Beyond Philology No. 19/4, 2022
ISSN 1732-1220, eISSN 2451-1498

https://doi.org/10.26881/bp.2022.4.03

Fostering an autonomous approach as a key to successful remote learning during the covid pandemic

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Received 09.04.2022,
accepted 03.11.2022.

Abstract

The purpose of this article is to call for greater attention to the expanding problem of fostering autonomous approach, which may prove to be the key to changing the common perception of remote learning and be the source of its success. Drawing on the ability, motivation and opportunity (AMO) framework, this conceptual paper integrates research on learning and teaching approaches in the light of emerging realities to present the potential and benefits of a remote learning model based on autonomous practice and increased awareness. A case is made that fundamental work is necessary to contribute to a positive change in public attitudes towards remote learning and to increase its effectiveness. Current debates on the potential for developing the latest teaching recommendations are also extended, considering the benefits of promoting autonomous approaches with a particular reference to distance learning settings.

Keywords

AMO model, autonomy, awareness, distance learning

Promowanie podejścia autonomicznego kluczem do skutecznej nauki zdalnej w czasach pandemii

Celem niniejszego artykułu jest zwrócenie większej uwagi na rozszerzający się problem wspierania autonomicznego podejścia, które może okazać się kluczem do zmiany powszechnego postrzegania zdalnego nauczania i być źródłem jego sukcesu. Opierając się na modelu AMO (ang. *ability, motivation and opportunity*), niniejszy artykuł koncepcyjny wykorzystuje badania nad podejściem do uczenia się i nauczania w świetle pojawiających się realiów, prezentując potencjał i korzyści z zastosowania modelu zdalnego nauczania opartego na autonomicznej praktyce i zwiększonej świadomości. Przedstawiono argumenty przemawiające za koniecznością podjęcia kluczowych działań, które podniosą skuteczność edukacji zdalnej, a tym samym pozytywnie wpłyną na zmianę nastawienia społeczeństwa. Rozszerzono także aktualne debaty na temat możliwości rozwoju najnowszych zaleceń dydaktycznych, rozważając korzyści płynące z promowania autonomicznych rozwiązań, ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem warunków kształcenia na odległość.

Słowa kluczowe

Model AMO, autonomia, świadomość, nauka zdalna

1. Introduction

The outbreak of the global COVID-19 virus epidemic has undoubtedly changed numerous aspects of human life, and education is by no means an exception. Therefore, the education system is now confronted with perhaps the greatest challenge of recent decades. In March 2020, the rapid and exponential spread of the new virus forced most governments to close educational institutions across almost the entire world. The decision to replace the conventional method of teaching with distance learning (Demetriou et al. 2020) required not only numerous technological adjustments, but above all a change in

the culture of teaching professionals and adaptation to new ways and strategies of student learning. The challenges of online learning are of an institutional, pedagogical as well as personal nature (Asgari et al. 2021). Given that lack of students' motivation or limited student-teacher interaction is the most frequently reported difficulty in the process of remote learning (Amir et al., 2020), it appears particularly important to explore how the current practices can be enhanced. Several attempts have already been made (Abramson 2020, Dhawan 2020, Okada and Sheehy 2020), but the one presented in this paper seems to be superior as it uses novel theoretical perspective allowing for capturing a breadth of experiences by simultaneously focusing on students' abilities, motivations and opportunities. Consistently, this paper aims to explore how learners` abilities, motivations, and opportunities can be enhanced in remote learning settings.

