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Teachers' beliefs about the limitations and opportunities for supporting student autonomy at school

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1. Introduction

The school is constantly changing. To the main objectives of school - to ensure the achievement of academic results - new ones are added: the development of social-emotional skills, creativity, independence, initiative, etc. [OECD 2019]. Several generations of State Education Standards define the requirements to the content, goals and results of each of the levels of school education. Among them are the development of autonomy, responsibility, initiative of the child (FSES[12]). The changes taking place at the national level, recorded in the State Education Standards, are in line with the world practice and policy in the field of school education [Luksha et. al., 2018] on the development of agency, proactivity, initiative of school-age children.

It depends on the teacher whether conditions will be created to support children's autonomy and initiative, whether this result is the focus of his/her efforts. The teacher's attitude to the development of student autonomy can affect the extent to which the requirements stated in the State Education Standard will be implemented, how successfully and sustainably it will be done [Graczyk et. al., 2006, Hattie, 2012]. Beliefs are key indicators of teachers' beliefs of external requirements [Hattie, 2012, p. 22]. And their judgements, thoughts, and overall attitudes towards autonomy can in turn influence their teaching practices [Pajares, 1993, p. 45; Skott, 2013]. Teachers who are convinced of the importance of autonomy are more likely to integrate the principles into their practice [Bryan, 2012].

Modern trends in school education create new opportunities to support student autonomy and initiative. For example, there are extracurricular and project activities in which children can realise their ideas. The number of extracurricular activities is growing, interest in self-management practices and individual educational routes is intensifying [Polivanova et al., 2020]. These changes have been comprehended by science, and in the literature one can find terms that describe this phenomenon: "unpacking of education", "erosion", "de-structuring". [Sorokin et al., 2020]. But by themselves, the conditions favourable to support autonomy would be insufficient without the mediating role of the teacher, who makes these conditions functional, or overlooks them, or moreover, limits them. The sociological tradition more often views school as an institution [Coleman, 1968; Durkheim, 1996;

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[1] Order of the Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation of 31 May 2021 No. 287 "On Approval of the Federal State Educational Standard of Basic General Education". URL:
https://www.garant.ru/products/ipo/prime/doc/401333920/ (date of circulation: 19.01.2024)

[2] Order of the Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation of 12 August 2022 N 732 "On Amendments to the Federal State Educational Standard of Secondary General Education, approved by Order of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation of 17 May 2012 N 413". URL: https://www.garant.ru/hotlaw/federal/1565894/ (date of circulation: 19.01.2024)

Parsons, 2008]. School is usually studied as a set of related factors, the combination of which determines the final measurable result expressed in final achievements - grades, results of final tests. The description of school in terms of an institution, organisation, structure has a long history and most of all strengthens the problem of individual, non-determined by the structure choice, manifestation of the child's will, autonomy. Prominent thinkers have emphasised the impossibility of autonomy/freedom in the institution of school [Goffman, 2019; Foucault, 1999]. This assumption of school problematises the teacher's view and practice of supporting autonomy. To what extent school teachers accept the new task of supporting autonomy depends on the teacher's awareness of new possibilities and their interpretations, as well as real actions (practices).

Thus, we find a recognition of the need to orient the school towards the development of student autonomy, to reduce the rigidity of the school structure as an organisation (de-structuring). And these new conditions require the teacher to expand the repertoire of practices, to change his/her attitude to many aspects of school routines. However, neither the content of teachers' perceptions of autonomy development, nor the actual practices of support are described and discussed in the scientific field.

Teachers find themselves in a difficult situation: to provide subject results that require a high level of regulation and control, while at the same time demanding to create conditions to support autonomy, which implies reducing control and providing space for free action. A legitimate question arises: to what extent teachers can support the declared declarations, to what extent it is a realistic task.

At the theoretical level, it is not clear to what extent institutional change processes are conceptualised and accepted by teachers. In our study, teachers' beliefs about autonomy and practices of autonomy support are a new methodological tool to describe to what extent new school opportunities are actually supported by teachers and how this happens.

Scientific apparatus of the study

The object of the dissertation research is the phenomenon of student`s autonomy.

The subject of the dissertation research is teachers' beliefs about autonomy and practices of its support both in and out of the classroom.

The aim of the study: to discover/identify the extent to which teachers accept the task of developing autonomy (beliefs) and take steps to realise it (practices).

