

PERSONS' SELF-IMPROVEMENT AS AN INTEGRATED SELF-DETERMINED PHENOMENON

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Abstract

The article discusses psychological principles of integrated organization of a self-improvement phenomenon. It was determined that self-improvement as a self-determined phenomenon is conditioned and mediated by a set of interconnected personal characteristics, including the value of self-development, integrity of life course perception, self-acceptance and so on. The article reveals structural characteristics of self-improvement as a self-determined system, the basic parameters of which include the value of self-improvement, self-efficacy and personal autonomy. Expediency was justified of an integrated study of objective laws of a self-improvement process through personal and value-semantic mediation. An important factor of self-improvement is a need for self-fulfilment that actualizes person's potential abilities, supports internal state of tension, is the source of activity and self-activity, has a social character (social status achieving), can be formed purposefully during mastering of any activity.

Key words: *self-improvement, self-fulfilment, autonomy, synergy, self-determination, self-organization.*

Introduction

The modern society puts forward high demands for a personality who is the main driving force of social development, and requires his/her readiness and openness to different life situations. Such readiness and ability of a person to initiate his/her own development and self-improvement is the source and cause of self-determined behaviour.

The phenomenon of self-improvement belongs to transcendental psychological and philosophical categories, i.e., lays practically outside of consciousness and cognition. Namely, person's abilities to be him/herself, to preserve own identity, authenticity, to know him/herself and to be self-fulfilled gain a foothold through such human processes.

Self-improvement is an integral formation of a personality, which means creative self-attitude, a desire to change and improve him/herself.

One of most appropriate scientific approaches for self-improvement studying is the theory of the self-determination. The researches of Deci and Ryan (Deci & Ryan, 2000) are considered as classic studies in this aspect. Their works are attributed to positive psychology, which aim is to form positive components of human psychology, namely, to determine factors that stimulate innate human potential.

In Ukrainian psychology, studies of the self-improvement phenomenon is primarily associated with the works of G.z.S. Kostiuk (Костюк, 1998), who introduced the term "self-movement" into scientific use and understood it as an element of psychological development and self-development where self-development is "a process of continuous self-motion, continuous self-renewal because of restructuring of internal, personal structures, their relationships, mutual influence and improvement of interaction with the environment"; with works of Ball (Балл, 1997), his concept of personal freedom, that defines the freedom through circumstances that promote "harmonious deployment and display of persons' diverse abilities"; with Boryshevskiy (Боришевський, 2010), Penkova (Пенькова, 2014), whose works paid much attention to the problems of person's self-activity, self-control, and self-improvement.

Boryshevskiy (Боришевський, 2010) defines the process of self-improvement as a self-subject activity of a personality, this construct has significant presence in its structure of moral beliefs, a formation of worldview orientations, a structured “self-concept”, a developed system of self-control and other components that witness a sufficiently high level of personal development.

We agree with the definition of these characteristics as essential components of the self-improvement phenomenon. However, factors and conditions of initiation, dynamics and efficiency of the self-improvement process should be studied in detail as well as individual modus, characteristics of determination and self-determination should be determined.

The study purpose is to identify systemic preconditions of self-improvement as a phenomenon of self-determination and self-organization.

The study object is the phenomenon of persons’ self-improvement.

Factors and components of self-improvement form the study subject.

The study of such a complex, dynamic phenomenon as self-improvement involves the study of an integrated actor of psychological reflection and regulation that controls functional resources and capabilities of person’s consciousness. Such an actor is certainly a *subject*.

An *integrated organization* of the self-improvement phenomenon taken into account in the study stipulated the use of the methodology of the system approach and methodological principles of synergy as a theory of self-organization and self-determination of complex dynamic systems.

The essence of an integrated organization of self-improvement as a system means that the basic content of the component structure of self-improvement not only forms a system, but also acts in it as one of levels of its organization, thereby becomes a subsystem. This system, in turn, is ontologically included in the systems of higher orders (meta-systems). A subject’s personality becomes an ontologically represented *meta-system* towards his/her self-improvement.

Let us determine the basic components of self-improvement as an integrated self-organized and self-determined dynamic system.

Problems of personal development, fulfilment of personal possibilities and selfhood achieving (“being of own self”) are the theme of theories of personality of Rogers (Роджерс, 2002) and Maslow (Маслоу, 2008) who revealed a perspective for studying of the self-improvement problem; a personality thus appears not only as something that is in the process of development, but as a subject who consciously aspires self-development and a personal way of being means not only and not so much how a person is autonomous, but how he/she strives for autonomy and independence.