By providing a conceptual model underpinned by a literature review, the article makes several contributions to existing didactics literature. First, it highlights the issue of students' perceptions of remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic (Wu 2021) and enumerates reasons for their dissatisfaction (Abbasi et al. 2020, Agarwal and Kaushik 2020, Amir et al. 2020). Secondly, it explains the need to provide an autonomous environment for learners, suggesting a number of applications to induce a significant difference in the quality of remote learning and enable learners to reach their full potential, for instance supporting the development of cognitive and metacognitive abilities (Anthonysamy 2021), implementing students' self-directed activities (Paul and Jeferson 2019), providing autonomy in decision-making (Ma 2021) or enhancing self-efficacy (Hayat et al. 2020). In doing so, it addresses the call for improvement opportunities of academics as well as students themselves who manifest their dissatisfaction with the level of remote education (Abbasi et al. 2020). Thirdly, it concentrates on the benefits of increased learner awareness, metacognitive abilities as well as motivation and these include

among others increased confidence (Anthonysamy 2021), creativity, productivity, active contribution in class (Brophy 2010) or persistence (Pelikan et al. 2021, Schunk 2014). This is of great importance as it contributes significantly to learning success. Finally, in the light of largely atheoretical research on remote learning, a well-establish-ed in management research Ability-Motivation-Opportunity (AMO) theory (Boxall and Purcell 2016) is used in educational settings. This interdisciplinary transfer provides a comprehensive approach to skills-, motivation-, and opportunity-enhancing practices tailored at the specific needs of remote learners to provide conditions for more effective self-directed learning (Georgiou 2018, Knox 2017).

This paper is structured as follows. First, the literature review methodology is discussed. Second, key debates on autonomous learning and teaching approaches are highlighted as well as remote and blended learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. Third, building on the AMO model, abilities and motivations of remote learners are considered in terms of enhancing educational practices. Finally, a discussion on implications for future research and practice is presented.

2. Literature review methodology

To review the existing literature, the author identified issues related to autonomous approaches to learning and teaching and recent papers on distant learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. As a first step, leading journals in pedagogy and language education as well as key textbooks were manually scanned. Secondly, a comprehensive web search for relevant topics (e.g. characteristics of the autonomous learner, benefits of autonomous approaches to learning, metacognitive styles, remote learning) was conducted using several electronic databases such as Academic Research Source eBooks (EBSCO), Education Research Complete (EBSCO) or Google Scholar. Finally, the author also familiarized herself with the positions on

the reference lists of the articles found through the first two methods. This strategy was directed to answer the question of whether promoting autonomous approaches can contribute to effective remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. Further analysis resulted in a development of a conceptual model of autonomous ability-motivation-opportunities for educational research. Notably, the model remains deliberately non-exhaustive, but the selected constructs exemplify the possibilities for research into the propagation of autonomy in remote learning settings.

3. Autonomous approach to education in a distance learning setting

3.1. Autonomy – a brief overview

Nowadays, learner independence is an extremely important concern in Second Language pedagogy. The concept of autonomy regarding foreign language teaching is not a new issue as it emerged with the Council of Europe project on the teaching of modern languages, yet it is now one of the most vital and intriguing issues in both theory and practice of teaching methodology (Wiśniewska 2017). To provide a brief overview, the first broadly accepted definition of autonomy presents it as "the ability to take responsibility for one's own learning" (Holec 1981: 3), noting that it implies "to have and hold the responsibility for all the decisions concerning all aspects of this learning [...]" (Holec 1981: 3). This ability however lacked sufficient description and needed further elaboration (Benson 2009) and thus over the years the concept of learner autonomy has been widely debated in the field of second language acquisition. Specialists are not unanimous whether it is a psychological phenomenon with political implications or a political law with psychological implications, whether to treat it as an ability or a behavior; if it is determined by the learner's responsibility or control, or finally whether complementary teacher autonomy

affects the development of learner autonomy (Little 2003). However, what they do agree on is that autonomy should be considered as a complex and multi-dimensional concept (Benson 2009). To fully understand its complexity, it is essential to identify and carefully analyse its individual components, such as motivation, self-esteem or autonomy (Everhard 2015), as well as a range of associations with different forms of practising autonomy, including individual and collaborative learning, the use of authentic materials, language guidance, negotiated syllabus and more (Benson 2009). Last but not least, it is undeniable that the concept of autonomy empowers learners to both be more active and become more effective language learners (Rahman 2018).

