

# Personal Meanings of Learning in the Process of Formation of Students' Subjectivity

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•Received 28 August 2015 •Revised 17 December 2015 •Accepted 11 March 2016

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The urgency of the presented study is stipulated by the current situation in the education system: learning has lost its meaning for a significant number of students; knowledge is external in relation to their real life. However, a lot of specialists view education as a source of personal development of a student, finding for himself, disclosure of his subjectivity. The process of development of schoolchildren's subjectivity is considered as the awareness of their needs for knowledge and transformation of themselves and the surrounding world, as well as the achievement of personal, learning and social goals. One of the objectives of the study is the identification and testing of pedagogical tools to facilitate the process of student acquisition of personal meanings of learning in the process of formation of his/her subjectivity. The leading research method is the experiment, which involves the innovative teaching of learning technologies to students of different ages. The main results of the study are the clarification of the concept of "personal meaning of learning", the identification of personal meanings of learning before and after an innovative teaching, the evidence of influence of the personal meaning of learning on the increased level of schoolchildren's subjectivity. The article will be useful for scientists researching problems of modern education, as well as practitioners seeking to improve the effectiveness of the educational process.

*Keywords:* personal meanings of learning, development of a student's subjectivity, levels of subjectivity, innovative training, educational technologies.

## INTRODUCTION

### The relevance of the study

The relevance of study is determined by the transition of educational institutions in Russia to the standards of new generation. The objective for students to master the Federal State Educational Standards of the second generation is not only subject, but also personal result of education, namely the readiness to self-development, the

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doi: 10.12973/ijese.2016.341a

formation of motivation to learning and cognition, and value-semantic settings. Personal results are based on the system of axiological attitudes of students to themselves, other participants of the educational process, and to the world. Thus, the Concept of the FSES updates semantic aspects in defining the aims of education, its content and methods of training and education. The analysis of philosophical and psychological-pedagogical research into the problem of meaning allows us to say that the phenomenon of personal meaning, its structure and mechanisms of generation in the human consciousness are sufficiently studied by scientists-psychologists (Adler, 1973; Bakhtin, 1979; Weber, 1990; Husserl, 1991; Leont'ev, 2003; Slobodchikov, 2000; Frankl, 1990; Heidegger, 1997; Jung, 1993). The need for personally important content of education, development of learning motives and values is indicated in the works of scientists engaged in the development of individual and personal approach to education (Bondarevskaya, 2000; Shiyanov & Kotova, 1999; Sibgatova et al., 2015; Sibgatova et al., 2016; Zaitseva, 2013); personal-humane approach in education (Amonashvili, 1996); the concept of self-development and pedagogical support (Gazman, 1996; Shchurkova, 2002), as well as in the works devoted to pedagogical axiology (Bim-Bad, 1994).

### **Essence of the concept of “personal meaning of learning”**

A famous Russian scientist A. K. Markova (Markova, 1990) defines the meaning of learning as the subjective attitude of the pupil to the educational process, “adoption”, so to speak, by the student of the learning process to himself, his experience and his life. Understanding of learning and awareness of the student’s personal importance do not occur automatically in the educational process. During training it is necessary to form students’ internal desire to obtain knowledge, and methods of its acquisition. Personal meaning of learning at different school ages is different. Accordingly, the content and methods of education must be analyzed by a teacher from the point of view of their correspondence to students’ personal meanings of learning at a certain age. The meaning of learning for each student is determined by the system of his ideals, values, which he adopts from his environment (family, friends, and classmates). Due to this, before the training begins, a child develops a certain concept of learning activities. However, at high school, the meaning of learning can be changed considerably. Psychological studies show that while realizing the meaning of learning, students are more successful in academic activities (the stock and quality of knowledge are increased, the ways and methods of acquiring knowledge are improved), it is easier for them to perceive and understand the educational material, learn it more effectively, concentrate their attention, increase their performance.

Assessing the state of modern education, E. Bondarevskaya (2000) in her works also emphasizes the loss of its meaning for man. While developing the principle of individual-personal approach, the scientist determines the position of a child in the educational process as follows: each person has his own life path, his own individual story. It is possible to understand a child through understanding his life story. A person will be able to find himself, gain his spiritual stability and integrity, independence and freedom, if in this search the teacher will be able to introduce the values that will be personal meanings of his life. The changing values always lead to a rethinking of basic educational processes that ensure the implementation of these values. The following processes are supposed to be educational in the personality-oriented paradigm: personal development training, the “domestication” of the student’s subjective experience, moral education, the development of moral abilities of a person, pedagogical support of subjectivity. Thus, the researcher sees the task of the school in transfer of the content from the level of meanings to the level of

personal meanings so that the students could perceive it as a social, moral or any other value.