Research questions

1. Is the task of developing autonomy presented in the normative documents of the Russian school education system? How is autonomy defined?

2. How is the school as an institution and as an educational space organised in terms of opportunities to support autonomy?

3. How do teachers use new institutional opportunities in connection with destructuring?

4. How do teachers understand and develop students' autonomy?

5. Are there limits to autonomy support in the classroom-lesson system and what are these limits according to teachers' beliefs?

Objectives of the study

1. To identify and describe modern ideas about autonomy as an educational result of general education as it is reflected in normative documents (Federal State Educational Standard and Federal Educational Programs).

2. To highlight theoretical views on school in connection with opportunities for the development of autonomy (as it is defined in different theoretical approaches).

3. To identify and describe teachers' response strategies to the processes of institutional change in relation to de-structuring.

4. To determine the content of teachers' beliefs about autonomy and practices to support it.

5. To determine the boundaries of possibilities of transformation of teachers' practices to support autonomy (according to teachers' beliefs).

Hypotheses of the study

1. Teachers' beliefs about autonomy and about practices are reduced to the need to master the skill of independent learning, in other words, mastery of subject material, and do not assume characteristics unrelated to learning.

2. Teachers' beliefs about possibilities of children's autonomy development contain the idea of school as an institution limiting the possibilities of such development.

Research methodology

During the work, several interrelated empirical studies were conducted, both qualitative and quantitative. Schematically, the sequence of studies and their relationship is presented in the figure below (Figure 1).

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┌─────────────────────────────────────────┐
│  How do teachers respond to the process  │
│  of de-structuring in school? (№1)       │
└─────────────────────────────────────────┘
                    │
                    ▼
┌─────────────────────────────────────────┐
│  How do teachers define autonomy and     │
│  what practices do they use? (№2)        │
└─────────────────────────────────────────┘
          ↙                      ↘
┌──────────────────────┐   ┌──────────────────────┐
│ What is the content  │   │ What practices to    │
│ of the concept of    │   │ support autonomy are │
│ autonomy in          │   │ prevalent? (№4)      │
│ teachers' beliefs?   │   │                      │
│ (№3)                 │   │                      │
└──────────────────────┘   └──────────────────────┘
          ↘                      ↙
      ┌─────────────────────────────────┐
      │ What are the opportunities and  │
      │ constraints to support          │
      │ autonomy? (№5)                  │
      └─────────────────────────────────┘
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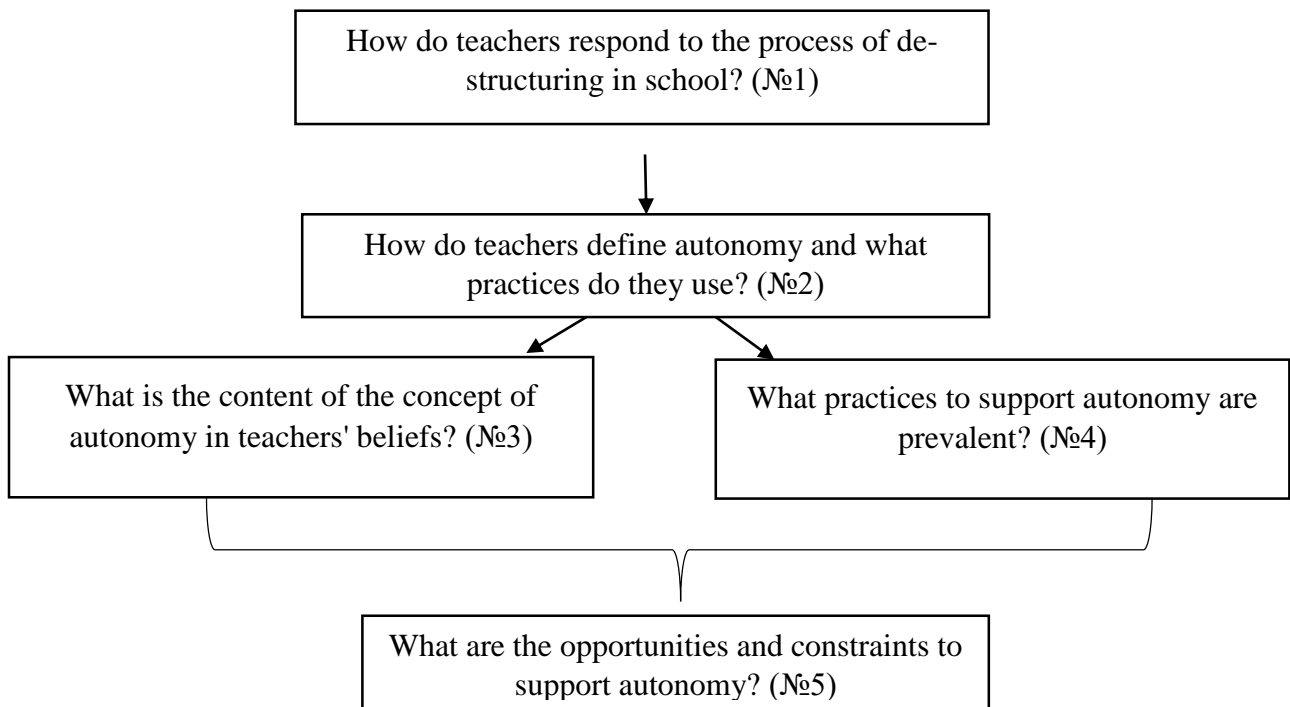
Figure 1: Schematic diagram of the relationship between the five empirical studies

All qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis logic using MaxQDA software [Braun & Clarke, 2019; Saldana, 2011]. The data was transcribed and then codes were extracted, both inductively and deductively. Codes were grouped into categories and themes. The interviews were conducted using metaphors and cases that stimulate respondents to recall, respond, and express their point of view more meaningfully [Kagan, 1992, Leavy et al., 2007].

When analyzing data from quantitative surveys, the Jamovi statistical package was used. The following were carried out: correlation analysis, variance, exploratory factor analysis.

The purpose of **study № 1** was to record and describe teachers' response strategies to changes in the school institution as one of the conditions for the development of autonomous behavior of students. Study was conducted within the framework of qualitative methodology. The material for analysis was semi-structured interviews. The views of 15 teachers of different disciplines of primary

and secondary schools with at least 3 years of experience were studied. Respondents were recruited using the snowball method through the social network VKontakte.

Study № 2 was conducted within the framework of qualitative methodology. The material for analysis was semi-structured interviews (n=21). Respondents were recruited using the snowball method through the social network VKontakte.

Study № 3 aimed to create a questionnaire to assess the structure of teachers' beliefs about student autonomy. 713 respondents took part in the survey. The questionnaire made it possible to differentiate teachers' interpretation of the construct of independence as independence or volitional functioning. The sample is voluntary. The recruitment of respondents took place with the assistance of master's students in the educational program "Educational Management" in the fall of 2023, who participated in project activities to study the beliefs of teachers in those schools in which they held administrative positions. The psychometric properties of the questionnaire were found to be acceptable for assessing teachers' beliefs and identifying their structure.

To clarify and describe teachers' beliefs about autonomy support practices, a survey was conducted (**Study № 4**). The sample included 260 teachers of secondary schools from different regions of Russia. Quantitative and qualitative content analysis of the practices described in the questionnaire was used [Busygina, 2021].

Study № 5 was carried out using case study methodology. To describe possible barriers, a project was undertaken to implement practices to support autonomy in the classroom. The study of beliefs was based on the methodology of action research. An invitation to participate was sent to all interview participants. A working group was formed, consisting of 6 people who voluntarily agreed to participate in the project for 6 months, accompanied by a mentor. Qualitative data (diaries, plans, interviews, focus group) were transcribed and subjected to thematic analysis, codes and categories were identified, which were then interpreted within a given theoretical framework. Several interrelated empirical studies, both qualitative and quantitative, have been conducted in the course of this work.

Theoretical framework of the thesis research

The construct of teachers' beliefs [Pajares, 1992; Skott, 2009] was used to analyse the changes taking place in the school, which allows to reconstruct the school in order to discover in it the a priori existing conditions for supporting autonomy. School was described in the sociological tradition as an institution [Durkheim, 1996; Parsons, 2008] and through trends of destructuring [Sorokin et al., 2020] as an educational space [Polivanova et al. 2020]. Self-determination was considered in accordance with the theory of self-determination [Deci, Ryan, 2008]. Educators' beliefs were analysed with differentiation into independence and volitional functioning [Soenens et al., 2017].