Regarding the characteristics of the two sides of the learning process, namely the learner and the teacher, the autonomous student is characterised by having developed metacognitive and cognitive strategies that enable him/her to undertake, conduct and evaluate his/her own language education (Marantika 2021). More specifically, independent learners actively participate in all types of learning activities, including goal setting, planning, task completion, self-reflection and assessment of learning (Klimas 2017) and display developed cognitive and metacognitive skills (Anthonysamy 2021). Perhaps most significantly, learners who approach learning autonomously are aware of their own responsibility for the learning process and realise that it does not end in the classroom but at most begins there (Toporek 2021).

Although much attention is paid to the learner's position, also the role of the teacher in building autonomy is of considerable importance (Little 2003, Ma 2021). To promote autonomy, the teacher must go beyond the constraints of the educational system (Alonazi 2017), which for many years has imposed on him/her the role of instructor and expert. He/she cannot control the learner but rather contribute to the development of their awareness and independence (Asgari et al. 2021, Dam 2000) at the same time supporting them (Lamb

2008). Notably, the autonomy-supporting teacher must themselves exhibit autonomous qualities. Not only does their autonomy affect their motivation and job satisfaction, but most importantly the learning outcomes of their students (Lamb 2008, Little 2000). Thus, teacher autonomy is an indispensable element for inducing autonomous behaviour in others.

3.2. Difficulties and perceptions of remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic

In the past two years, the demand for distance and combined forms of education has increased dramatically due to the outbreak of the global COVID-19 virus pandemic. The unexpected emergence and such rapid spread of the virus has had an enormous impact on virtually every aspect of daily life, causing great insecurity and leaving destructive impacts on people's mental health. Terrifying reports of the number of fatalities, restrictions of physical and social distancing measures and worldwide confusion in state security mechanisms have contributed to pervasive anxiety, doubt and uncertainty (Demetriou *et al.* 2020). From March 2020, public as well as private universities have virtually unanimously decided to implement distance learning to enable students to continue their courses despite the social distancing requirement. According to data provided by UNESCO, more than 1.5 billion students around the world (representing more than 90 % of all enrolled students) have been impacted by the COVID-19 lockdown and subsequent educational changes (Asgari et al. 2021). Consequently, the conventional method – that is, traditional face-to-face learning – has been replaced by remote teaching and learning (Demetriou et al. 2020). Although distance learning holds a number of benefits, there are also fundamental challenges faced by the system, teachers and students such as time-consuming conversion of a course from a conventional to an online format, requirement for the instructor to be familiar or willing to learn about online teaching pedagogy and instruc-

tional tools (Ryan et al. 2012). In addition, designing a fair and accurate assessment to minimise fraud is difficult in an online environment (Lee-Post and Hapke 2017). From the student`s perspective, most of them prefer to learn particularly difficult concepts directly in person, as they find it provides them with a deeper level of learning compared to online instruction (Jaggars 2014) and teaching online requires them to be highly motivated and able to deal with time efficiently (Georgiou 2018). Over a decade ago, Watkins et al. (2004) noted that even if learners can succeed in a conventional learning environment, this alone cannot guarantee a successful outcome in a distance learning situation. Despite the existing literature on online education, there has not been sufficient examination of the challenges and factors affecting pandemic online education. Therefore, there has been a worldwide need to explore online teaching/learning throughout the full range of educational levels and faculties (Asgari et al. 2021).

