



MODELS FOR IMPLEMENTING INDIVIDUAL EDUCATIONAL TRAJECTORIES OF STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

This article examines various models for designing and implementing individual educational trajectories. Expanding students' opportunities for independent learning and taking into account their abilities and needs are among the core principles of the modern higher education system. From this perspective, several models of individual educational trajectories have been developed. The study analyzes existing approaches, explores their advantages and limitations, and offers recommendations for their effective application in educational practice.

KEYWORDS: Individual educational trajectory, higher education, educational models, learner-centered instruction, variable educational components.

INTRODUCTION

The contemporary education system is undergoing rapid change, requiring higher adaptability to students' needs. To improve the quality of education and to consider learners' individual characteristics, higher education institutions are increasingly introducing individual educational trajectories. These trajectories enable students to select clusters of courses aligned with their abilities, interests, and future professional pathways.

First and foremost, it is essential to review scholarly perspectives on the concept of the "individual educational trajectory." Numerous researchers have conducted studies in this area and proposed diverse approaches and interpretations.

According to S.A. Vdovina and I.M. Kungurova, an individual educational trajectory serves as a determining factor in shaping a learner's specific educational pathway. Its core essence is defined by the structure of knowledge embedded in the curriculum and the extent to which the learner masters this content, ultimately contributing to the attainment of personally significant educational outcomes[3].

According to A.S. Gayazov, an individual learning pathway and an individual educational trajectory constitute integral components of a generalized educational route and are formed on the basis of a creative approach. He emphasizes that the fundamental aspects of an individual trajectory include enabling the learner to study at a personalized pace and ensuring the development of their own cognitive domain while taking into account their personal and psychological characteristics [5;27].

One of the most essential components of the learner-centered education concept is granting higher education students the right to independently select a certain portion of the curriculum, thereby enabling them to construct their own individual educational trajectory. The individual educational trajectory is implemented on the basis of a specially designed study plan. This plan is developed in accordance with the educational program and encompasses both compulsory and elective (variable) components[6].

As emphasized by T.V. Vergun, O.Yu. Kolosova, and V.N. Goncharov a properly organized individual educational trajectory is beneficial for all participants in the educational process[4;315]. In particular, students obtain opportunities to acquire knowledge not only within their primary field of study, but also from other disciplines. For example, a software developer may wish to develop social and communication skills in order to present products effectively and interact efficiently with clients.

Moreover, studying in mixed groups offers students the possibility of gaining informal experience from peers in different specializations. Employers, in turn, benefit by recruiting specialists who possess the competencies required by the labor market. Higher education institutions become more attractive to prospective applicants. Professors who teach elective (variable) academic components also gain the opportunity to work with highly motivated students who choose subjects aligned with their interests.

A variety of models have been proposed for the effective design of individual educational trajectories, each of which is based on specific pedagogical principles. This article analyzes seven key models for implementing individual educational trajectories and examines the practical aspects associated with each of them.

Based on the reviewed definitions, scholarly viewpoints, and literature, an individual educational trajectory can be defined as an educational pathway constructed in accordance with a student's personal characteristics, interests, and future professional orientation. Such an approach serves to achieve the following objectives:

- enhancing student autonomy in the learning process;
- ensuring flexibility within the educational system;
- preparing specialists who meet the requirements of the labor market;
- integrating modern technologies and interdisciplinary approaches into the educational process.

In designing individual educational trajectories, primary attention is given to maintaining a balance between compulsory and elective components. Additionally, integration with diverse forms of instruction—traditional, online, and blended learning modalities—is of particular importance.

There are several models for implementing individual educational trajectories. Based on the results of the study, the following five models have been identified:

1. Full Academic Choice Model (Liberal Arts)

According to the “Encyclopaedia Britannica”, the Liberal Arts model is characterized by an educational curriculum in colleges and universities that prioritizes providing students with broad-based knowledge and developing their intellectual and critical-thinking abilities. This feature distinguishes it from professional or technical education programs, which primarily focus on specialized vocational training[<https://global.britannica.com/topic/liberal-arts>].