Therefore, personal autonomy, in our opinion, is one of the main structural components of self-improvement.

As an integral psychological system, a person is situated not in opposition to the objective world, but in unity with its part that has an importance, a content, a *value* for him/her. Therefore, the system of value orientations can be considered the second important structural component of self-improvement. At that, an important persons’ characteristic that mediates the process of his/her self-improvement is the prospect of the future determined by motivational goal-setting processes. Therefore, this component should be added with existence of goals in the future perspective of a person.

As the heritage of the theorists of the socio-cognitive direction says, human behaviour is governed by complex interaction between internal and environmental factors, so at considering of person’s behaviour, cognitive components should be taken into account such as perception, expectations and values. However, the appeal of achieved results and belief in a positive outcome are insufficient for motivation of a subject. According to the concept of self-efficacy

of Bandura (1997), a *confidence in own capabilities* sufficient to cope with certain activities is also needed. Therefore *self-efficacy*, which means how competent and confident a person feels while doing a job, is the third, central and essential component of self-improvement.

Of course, the list of structural components of self-improvement as a system that simultaneously are the factors that contribute to this system development can be continued. However, we have identified these three components as key parameters of the model of person's self-improvement.

Being agree with the concepts of Rogers (Роджерс, 2002) and Maslow (Маслоу, 2008), we can define a continuous search for personal growth as the basis of the individual striving for self-development that is foundational for self-improvement.

Based on the above, it is evident that persons' self-improvement as a system assimilates the potential of the "personality" meta-system, into which it is included ontologically. Since a personality is included into a more general system – environment of values, the latter, in turn, also assimilates its potential. Genesis of self-improvement motives is exercised not only from a need sphere, but also form personal and value-semantic structures, formations, processes and so on. Thus, a personality as a whole and its components also obtain the possibility to perform functions of motives that is the basis of self-improvement. Namely, the nature of the motives underlying activities determines the focus and content of person's activity, his/her involvement, meaningfulness, satisfaction. Moreover, satisfaction with him/herself and own results provides the experience of the importance of this process and is a source of further self-improvement.

Method

The empirical study involved 162 university students and 60 high school students of Kyiv secondary schools.

They filled the following *psychological techniques*: Morphological Test of Life Values (Сопов & Карпушина, 2002); Questionnaire of Person's Self-Attitude of Pantilyeyev, Stolin (Столин & Пантйлеев, 1988); Personal Orientation Inventory (POI) of Shostrom (Алешина, Гозман, Дубовская & Кроз, 1987); General Self efficacy Scale of Schwarzer, Jerusalem (Шварцер, Ерусалем & Ромек, 1996); Questionnaire of Self-Improvement Values (Пенькова, 2014).

Also, to achieve the purpose of this article, we (the authors) developed a research technique for self-improvement structure investigation that is a modification of the questionnaire of Serdiuk (Сердюк, 2014). The technique allows the authors to investigate a self-improvement structure. It contains 28 statements for three scales: the value of self-improvement, self-efficacy, autonomy. A degree of agreement/disagreement with the proposed statements is expressed from 1 to 5 points.

Methods of processing and interpretation of empirical data: quantitative and qualitative analysis (descriptive statistics, comparison of sample means by Student's t-test, correlation analysis). Processing of the empirical results was carried out using the statistical software package SPSS 19.0 for Windows.

Results and Discussion

Overall, the experimental results (data contained in Table 1) show that at presence of high indices of formed values of self-improvement and self-sufficient assessment of own capabilities, low indices of personal autonomy become the main barrier for self-improvement, and therefore for self-fulfilment.

Personal autonomy, one of the key concepts of the theory of the self-determination, appears when a person acts as a subject, based on a deep sense of Self. In other words, autonomy means sense of freedom in relation both to external forces and internal personality forces.

Table 1. Formation of self-improvement indices

Mean (N=162)	Self-improvement indices		
	Values	Self-efficacy	Autonomy
\bar{X}	39	18	14
S_x	3,6	2,8	2,1

Note: \bar{X} – mean; S_x – standard deviation

This result is confirmed by the results obtained earlier by Penkova (Пенькова, 2014) (see Table 2). The tested students performed value choice based on the regulatory requirements of society, and implemented it by searching internal resources for significant goal achieving.