Over the course of the two years, several studies emerged to explore the perceptions of students and teachers during remote education in emergency settings (Wu 2021). Abbasi et al. (2020) found that when students could not attend normal classes due to an epidemic, they were not satisfied with online learning and administrative departments and teachers should take necessary measures to improve the online learning environment. According to a survey among medical students (Agarwal and Kaushik 2020), despite the time savings, students felt that online courses altered their normal routines, and listed obstacles hindering learning such as the number of participants or technical failures during class discussions. Although most of the studies were conducted at the higher education level, Fauzi and Khusuma (2020), as an example, identified problems related to the implementation of online learning in primary schools and as it turned out their findings were quite similar. The results of the study indicated poor results of online teaching and showed that not only pupils but up to as many as 80 % of teachers from 45 different institu-

tions felt dissatisfied with online education. Owusu-Fordjour et al. (2020) investigated online learning among 214 college students and proved that the pandemic negatively affected their learning not only due to technological constraints but most importantly many of them were not accustomed to effective learning on their own. This and similar studies (Georgiou 2018, Knox 2017) have identified a major concern that attracted the author's particular attention. Namely, students are not used to learning in a more autonomous environment, manage their time and stay focused for longer online learning duration and therefore their learning experience tends to be less effective when taught on their own under remote education conditions (Amir et al. 2020, Owusu-Fordjour et al. 2020). The genuine issue is that students who learn online are more likely to withdraw if they do not achieve immediate results and the reason for this is that they work independently, relying almost entirely on their own motivation and self-direction (Paul and Jefferson 2019).

3.3. Learner autonomy as the key to successful remote learning

Given the overview of what autonomous education means and entails, and having presented the current learning situation and the unfavourable perception of it, some key questions arise. What benefits does autonomous learning provide? How can it affect the current situation? Can this attitude be changed, and if so, how? It appears that the solution may lie in the development of an autonomous approach to learning and teaching. The advantages of fostering and promoting an autonomous attitude in students bring a number of benefits related to the learning process. It seems to be particularly important for learners in times of pandemics to exhibit the characteristics of autonomous learners which will result in a more conscious and effective learning and even long-term success (Jochimczyk 2020). Analyzing the available literature on the

subject, one can venture to say that learner autonomy, responsibility and motivation are always interrelated when it comes to effective language learning. The long-term goal of education is to build developmental potential, be it a personal development, the ability to find one's place in social and professional life, or the capacity for finding solutions to emerging problems. It is crucial to understand that to achieve this goal, education must be based on the principle of autonomy (Federowicz 2015). The teacher's own attitude and commitment will be of great relevance here as it is his/her responsibility to create opportunities for independent learning and a student-centered classroom environment (Oates 2019). Teaching researching skills and developing both critical and creative thinking in students is vital. Equally fundamental for today's students in the new learning reality is the development of their communication and social skills along with self-management abilities (OECD 2018).

What is more, an undeniable benefit of an autonomous approach to teaching is the increase in student motivation, which in turn leads to more effective learning. Autonomy, motivation and successful learning outcomes are interrelated, as a decrease in learning effectiveness results in a decrease in motivation (Dörnyei and Ushioda 2013). With an explanation comes empirical research in social psychology, which states that "feeling free and volitional in one's actions" (Deci 1995: 2) is a basic human need, whereas autonomy is both the source and the motor of our intrinsic motivation. Relating this knowledge to the field of learning and teaching, we find that autonomy solves the problem of motivation in learning. To clarify, learners draw on their intrinsic motivation when they take responsibility for their own learning while committing themselves to developing their capacity for self-reflection. In turn, being successful enhances their sense of motivation. By being motivated, they find their learning both more effective and efficient (Toporek 2021). Sierens *et al.* (2009) stated that autonomy-supportive teacher nurtures student interest and

increases intrinsic motivation since passion and enthusiasm for one's subject can be contagious. Intrinsically motivated learners and autonomous individuals take control of the learning process and actively pursue their own learning goals (Oates 2019).