The essence of the personality-humane approach is disclosed in the works of Sh. Amonashvili (1996) and his associates. This approach means that each child has his own personal as well as meaning, personal significance of learning which he/she must rely on in the pedagogical process. The scientist states that applying learning as a freely elected activity by the student implies creating the best conditions for targeted, social and educationally meaningful development, education, enrichment of knowledge and experience; managing this process in accordance with the growing needs of its internal forces, that is, from the point of view of the child, his interests.

I. Abakumova (1989) in her dissertation points out that the main goal of the modern educational process is the development of a semantic sphere of students or meaning making. When students deduce meanings, they find themselves, in the language of psychology, beyond the self, these meanings enrich the structure of consciousness and self-awareness, transfer them to a new level. In this case, the educational process must be understood not in what is subject to assimilation, but what "nourishes" the personal development of students. It is easy to see that the content "feeding" the development is culture as a locus of meanings of human existence.

Our analysis of the pedagogical literature on the problem of the meaning of learning allows us to conclude that today there is a pedagogical problem recognized which is associated with the issues of finding personal meaning of learning in meanings (content of education), learning motives and values.

We understand "personal meaning of learning" as perceived by the student as a subject of learning importance of the specific learning situation in particular or activity in general is connected with assimilation of knowledge and acquisition of skills in the process of training and education.

### **Dynamics of the student's personal meaning of learning in the process of formation of his subjectivity**

In the course of the study it was found that the formation of the student's subjectivity is carried out successively in the process of transition of subjectivity from one level to the other, the personal meanings of learning being changed as well:

- The level of potential subjectivity is characterized by a negative, passive or neutral attitude of the student. The student is rarely active in learning due to external coercion or incentive. The direction is inter-situational, i.e. it has no connection with learning. The student works only under the supervision of the teacher. When any difficulties arise, he does nothing. There is a lack of personal important goals when performing training activities- failure to cooperate with other students and get the help of the teacher, dissatisfaction with himself, school, and teachers.

- The level of the modus existence of subjectivity involves a positive, conscious, but situationally manifested attitude of a growing person. The student strives for positive marks, is active in the perception of new knowledge and shows cognitive interest, consciously accepts the goals of the teacher, independently seeks solutions to academic tasks, gets positive emotions from particular success. This level is characterized by unstable positive attitude to learning, intention to receive positive marks.

- The level of attributive existence of subjectivity means sustainable responsible attitude to work. In this case, the student shows intellectual initiative and non-situation activity, shows pride and dignity, confidence in his capabilities. The

student sets personally significant goals in learning which go beyond the regulatory-specified activities, shows persistence and perseverance in achieving them. Learning is perceived as a personally-significant value. Life plans are connected with further education. We believe that uncovering meanings of learning in the educational process can be achieved through awareness, reflection and development of learning activities. Pedagogical practice is in search of innovative approaches to the selection of educational content, effective pedagogical technologies, contributing to the development of the meaning of learning as well as ways and techniques of free subject-subject interaction.

Characteristics of innovative learning are focused on uncovering personal meanings of learning by the student in the process of subjectivity formation. Innovative training in the report to the club of Rome in 1978 was seen as education focused on the readiness of an individual to adapt to forthcoming changes in the society, to an uncertain future. "The transition from the educational paradigm of the industrial society to the educational paradigm of the post-industrial society means, first of all, the rejection of the understanding of education as getting knowledge and understanding of the teacher as its medium" (Novikov, 2010). New paradigm of education considers the student as the central figure of the educational process. The person becomes the subject of activity, resolving the contradiction between personal meanings and values, on the one hand, and external requirements, on the other hand. However, the resolution of this contradiction in educational practice can be done through applying educational technology as a system of the student's actions to achieve personal and socially significant goals in learning. The author's opinion is that the use of educational technology is determined by the desire of the student and reflects the level of formation of his subjectivity. The article provides the description of such educational technologies as "I want to learn", "I am able to learn", "I can learn", states the purpose, content, procedure of interaction between the teacher and the student, as well as the expected result.

The education technology "I want to learn" is designed for students with a potential level of subjectivity, low degree of learning motivation, for those who are frustrated by school. It involves a student in the system of individual tasks focused on the development of intellectual abilities. The technology "I am able to learn" is for students with a situational manifestation of positive attitude to learning and implies the teacher's support of the student's activities at all stages: goals setting, learning, selection of methods and reflection. The technology "I can learn" involves children with intended educational needs and formed learning skills. The role of the teacher is to guide the student in achieving learning goals. These technologies are described in detail in our article (Selivanova, 2015).

