

Preface to the thematic issue "Development of children's autonomy"

There is a strong emotional intensity around the topic of children's independence. The current interest of society and the media in children's development, serious requirements for the rapid adaptation of both children and adults in changing conditions, the expansion of digital tools for monitoring children, solving the task of reducing parental anxiety, reflection of micro-events within the child-parent relationship and their consequences, contribute to this fact. The layman easily gives examples of the lack of self-service skills (excessive expectation of help) and deficits of self-regulation (impulsivity, anger), lack of initiative and irresponsibility, aimlessness and unwillingness to grow up in others — both children and adolescents, and young people, and at the same time willingly joins the trend to strengthen parental control by installing video cameras and appropriate applications by acquiring a "smart watch" and in various ways narrowing the space of a child's free action, where it would be possible to train a variety of skills related to independence.

The modern educational discourse is increasingly focused on the non-objective results of education. The quality of education is increasingly evaluated from the point of view of the psychological well-being of schoolchildren and by how much independence is possible within education, to what extent there is freedom of self-expression, choice, and trial. Speaking about education, we are actually starting to talk about the psychological aspects of life in the education system, and the years of this life are getting longer. The realities of modern childhood differ significantly from those familiar and described in the works of the classics of Russian psychology. Traditionally, the child learned autonomy and responsibility in everyday situations, in unregulated communication with peers, in feasible participation in work. In preschool childhood (this is one of the most thoroughly studied and described ages), play activity provided the development of arbitrariness, i.e. "mastering one's own behavior" (L.S. Vygotsky). Today the space and amount of play of preschoolers is decreasing, which probably reduces the level of behavioral arbitrariness reached by the end of preschool age. The educational system is focused on the familiar "norms of age" that have not been discussed for decades, which are hardly achievable and adequate to social reality today; at the same time, purposeful practices of developing and supporting various forms of independence in the educational environment of both preschoolers and schoolchildren are beginning to develop.

Speaking about autonomy in modern conditions of growing up in a situation of changing educational practices, it is difficult not to notice the emergence of new zones and circumstances that enrich the space of development of a modern child or, in the opinion of the layman, deform it. This is the digitalization of education and everyday life, and the emergence of social networks; these are new collaborations of children and youth, initiative practices, for example, volunteering, and much more. Such changes in the universe of modern life traditionally provoke the desire to subordinate these innovations to control and guardianship. Is such a restriction productive, and is it possible — these are also questions that enrich the scientific field, they need to be discussed in a research way in order to have clear answers to the questions and concerns asked by society.

The new reality also raises new research questions. If traditionally for Russian psychology, the focus of attention was on the mechanisms of personal autonomy development, which were tacitly understood as universal, mediated mainly by age norms, today interest is shifting towards behavioral autonomy, i.e. to the study of those actions that a child can perform independently. The term "agency", borrowed from sociology and implying the ability to make responsible decisions and perform independent actions, is increasingly penetrating into scientific usage. According to D.A. Leontiev, it should be about overcoming determinism, external control of action, about the perception of oneself as the cause of the changes taking place.

We present a thematic selection of 10 papers. They discuss the topic of autonomy from different sides, constituting an extremely broad framework for discussing those realities that can be associated with their own decision about action, with autonomy in its broadest sense. It was also important for us to pay attention to the transformation of ideas about autonomy in modern conditions.

We put the word "autonomy" in the title of the thematic issue, not trying to limit the authors to established approaches, but rather encouraging the operationalization of intuitive, emotionally resonant questions and highlighting research issues relevant to the current social situation of the development of children, adolescents and youth. While preparing this issue for publication, we saw our task in arousing readers' interest in rethinking, reflecting on the conditions for the development of autonomy in its different understanding in modern conditions, and in providing as wide a panorama of research on autonomy in the modern realities of life and learning as possible.

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