An autonomous learner is also more capable of adapting to new realities in a constantly changing world, which is extremely important in the context of a pandemic. Autonomy, and consequently student awareness, directly affects self-esteem and effective learning. Again, the teacher's role is to trigger this awareness in the learner and provide them with the necessary knowledge of learning styles or possible learning strategies to suit themselves (Othman and Amiruddin 2010). Learning according to one's own preferences contributes to greater absorption of memory and facilitates the memorization process. Following strategies also results in greater self-awareness, builds the learner's confidence and belief in his/her own abilities. Knowing one's own learning style and choosing appropriate strategies prepares for a situation where the learner will be reliant only on their own strength, without the help of a teacher (Oxford 1990) which is often mentioned as a challenge with regard to remote learning in the coronavirus times. Students should receive a clear recognition that there are various learning styles and be encouraged to reflect on their preferred learning methods and their effectiveness (Marantika 2021). It is useful to conduct a diversified class by demonstrating different learning strategies so that the students can try them out and decide independently which is the most suitable for them (Gałązka et al. 2017). Stimulating metacognition is the basis for autonomous learning and has a significant impact on student success (Marantika 2021).

4. AMO model for educational research

In a consideration of the impact of autonomy on learning success, the author adapts a version of the AMO model intro-

duced by Boxall and Purcell (2003) to understand how the diverse needs of remote learners can be met using HR practices. The AMO model is originally associated with a behavioral perspective, and an interest in the relationship between Human Resources Management (hence HRM) and performance (Armstrong and Brown 2019). According to this theory, an individual functioning, and therefore performance, depends to a large extent on an individual's abilities, motivations and capabilities to participate in organizational life (Szulc and Smith 2021). As the AMO theory is arguably a new framework in educational context, a brief explanation seems appropriate here. Boxall and Purcell (2016) formulated the model formula as P = f(A,M,O) which explains that individuals perform when they have:

- the ability (A) to perform – they can do the job because possess the necessary knowledge, skills and aptitude;
- the motivation (M) to perform – they do the job because they want to or feel obliged to;
- and the opportunity (O) to perform - the work structure and environment provide the necessary support and opportunities for expression (Armstrong and Brown 2019).

The impact of HRM on organizational performance is widely recognized. Numerous studies have confirmed the positive impact of HRM on outcomes such as increased employee engagement and productivity or decreased employee turnover (Combs *et al.* 2006). And while it has recently been more frequently recognized that HRM also has the potential to increase school performance, very little empirical attention has been given in the pedagogical or linguistics literature to the ways in which various HRM practices can best be implemented to achieve positive teacher and student outcomes. Only a few publications have emerged that explore increased engagement empowerment and motivation of teachers (Bouwmans et al. 2017, Mohammadi and Amini

2020) and, to the best of the author's knowledge, no concept of how students themselves can personally benefit from HRM systems has yet been presented. This could, however, allow for the best possible adjustment of learning conditions especially in remote settings and through increasing motivation and self-belief, enhance student`s learning effectiveness.

The AMO model transferred to the educational context appears to be a well-structured framework that allows for a better understanding of the relationship between conditions and student performance. The effectiveness of the model's propositions seems to be beyond doubt. In fact, a learner with developed skills (abilities) will perform better while a motivated learner will be willing to make more effort to succeed. Similarly, if the learning environment (e.g. teachers) does not provide adequate opportunities, both the skills and the motivation of the learner may become irrelevant (Marin-Garcia and Martinez Tomas 2016). Consistently, adapting a version of the AMO model to the context of remote teaching and learning can help us not only to make better use of students' skills (Boxall et al. 2019), but also to take a broader perspective in benefiting from a validated model from business to enhance learning. In the following sections each element of the model is discussed in more depth.