Table 2. The hierarchy of self-improvement values of high school students

No	Description of values	Students (N=60)	
		Points	Rank
1	Have a nice appearance	7,0	4
2	Looking older	9,7	11
3	Be successful	5,7	3
4	Have warm relationships with their parents and family	2,0	1
5	Have good relationships with friends and others	3,6	2
6	Have authority in school	9,9	12
7	Earn a living	9,1	10
8	Buy expensive things	12,1	15
9	Provide a material comfort	8,5	8
10	Develop a creative attitude to work, be prepared for future career choice	7,1	5
11	Develop cognitive interests and creative activity	7,4	6
12	Be able to acquire knowledge independently, meet constantly with new science and technology achievements	7,8	7
13	Be self-fulfilled as a spiritual personality	8,7	9
14	Acquire national culture and spiritual heritage of own people	10,5	13
15	Be able to act in accordance with their own beliefs and participate in the life of own country	11,2	14

It should be noted for result analyzing that adolescence is the time of rapid developing of self-consciousness, formation of such traits as self-criticism, self-esteem, self-demand, own physical, mental and moral qualities are understood more deeply by teenagers.

A special place in the values choice of high school students have the values of relationships with parents and family, friends and others, they satisfy students' need for self-image recognition, fulfilment of self for others that leads, at the end, to the development of students' life plans, determination of personal perspectives.

Students recognize as an important one the “be successful” value that gives them an opportunity not only to attract attention to themselves, to show off, but to see own Self in assessing of other people, to get their recognition.

In general, high school students prefer the values of self-fulfilment, which is associated with the development of their social activity aimed at bringing of inner reserves into line with the environmental conditions for successful personal growth.

To check correlation between self-improvement and personal characteristics, we performed a correlation analysis that showed that self-improvement indices are linked with such personal characteristics as self-attitude and value orientations (see Table 3). This indicates that modern young people are focused on self-improvement, strive to implement own potential, to reveal own abilities, to be independent. They are characterized by a holistic perception of life course events, and self-control during their plan implementation.

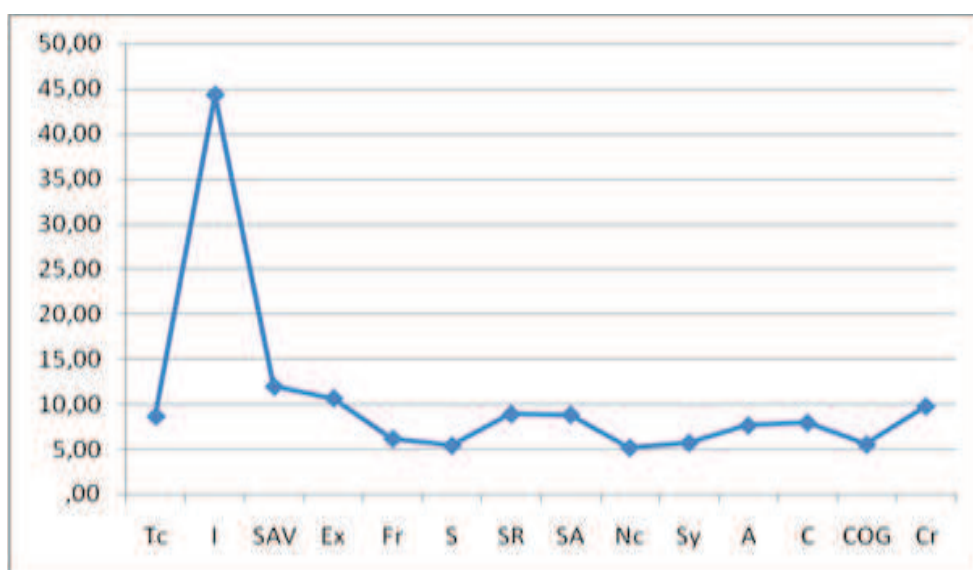
Table 3. The relationship of the self-improvement components with personal characteristics

	Value orientation					self-acceptance	self-consistency	synergy
	Self-development	Spiritual satisfaction	Creativity	Active social contacts	Own prestige			
Values of self-improvement	0,44**	0,36**	0,25**	0,22**	0,35**	-	-	0,34**
Self-efficacy	0,29**	0,24**	-	-	0,3**	0,42**	0,38**	0,26**
Autonomy	0,31**	0,25**	0,22**	0,21**	0,28**	0,26**	0,34**	0,26**

Note: ** Correlation is significant at the level 0.001; * Correlation is significant at the level 0.05

Thus, awareness on own competence, importance for other people and presence of favourable conditions, which modern young people have, can contribute to their self-fulfilment in a particular area, to their desire to be real, authentic during interaction with others. It is obvious that modern young people perceive their environment as having positive attitude to them that promotes initiation of self-development and searches of relevant life areas for self-fulfilment.