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

### **Methods of study**

In the research process we used a range of complementary scientific methods:

- theoretical methods: analysis of philosophical, psychological and educational literature, legislative, regulatory and methodical documents on the issue; study and synthesis of innovative pedagogical experience;
- experiential methods: experiment.

Value orientations of the person (Rakic, 1973) are divided into two groups on the basis of what goals and objectives this or that value is associated with. The first group consists of values-goals (terminal values), the second group contains values-means (instrumental values). Terminal values (T-values) are the main goals of a person, they reflect a long-term life prospect, what he seeks now and in the future. Instrumental values (I-values) refer to the means chosen to achieve the goals of life.

The study of these two groups of values, in the students' language, can detect the relationship of the orientation to education with the need in self-determination: whether it is important for the student as the leading purpose in life or as a means, a way of achieving goals. These are fundamentally different personal meanings. The study of the second component, cognitive in its nature, reveals the criteria which make education important for the student, describe the individual assessment scale and its content. The subject of analysis is the dynamics of personal meaning of the concept "education" in students' minds.

### The experimental base of the study

The study of 2014-2015 involved 243 students of 5-9 forms of MKOU SOSH of Nizhnevskino village located in Kumensky district of the Kirov region of the Russian Federation. The control group consisted of 122 students under the letter "A" and the experimental group was formed by 123 students under the letter "B".

### RESULTS

Let us compare age dynamics of the objectives reflecting the different time perspective in the system of T-values and I-values (Figures 1-4) without taking into account the indicator "education as a quality of a person".

Figure 1 shows that the significance of learning as a terminal value for students of the control group from 5th form to 9th form is gradually becoming lower, its significance as a value-means is quite considerable and remains relatively stable. In the experimental group of the adolescents of 7th form the terminal values of education are increasing, reach their peak and becoming lower. Values-means in the experimental group are also increasing.

Figure 2 shows that school graduation is a terminal value, primarily for pupils of 5th form, for them it is the ultimate goal associated with the future. On the contrary, for pupils of 9th forms, graduation is a real forthcoming event, and this value is gradually losing its importance. School graduation is considered a means of achieving goals by about a quarter of adolescents of 5th form of the experimental group, this value as a means is steadily reducing to 9th form.

The purpose associated with entering a university for 10-15% of the experimental group pupils of 5th-6th forms is basically terminal as it is long-term and it is reduced to 9th form. Interestingly enough, a fairly large number of teenagers of all age groups view entering a university or vocational school as a goal-means. The students in the control group determine it as a terminal value, and as for the value-means of students of 5th-6th forms, it almost loses its importance to 9th form (Figure 3)