4.1. Abilities

The first component of the AMO framework is ability, which in the HRM context refers to individual's skills, job-related knowledge, and effectiveness in social interactions (Szulc and Smith 2021). In the didactic context however, it can be referred to the ability to complete a given task or acquire new material by having the necessary knowledge, skills and aptitudes to do so. Self-efficacy – students' beliefs and confidence in their ability to succeed in learning and perform

successfully – is believed to lead students to excel by increasing commitment, effort and persistence (Pintrich 2003). It seems incredibly relevant as reluctance and willingness to let go are frequently mentioned problems in the context of remote learning. Chin et al. (2017) reported a considerable association between students' positive emotions and their academic performance. In other words, students are more likely to achieve their goals and perform tasks correctly when they believe they are capable of it. Learners with a strong sense of efficacy are more likely to challenge themselves and be intrinsically motivated. They put a lot of effort into their commitments and recover quickly from failures, which ultimately makes them achieve their personal goals (Hayat et al. 2020).

Proceeding further, it is proven that developed cognitive and metacognitive skills lead not only to increased confidence, but also provide more effective learning (Anthonysamy 2021). Identifying the learner's own preferences for the time, place and form of learning does not only increase the effectiveness of the learning process, but also helps to raise their morale. In order to combat the difficulties faced by online learners during isolation, educators might consider providing tailored training initiatives on, for instance, autonomy-supporting behavior, learning styles, or effective learning strategies for a particular situation aimed at developing cognitive skills and raising metacognitive awareness.

4.2. Motivation

Motivation relates to an individual's willingness to use their abilities in a productive manner (Purcell et al. 2003). Employees only perform tasks if they are able and willing to do so and, by analogy, only students who really want to, will invest their time and effort in learning. Hartnett (2016) identifies feelings of isolation, frustration with technology or time constraints due to other responsibilities as factors that contribute

to a loss of desire to participate in remote activities. Moreover, as many students during the pandemic found themselves in inconvenient conditions, e.g. sitting at the kitchen table surrounded by household chores, they may perceive this as tedious and struggle to remain motivated throughout the whole class session, thus lowering their performance. More than ever in distance learning, students are challenged to regulate their own learning (Pelikan et al. 2021); not only do they have to make a conscious decision to engage in the learning process, but they also have to persevere despite many distractions and fewer external regulations. As initial insights from the existing literature suggests, motivated learners are more likely to engage in learning activities, are more persistent (Schunk 2014), creative, productive, actively contribute in class (Brophy 2010) showing lower levels of procrastination (Pelikan et al. 2021).Therefore, maintaining a high level of intrinsic motivation is considered fundamental in distance and blended learning settings to avoid giving up but to achieve even better outcomes. However, it is important to note that strategies commonly used to motivate oneself in typical circumstances may not work well in distance learning settings.

Furthermore, the growth of self-awareness is beneficial for sustaining motivation. Namely, the learner must understand why they are learning, whether for positive grades and praise or for their self, personal fulfilment and better future prospects. Above all, seemingly the core characteristics of an autonomous learner, remote learners need to realize that they themselves are responsible (Holec 1981, Little 2003, Benson 2008) for their learning process so that, especially in difficult covid conditions, they need to actively take charge of it. According to the transactional distance model (i.e. psychological separation in the context of distance education) autonomous learners require less dialogue and minimal structures than their less independent peers (Moore 2007) and therefore can perform better in epidemic conditions. Finally, to increase motivation, it is recommended that teachers ensure that classes

are designed to encourage students' active participation, taking advantage of technological assets (e.g. Kahoot) and enabling the use for different learning strategies.

4.3. Opportunities

According to the last element of the AMO model, the educational environment as well as the structure of classes should provide the necessary support and opportunities for students to perform. Individuals who are challenged to learn remotely often face obstacles that prevent them from using their skills effectively (Watkins et al. 2004) thus failing to succeed as intended. A range of opportunities aimed at supporting the most troublesome areas can help to effectively develop self-awareness, deal with non-standard situations and see oneself as a learner through the lens of strengths and competencies rather than potential deficiencies and weaknesses. Providing students with such opportunities can be achieved by striking a balance between independence, power and support (Hartnett 2016). The following sections outline in more detail concrete options that could be adopted as potential solutions to the identified problem areas.

