The results analyzed by SPSS 20 software showed that "more than 10% of students rated the influence of attitude on self-study activities as having little impact on average. Students often implement the self-study method through group discussions and exploring information online, but the self-study method using mind maps has not been applied much." The authors' paper also proposes measures to help students improve their attitudes

and methods of self-study [9].

Through the research review we can see three problems as follows:

**Problem One:** The authors all believe that students' self-study at the university level plays a very important role. It determines the results and ability of students to acquire knowledge.

**The second problem is:** Self-learning capacity is influenced by many factors besides the learner himself. Those factors were identified by some authors as teaching activities; school; family; society and surroundings. Therefore, when offering solutions to improve self-study capacity for students at higher education institutions, we need to consider the aforementioned relationships with learners.

**Third issue:** Studying students' self-learning capacity is of great interest to researchers. Especially those studies that focus on evaluating the relationship between self-learning capacity and impact factors. Therefore, the implementation of a general study on improving the quality of self-study for students and considering solutions is essential in the period when Vietnam is implementing Resolution 29/TW on fundamental and comprehensive reform of education and training, meeting the requirements of industrialization, and modernization.

### 3. Some methods of self-learning motor enhancement

#### 3.1 Promote learners' motivation for self-study

**First,** to clarify this content, let's learn about Maslow's hierarchy of needs. He said that people always have low to high needs such as: Basic needs; the need for safety; the need for recognition, and endearment; the need to be respected, and the need for self-expression. The motivation we are talking about here is closely related to needs. To achieve needs, people will have specific motivations and actions. In the process of developing the theory of learner motivation, Klausmeier argued that some learners are divided into two groups. The first group is learners who wish to acquire knowledge from the school and teachers. He said that for this group, the motivation for learning is appropriate learning activities that satisfy them. The second group is the group that does not want to learn the knowledge that the school and the teacher impart. In other words, this group does not want to learn according to the requirements and tasks that the teacher sets. For this target group, Klausmeier said that applying principles helps bring positive motivation to learners such as: Directing learners' attention to desirable learning outcomes; Taking advantage of curiosity and curiosity and encouraging them to grow; Taking advantage of existing interests, and developing other interests; Have an appropriate form of reward; Formulate learning tasks appropriate to learners' abilities; Help learners set realistic goals.

The motivation for learning depends on conditions such as: Sense of near purpose and ultimate purpose of learning activity.

A clear understanding of the theoretical and practical implications of acquired knowledge.

The emotional form of the scientific information presented.

The expansion of the content and the newness of the document.

Career trends of learning activity.

Understanding the learner's motivation for learning, we will see that many factors influence the learner's motivation to learn. For example, lesson content, teaching methods,

personality of the teacher, relationships in the team, in the group of learners, the results achieved, the atmosphere of competition in the class... From analyzing the content of Learners' motivation for learning, the author finds the above content most interesting because when we understand the principles or factors affecting the learner's motivation to learn, we will have measures to positively impact it.

### **3.2 Form positive feelings of learners with the subject**

The cognitive positivity of learners manifests itself in the concentration of attention, active exploration, and brainstorming with high self-awareness and interest... This is a psychological condition that plays an important role in teaching. As for the teaching activity of teachers, it is the basis for developing active teaching methods. For learners' learning activities, it has a decisive influence on the outcome of knowledge acquisition. Therefore, forming cognitive positivity in learners is important in improving the quality of the teaching process. Based on the author's experience and the knowledge gained from the topic of General Psychology, the positive sentiment of learners with the subject depends correspondingly on cognitive motivation. Therefore, in teaching, in order to form cognitively positive emotions in learners, it must mainly come from the formation of cognitive motives. Cognitive motives are understood as factors that promote cognitive functioning. There are two types of cognitive motivations:

First, the motivation for knowledge improvement: In learning, what motivates students to actively learn is in knowledge itself, in the need to perfect knowledge. Learning driven by this motivation is pedagogically ideal, where learning is not hindered by internal contradictions within the learner himself.

Second, social motivation: What motivates students to actively learn outside knowledge, but to achieve it must be through knowledge. For example, liking good grades, expecting the future, because of loving parents, because of appearance, because of competition... The hierarchy of the above two types of engines is interchangeable depending on each specific case. However, pedagogically, the motivation for perfecting knowledge remains above all levels.

### **3.3 Renovation of university teaching**

Renovate learner-centered teaching and teachers have the role of organizing, testing and supporting students' learning activities in a reasonable way so that students autonomously occupy knowledge. The reason for the need to innovate university teaching is to increase the use of active teaching and learning skills. Create interaction between faculty and students both inside and outside the classroom.