The main points put forward for defence

1. The Federal State Educational Standard and Federal Educational Programs define the development of student`s autonomy as one of the most important educational outcomes. The concept of "autonomy" is defined in the texts in multiple ways: as a set of skills responsible for independent learning (the block "Subject Outcomes") and as personal characteristics of a student: readiness and ability of students to self-development and personal self-determination (the block "Personal Outcomes").

2. Historically, the school emerged as an institution for preparing a child for life in an industrial society. Today the school is transforming, expanding the nomenclature of expected educational results. Opportunities for supporting autonomy in the conditions of institutional processes associated with the trend of destructuring are found.

3. Institutional changes taking place in the school lead to different strategies of response on the part of teachers: from retention, preservation of the structure of the school institution (inherent regulations, rituals, rules) to active use of emerging opportunities.

4. There are two poles of teachers' beliefs about autonomy. Most teachers reduce the understanding of autonomy to the skill of autonomy in the sphere of learning. They hold only one task: learning. A smaller proportion of teachers link autonomy to volitional functioning in curricular and extracurricular domains. Practices supporting independence prevail over practices supporting volitional functioning. The task of developing autonomy is accepted only to the extent that teachers see changes at the institutional level. A tool for assessing teachers' beliefs can be the author's questionnaire, which distinguishes between constructs such as diligence, volitional functioning and independence.

5. Obstacles to supporting volitional functioning in the classroom, according to teachers' beliefs, are the constraints external to teachers related to the classroom-lesson system. The most favourable conditions for supporting autonomy can be created in extracurricular activities.

The scientific novelty of the study consists in enriching theoretical knowledge about the nature of variability of institutions (on the example of school education) by analysing the beliefs of its main actors - teachers. Teachers' beliefs are analysed with differentiation into independence and volitional functioning and the prevalence of independence as demanded by the learning situation and orientation to the subject result while maintaining the classroom-lesson system of education is shown.

Practical significance of the study

The results of the study can serve as a basis for:

1. To develop professional development programmes for teachers in the situation of expanding the nomenclature of planned educational outcomes.

2. For reflexive evaluation of the real practice of pedagogical professional behavior of teachers in the situation of supporting children's autonomy.

3. Content expansion of the repertoire of pedagogical practices.

4. To justify the transformation of the structural stability of the school as an institution aimed at ensuring subject outcomes.

Results of the study

Let us present the main findings of the study correlated with the research questions in tabular form (table 1) and comment on the results of the research series. Each research question is correlated with a particular study and outcome.

Table 1. Relevance of research questions, studies conducted and results

№	Research question	Research	Result	Provision
1	Is the task of forming aytonomy presented in the normative documents of the Russian school education system? How is autonomy defined?	The conceptual analysis of official documents regulating the sphere of education has been carried out, the main moduses of the use of the term "autonomy" have been highlighted.	The Federal State Educational Standard and Federal Educational Programs set the importance of studying autonomy, but do not clarify the definitions explicitly. Three moduses of using the term "autonomy" are identified. Each modus is correlated with the conceptualisation of autonomy proposed in the scientific literature, and the choice of the theory of self-determination of personality is justified.	The Federal State Educational Standard and Federal Educational Programs define the development of children's autinimy as one of the most important educational outcomes. The concept of "autonomy" is defined in the texts in multiple ways: as a set of skills responsible for independent learning (block "Subject Outcomes") and as personal characteristics of a student: readiness and ability of students to self-development and personal self-determination (block "Personal Outcomes").

2	How is the school as an institution and as an educational space structured in terms of opportunities to support autonomy?	A review of approaches to understanding the nature of the school has been carried out. The criterion for selecting these or those approaches is the degree of expansion of conditions for supporting autonomy. The school is considered from the historical and pedagogical perspective, from the sociological point of view and in accordance with modern approaches explaining the tendencies of "unpacking", "de-structuring".	Various theories and approaches to understanding the essence, structure, functions of school question the possibility of supporting autonomy understood as volitional functioning. However, the given empirical data testify to the emergence of such opportunities in school, which allows describing school in terms of educational space.	Historically, the school emerged as an institution to prepare a child for life in an industrial society. Today the school is transforming, expanding the nomenclature of expected educational outcomes. Opportunities to support autonomy in the conditions of institutional processes associated with the trend of destructuring have been found.
3	How do teachers utilise new institutional opportunities in relation to de-structuring?	Study No. 1 Capturing and describing teachers' beliefs about changes in the institution of school as one of the conditions for the development of autonomous behaviour of students.	At the level of beliefs, changes in three highlighted elements of the school structure were recorded: rituals, disciplinary practices, and the type of relationships. Strategies of response to the processes of school transformation took place in the form of: -adaptation and their use (rejection, mitigation, emergence of new practices). -to retain elements of the structure, to maintain the status-quo.	The institutional changes taking place at school lead to different strategies of response on the part of teachers: from holding on, preserving the structure of the school institution (inherent regulations, rituals, rules) to actively using the emerging opportunities.