Granting independence can be manifested on various levels. Firstly, students' self-directed activities (Ryan and Deci 2020) should be an integral part of the didactic process. The passive role in the learning process and lack of student involvement affects the withdrawal of cognitive activity, becomes the cause of difficulties in developing independent thinking as well as more complex skills (Federowicz et al. 2015) which ultimately hinders success. On the contrary, autonomous decision-making provides learners with an opportunity to develop the ability to search for knowledge independently (Ma 2021), improve information retrieval techniques and discover new sources of information (Jochimczyk 2020), while simultaneously expanding their cognitive abilities.

Regarding the second pillar, namely power issues, the learner-educator frame is of paramount importance due to the fact that it either evolves or blocks student engagement as well as it affects their learning motivation (Pishghadam et al. 2021). Since the decision to integrate autonomy into the learning process is partly teacher-dependent, there needs to be a redefinition of the teacher's role (Alonazi 2017), moving from the long-entrenched oracle position to a modern facilitator (Yan 2012) or counsellor (Kongchan 2008) who will concentrate on assisting students' autonomy by enabling them to make independent decisions. Educators employing autonomy support as a relational educational style are less controlling and more attentive to students' needs, thus increasing their motivation and interest in class (Chang et al. 2016, Pérez-González et al. 2019). According to Jochimczyk (2020), autonomy in decision making is a way of stimulating autonomous action that allows learners to demonstrate their independence along with developing their competence in learning. Ma (2021) gives several examples of such practices including allowing learners to work in their specific manner, acknowledging their viewpoint, empowering independent work or learners' dynamic involvement.

Finally, when speaking of support, it is meant to refer to any form of assuring students with the necessary help, be it in the form of the right mindset, understanding in various situations, or providing useful resource materials. Especially in times of isolation and remote learning, students may face not only educational barriers related to lack of understanding of the subject matter (Jaggars 2014), some technical obstacles such as poor internet connection (Owusu-Fordjour et al. 2020), but even emotional difficulties (Demetriou et al. 2021) related to feelings of loneliness or struggling with a new reality. It is therefore necessary to ensure that they have the right learning environment, which is demanding on the one hand, and caring and understanding on the other. The attitude and role of the educator and, in the case of younger pupils, the parent will be crucial here, so that learners perceive them as

supportive, understanding, willing to help and empowering them to take responsibility for their own learning (Lamb 2008).

5. Discussion

The aim of this paper was to show the increased importance of fostering an autonomous approach in remote learning settings during the covid pandemic to enhance students` abilities, motivations and opportunities in successful education. The model developed in this paper emphasizes the need to awaken the learner's potential for autonomy by stimulating greater awareness, intrinsic motivation and the development of metacognitive skills throughout the duration of remote learning but also beyond. The insights generated provide several theoretical and practical cues, which will be discussed next.

5.1. Theoretical implications

My first contribution pertains to highlighting the problem of students' approaches to remote learning during the pandemic of COVID-19. While in the past two years we observe a tendency in research to move away from focusing on effective teaching in traditional settings to explore online education, little is still known about the factors affecting pandemic online education (Asgari et al. 2021) and effective ways to deal with these challenges. I therefore contribute to a discussion of the potential for changing students' perceptions of distance learning, in which the emphasis is placed on the enhancement of individual`s potential for success in learning.

Secondly, I highlight the need to ensure autonomous conditions for studying in remote learning contexts, support the development of autonomous traits in the learner as well as indicate the potential opportunities for their implementation. My conception of the correlation between the development of autonomy and successful learning provides a better theoretical understanding of the conditions to achieve a positive influence

on students' self-awareness and metacognition and the corresponding high learning outcomes. It is also partly a response to calls from academics as well as students themselves who manifest their dissatisfaction with the level of remote education (Abbasi et al. 2020). Accordingly, by emphasizing the importance of an autonomous approach to remote learning success, I concentrate on the benefits of increased learner awareness leading to a positive change in perception of remote learning in challenging epidemiological conditions experienced since March 2020.