Innovation in higher education requires the following conditions:

Positive teaching changes

Renovate and strengthen facilities

Modernize curricula, curricula as well as training facilities

Among the above conditions, the most important condition is to change the active teaching method. When changing positive teaching methods, will help students be excited, active, and creative in learning.

## **4. Solutions to improve learners' self-learning capacity**

### **4.1 Form positive feelings of learners with the subject**

Teachers themselves need to be aware of the importance of self-study for their students. Only when we realize its

importance can we find ways to support students to self-study. Increase the use of active teaching methods. When we use active teaching methods, it will help learners be interested and stimulate creativity in learning. Teachers need to promote this motivation in ways that show learners the need for upcoming subject knowledge and guide learners to understand the benefits and objectives of the subject. When learners are self-aware of these things, they will focus on learning and achieve the goal that the learner himself has set under the guidance of the teacher. In addition, teachers need to often motivate learners with reward mechanisms through grades.

### **4.2 Promote learners' motivation for self-study**

In teaching, teachers must always find out the motivations of learners or in other words, understand the needs of learners. When teachers identify the needs of groups of learners, they will use factors such as lesson content or teaching methods... different for different groups of learners. Build the right motivation for students. In addition to equipping learners with knowledge and skills of the subject, it is necessary to create motivation and goals for learners in each subject. For example, for a group that does not want to learn the knowledge that the school and the teacher impart, the teacher will apply principles such as: Formulating learning tasks appropriate to the ability of this group; Stimulating curiosity, and encouraging them to grow or teacher needs to have an appropriate form of reward... The results of applying the content of the learner's motivation for learning show that the learning results of learners have made uniform and noticeable progress.

### **4.3 Guide self-study methods for learners**

Teachers should guide learners to have self-study methods and effective ways to conduct self-study such as the self-development of appropriate self-study plans and schedules; In addition to teamwork, it is possible to work independently; it is possible to self-test and assess the level of the learner himself.

### **4.4 Renovation of educational management activities**

Higher education institutions need to constantly innovate educational management, ensure sufficient facilities for teaching, and create a favorable educational environment. For example, if we want students to self-study, we need to create a self-study environment such as a space for students to self-study or provide enough new materials for learners to access as soon as possible.

All the solutions that the author has proposed are important, but the solution that the author thinks is the most effective is the first. Teachers themselves need to be aware of the importance of self-study for their students. Only when we realize its importance can we find ways to support students to self-study. The reason the author thinks this is the most important solution is because:

Firstly, the teacher is always the one who plays a guiding and leading role in the early days of learners approaching the subject. If we are followers of the traditional teaching style, i.e. teachers impart knowledge and learners take notes and memorize, learners only use that provided knowledge to apply in work. At this point, we will have no new creativity, no breakthrough thinking.

Second, as stated above, self-study is essential for university education. So, if students are not guided by teachers and



guided by self-study methods, learners cannot absorb a large amount of knowledge by themselves and will not have the habit of learning about changes and catching up with world development trends. Therefore, only when the teacher has the right awareness of self-learning and the teacher himself is a person with self-learning methods, their students also oriented and form the ability to self-study.

In practice, a teacher who takes an active approach must always be conscious of improving his self-learning ability. When starting to teach learners, they should always determine what goals and learning methods are appropriate for the subject. For example, principles will be heavy on theory and knowledge, so guiding students to read the material by themselves and summarize knowledge is an important thing. Teachers must always learn new ways of communicating and exciting learners through learning aids such as Quizizz or Padlet. For practical-oriented subjects, teachers should let students do their own research and come up with ideas to present. This creates breakthrough thinking and creative thinking for students.

## 5. Conclusions

The orientation of fundamental and comprehensive reform of education and training in the spirit of Resolution 29/TW clearly stated that "Education and training is the top national policy, the cause of the Party, the State, and the whole people. Investment in education is a development investment that is prioritized in socio-economic development programs and plans. Fundamental and comprehensive reform of education and training means the renewal of major, core, and urgent issues, from viewpoints and guiding ideas to objectives, contents, methods, mechanisms, policies, and conditions to ensure implementation; innovation from the leadership of the Party, the management of the State to the governance of education-training institutions and the participation of families, communities, society, and learners themselves; innovation at all levels and disciplines" <sup>[10]</sup>. The article has clarified the theoretical basis of self-learning activities and learners' self-learning capacity. The research overview of the article has shown us that self-study is an important factor, in determining the quality of training and the quality of human resources. Improving self-learning capacity helps learners be interested and active in the training process. The article also presented a number of solutions to improve self-study capacity for learners at higher education institutions.

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