The Association of American Colleges and Universities defines the Liberal Arts educational model as “an approach that prepares students to engage with the complexity, diversity, and change of the contemporary world.” This approach enables learners to broaden their understanding of the world by studying both the natural and the humanities disciplines, while also allowing them to pursue in-depth study of a field aligned with their interests[1; 2].

This model allows students to independently select up to 25% of the curriculum. Formed on the basis of Liberal Arts programs, it is widely implemented in leading universities of the United States and Europe.

Advantages:

- Increases student autonomy
- Fosters unique knowledge and skills
- Promotes interdisciplinary approaches

Limitations:

- May result in insufficient specialization
- Difficulties in designing a flexible study plan

2. Restricted Choice Model

In this model, students are allowed to select courses within a predetermined academic field. For example, a student may choose several subjects from social and humanities disciplines, psychological-pedagogical studies, or legal studies. The main advantage of this model is that it preserves the alignment of the curriculum with the chosen specialty, thereby contributing to the development of professional competence.

However, the limitation of this model is that the student does not possess absolute freedom of choice and is subject to certain institutional restrictions. Consequently, the formation of an individual educational trajectory partly becomes the responsibility of the institution and academic program coordinators. To mitigate this limitation, it is advisable to actively involve students and alumni in discussions regarding the number and quality of elective courses.

Advantages:

- Ensures structural coherence of the curriculum
- Enables students to acquire in-depth knowledge within a specific field

Limitations:

- Limited freedom of choice
- Reduced opportunities for interdisciplinary integration

3. Block Model

In this model, clearly defined blocks are developed for each educational direction, and the student selects one of these blocks. The model requires choosing courses in large thematic clusters. This approach is aimed at training specialists with a narrow professional focus within a particular field, which constitutes its principal advantage.

The model ensures gradual specialization and is structured according to the student's future professional trajectory or employer requirements. It can be implemented in stages: initially, students are offered broad academic directions, and subsequently they are guided toward a specialized block that allows them to develop a narrow area of expertise. Once a block is selected, the student is required to complete all academic components included in it.

Advantages:

- Provides opportunities for deep professional specialization
- Facilitates alignment with labor market demands

Limitations:

- Adaptation to rapidly changing labor market requirements may be challenging

4. Major–Minor Model



In this model, students complete coursework in a primary specialization (major) and an additional field (minor).

Advantages:

- Enables the preparation of multi-profiling specialists
- Expands career opportunities

Limitations:

- May increase the academic workload

5. Mobility Window Model

This model incorporates student mobility through exchange programs at foreign universities.

Advantages:

- Provides opportunities for acquiring international experience
- Facilitates adaptation to global labor market requirements

Limitations:

- Planning and coordination may be challenging for higher education institutions

Individual educational trajectories are applied in various countries. For example, in the United States and Europe, the Liberal Arts model is widespread, while in Russia, the Major–Minor model is being actively tested. In Uzbekistan, variable components of education are being introduced within the credit-module system.

Research findings demonstrate that there is no universally optimal model for higher education. Instead, each university must select a flexible approach that aligns with its institutional capabilities and strategic priorities.

In conclusion, the effective implementation of individual educational trajectories requires higher education institutions to adopt a flexible, student-centered, and labor-market-oriented approach. This involves avoiding overly rigid academic standards and instead offering variable curriculum components that take into account students' personal interests, levels of preparedness, and future career goals. Furthermore, analyzing the advantages and limitations of existing models and combining different approaches—such as full academic choice, restricted choice, block models, major–minor structures, and mobility windows—can significantly enhance the overall effectiveness of the educational process. Such a combined strategy contributes to the development of students' decision-making skills, professional adaptability, interdisciplinary competencies, and readiness for integration into the global labor market. Therefore, the successful implementation of individual educational trajectories requires active collaboration among educational institutions, faculty members, students, and employers, as well as continuous improvement of academic programs.

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