Thirdly, one of the most prevalent HRM models (Boxall and Purcell 2016) has been adapted to educational settings, focusing largely on the opportunities to increase learning efficiency during remote or blended learning. I point out and suggest that nurturing a student's ability and motivation along with providing a range of opportunities can serve effective learning leading to long-term success. This in turn has several practical implications discussed in the following sections.

5.2. Practical implications

The conceptual model presented in this paper can help students in developing a comprehensive approach to skills-, motivation-, and opportunity-enhancing practices tailored at the specific needs of remote learning to provide conditions for more effective self-directed learning, which, in turn, may ultimately lead to a change in the commonly held view of remote learning as inefficient and unencouraging for students (Georgiou 2018, Knox 2017). It was demonstrated that switching from traditional to remote learning may constitute significant challenges even for students who used to be successful within the school walls (Watkins et al. 2004). The author has consistently advocated a range of enhancements designed to make a significant difference to the quality of students' learning in remote settings and enable them to reach their full potential such as:

- providing training supporting cognitive and metacognitive skills development (see: Anthonysamy 2021, Marantika 2021) relating e.g. to learning styles or learning strategies;
- implementing students' self-directed activities (see: Moore 2007, Paul and Jeferson 2019) as an integral part of the didactic process;
- ensuring autonomy in decision making and independent thinking (see: Jochimczyk 2020);
- building or strengthening a sense of self-efficacy (see: Hayat et al. 2020).

The expectations placed on students to be more engaged and active during online classes, point my attention to the process of implementing activities tailored at the specific needs of remote conditions. I argue that teachers, while displaying autonomous qualities themselves (Lamb 2008), should create the right learning environment for independent work, conduct lessons in a way that engages active participation (Federowicz et al. 2015), tailored to students' preferences, making use of technological assets (e.g. Kahoot) and enabling the application of different learning strategies. Since successful mentoring and coaching relationships are commonly positively associated with development of student`s autonomy and performance outcomes (Pawlak 2019) further support from them and moving away from the typical hierarchy of teacher > learner (Alonazi 2017) may not only facilitate building on students' awareness and motivation, but also change their attitudes towards the perception of remote classes.

All these implications should contribute positively to building an autonomous learning community, focused on long-term learning outcomes and following the principle of life-long learning. Consequently, contributing to increased learning effectiveness as well as perception of remote learning no longer as a punishment based on weaknesses, but as a special opportunity to develop one's own skills and competences and a motivational attempt.

6. Future research directions

Although the issue of fostering autonomy in remote settings is gaining increasing attention among learning theorists and practitioners, most research does not go beyond the educational framework and does not seek ideas or solutions in other fields of study. I, therefore, call for a wider use of theory from HRM to promote a more comprehensive understanding of how high-performance practices can be applied in learning contexts and how they contribute to positive learning outcomes.

In addition to understanding the process underlying remote student adaptations, there is an urgent need for future research to evaluate the effectiveness of such adaptations. Further research in this area would enable us to see what particular adjustments work for different individuals (perhaps taking into account different fields of study, ages, motivation levels etc.) and what impact this may have on long-term learning outcomes and learners' perceptions of distance learning. Future research may also provide answers to emerging questions such as

- whether, after a period of time, students who were encouraged during the COVID-19 pandemic to learn autonomously actually found their learning more effective;
- whether students' attitudes towards remote learning are less negative after applying the aforementioned adjustments;
- whether they see learning progress after changing their attitude towards distance learning for a more positive one.

To accurately address the challenges associated with the need to increase learner effectiveness in an increasingly challenging online education environment, collaborative research between learners/students and representatives of different education-related communities (teachers, curriculum framework managers, book and guidance editors) may be of particular use. Such multi-faceted collaborations can lead to the development of

integrated and comprehensive solutions to the persistent problems faced by learners during the COVID-19 virus pandemic.

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