Indices of the Personal Orientation Inventory for the students aimed at self-improvement (see Figure 1) show that they are highly conscious subjects of their own lives and are characterized by understanding of goals of a current life stage, integrity of life course perception, formed self-actualizing values, existentiality, high self-regard, self-acceptance, resoluteness, ability to develop relationships with others, creativity.



Note: POI scales: time competence (Tc); inner-directed (I); self-actualizing values (SAV); existentiality (Ex); feeling reactivity (Fr); spontaneity (S); self-regard (SR); self-acceptance (SA); human nature (Nc); synergy (Sy); acceptance of aggression (A); capacity (C); cognitive needs (COG); creativity (Cr)

Fig.1. Mean values of POI for students focused on self-improvement

For more facts about the presence of internal relationships between self-improvement and the main parameters of personal organization, we performed factor analysis (method of principal components with factor structure rotation Varimax). The factor analysis defined five significant factors of self-improvement, the contribution of which to the overall data variance is 68.3% (results are shown in Table 4).

Table 4. Factors of self-improvement

	Factors (factor weight)				
	Factor1 24,7 %	Factor 2 14,3 %	Factor 3 12,5 %	Factor 4 9,3 %	Factor 5 7,5 %
Active social contacts	0,79				
Creativity	0,78				
Retaining of individuality	0,72				
Personal prestige	0,71				
Self-development	0,66				
Spiritual satisfaction	0,52				
Self-efficacy	0,51		0,49		
Achievements		0,84	-0,43		
Inner directed	0,44	0,81			
Self-actualizing values	0,51	0,61			
Existentiality	0,51	0,59			
Self-acceptance			0,56		
Capacity			0,59		
Self-understanding			0,69		

	Factors (factor weight)				
	Factor1 24,7 %	Factor 2 14,3 %	Factor 3 12,5 %	Factor 4 9,3 %	Factor 5 7,5 %
Self-esteem			0,66		-0,46
Expectations of a positive attitude from others				0,65	
Integrated self-attitude	0,61			0,63	
Self-interest				0,56	0,45
Self-consistency		-0,54			0,55
Synergy					0,54
Self-sympathy					0,45

Such conceptual filling of factors explains the sources of self-improvement. Person's focus on self-fulfilment and self-improvement associated with it are stipulated by a creative guide of the person, his/her self-control, self-efficacy, aspiration for self-development and a high status position in social contacts.

Significant factors that prevent self-improvement are: not clear and differentiated idea of young people about their future, not understanding by them of the ways and means of life goal achieving.

In general, it can be said that the life of modern youth is characterized by meaningfulness, availability of objectives, plans for the future, but the prospect of future is not always backed up by belief in their capabilities and autonomy.

The obtained results revealed quite distinct relationship between self-improvement indicators and indicators of value-semantic sphere and personal modus of their implementation.

As it is known, the universal model of regulatory process, in addition to goal-setting, programming, planning, also includes evaluation of results and correction, which are largely supported by a personal level of mediation – personal qualities and characteristics, system of person's expectations, aspirations and attitudes.

Conclusions

Self-improvement depends on person's own activity that supports self-fulfilment and self-esteem, value of Self. A necessary condition of its development is close relationships between conceptual characteristics of person's goals and current values of society that actually become regulators of interpersonal relationships. Moreover, such factors as awareness of their own self-efficacy and personal autonomy play a role of strong prerequisite for forming among youth of a desire to self-improvement.

The study results have led us to the following conclusions:

1. The process of self-creation is an integrated self-determined organized phenomenon, mediated by a set of personality characteristics, including the value of self-development, integrity of life course perception, self-acceptance, self-belief, readiness for self-transformation and so on.
2. Motivation of self-creation appears as a dynamic aspect of body functioning, which is supported by a complex system, forming factor of which is self-development of personality.
3. Ability to self-determination, self-development, self-improvement and self-creation is actualized when a person becomes a true subject. The driving forces of personal development are located in a personality him/herself, and external factors lose their programmable role.

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becomes a subsystem. This system, in turn, is ontologically included in the systems of higher orders (meta-systems). A subject's personality becomes an ontologically represented *meta-system* towards his/her self-improvement.

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