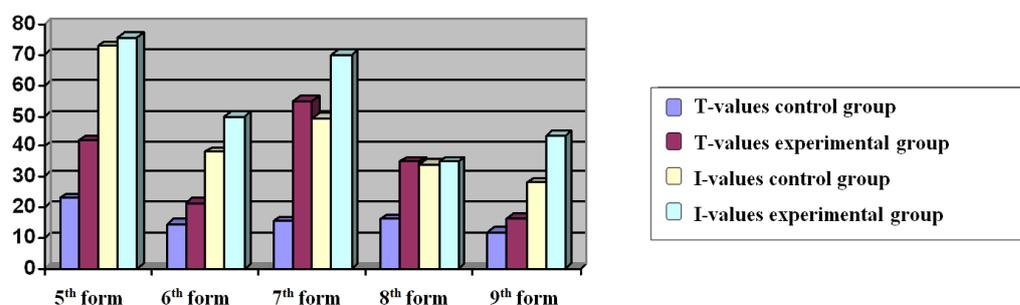


Figure1. Schooling as current activity

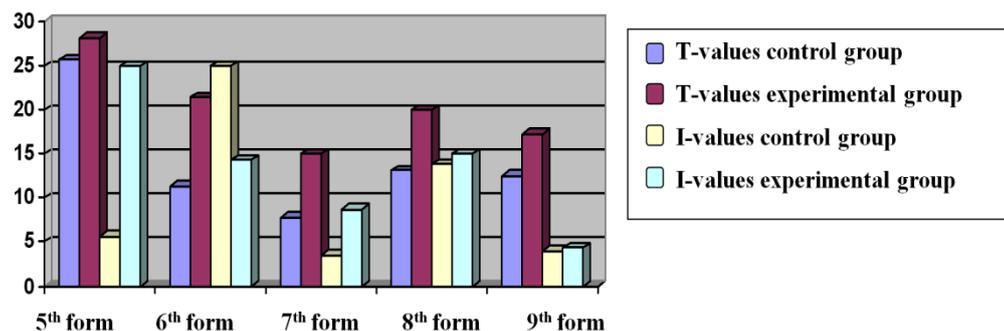


Figure 2. High school graduation

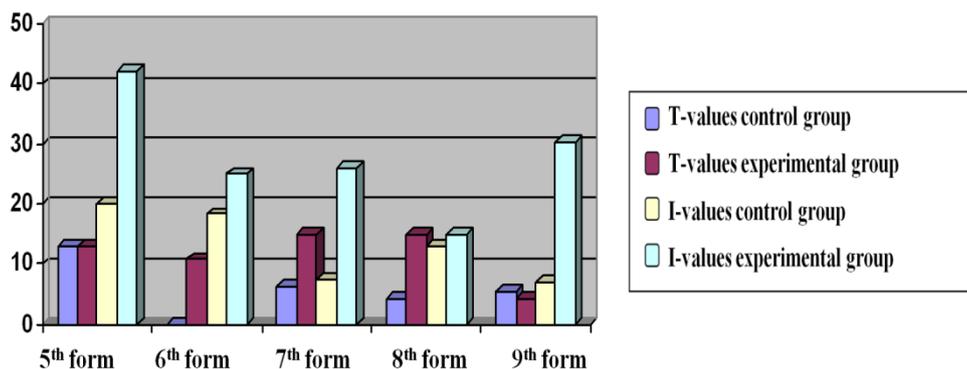


Figure 3. Entering a university or vocational school

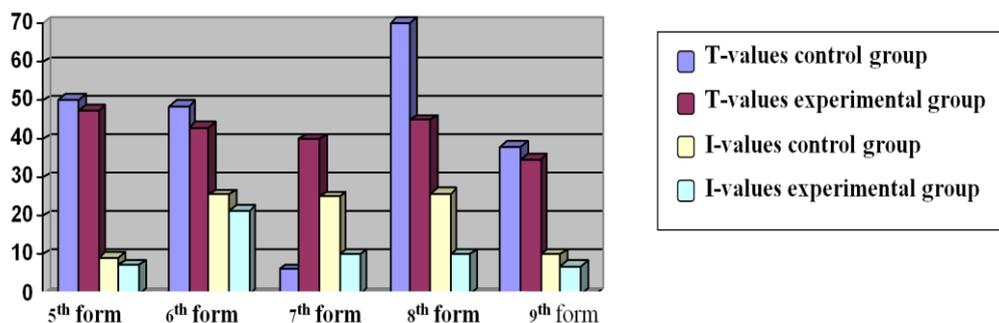


Figure 4. Education beyond the context of specific life plans

Figure 4 shows the dynamics of awareness of getting education as a goal and means of the value in the generalized formulation. Thus, this value as a purpose of life is significant in all age groups and both control and experimental study groups. The greatest uncertainty of the significance of education in life goals was shown by adolescents from the control group.

## DISCUSSION

The issue under discussion is the question of agreement between the subjective and objective student's positions in the educational process. It should be remembered that a student is a subject of learning process and an object of professional influences of the teacher. Disagreement of these positions leads to

negative consequences, namely: the dominance of object positions which results in the collapse of humanistic function of education, and absolute subjective position that creates a real threat; teachers no longer influence the process of the student's subject-activity development. At the same time, the uncovering of personal meanings of learning allows them to bridge this gap.

## CONCLUSION

Theoretical significance of the research is that the subjectivity of the student is considered in the article as an innovative characteristic of a person, adequate to the current stage of development of the society and information civilization of the XXI century. The main content of the formation of a growing person's subjectivity is the development of his needs in self-change, and self-development (general). Student's subjectivity in different age periods has its own peculiarities because it has possibilities to solve problems typical of the student's age in terms of changing situation of his development and changing leading activity (special). At the same time, every child as a subject of learning faces difficulties of his own development (individual).

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Practical significance of the research is that the theoretical findings of the study contribute to the formation of new pedagogical thinking and are designed to facilitate the transition to personality-oriented paradigm of education. The theoretical analysis of the logical relations that exist in the process of development of the student's subjectivity, his age and individual characteristics allows the teacher to provide pedagogical support and help the child to solve real problems of learning, gaining personal meanings of learning.

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