| 4 | How do teachers understand and develop student`s autonomy? | Studies №2,3,4 Content analysis of beliefs about autonomy, autonomous behaviour at school | Three groups of teachers' beliefs about autonomy were identified. From the first group to the third, the value of independence decreases and the value of volitional functioning increases, while the importance of control in pedagogical practices decreases and the sphere of support for autonomy expands. Teachers' beliefs are shown to be dominated by a view of autonomy as independence. The prevalence of practices that support independence has been shown. | There are two poles of teachers' beliefs about autonomy. Most teachers reduce the understanding of autonomy to the skill of independence in the area of learning. They hold only one task: learning. A smaller proportion of teachers link autonomy to volitional functioning in curricular and extracurricular domains. Practices supporting independence prevail over practices supporting volitional functioning. The task of developing autonomy is accepted only to the extent that teachers see changes at the institutional level. A tool for assessing teachers' beliefs can be the author's questionnaire, which distinguishes between such constructs as diligence, volitional functioning and independence. |
| 5 | Are there limits to supporting autonomy in a classroom-lesson system and what are these limits according to teachers' beliefs? | Study №5 Analysing and describing opportunities and constraints in implementing autonomy support practices in action research logic | Significant limitations were found when introducing practices to support autonomy. Providing choice, differentiation according to children's interests and needs, and reduced control led to risks of non-involvement, educational losses in the conditions of mass education and requirements to ensure subject results. | According to teachers' opinion, the obstacles to support volitional functioning in the classroom are the constraints external to teachers related to the class-lesson system. The most favourable conditions for supporting autonomy can be created in extracurricular activities. |

Autonomy is the new outcome of school education

The Federal State Educational Standard set the importance of studying autonomy, but do not explicitly clarify the definitions. Analysing the context of the use of the concept of "autonomy" in these documents allows us to conclude that there are at least three modus operandi of the term, which

determines its multiple meanings. Within the first modus, skills prevail: to be able to do something. Here autonomy can be described as functional independence, described also through the constructs of self-regulated learning, learning autonomy. The second modus of autonomy is described in terms close to the theory of self-determination: autonomy, autonomous motivation, self-determination, volitional functioning. The third modus of autonomy permeates all types of results at the value level, but it is least clear what kind of autonomy we are talking about. Thus, in the part of regulative skills and subject results, the explication of autonomy has a pronounced character. The field of autonomy manifestation is clear, indicators of independent behaviour are set, and operationalisation is easier. Explication of autonomy when describing personal results is difficult: there are no indicators of behaviour and the field for its development and, accordingly, assessment is not quite clear. Moreover, when studying the module of autonomy as an autonomy and as a value described in the section of personal outcomes, the researcher encounters a palette of terms that have few common links, both at the level of research tradition and at the level of behavioural indicators. Self-determination is understood both as self-determination and meaning-making, it is connected with the concept of the internal position of the individual and self-concept, and it is associated with initiative and freedom. This approach is the least studied, and therefore represents a more fruitful field for research.

Further, in order to achieve the goals and objectives of the study, the understanding and theoretical content of autonomy will be associated with the term autonomy. According to the theory, autonomy is an innate need for self-determination. Along with the other two needs (connectedness and competence), fulfilment of the need for autonomy leads to increased ability and a desire to develop [Ryan & Deci, 2000]. Research among adolescents has shown that satisfaction of the need for autonomy is associated with outcomes such as: well-being [Cordeiro P. et. . al. 2016], development of a healthy identity [Luyckx et. al., 2009].

The authors distinguish the aspect of independence and autonomy or volitional functioning [Soenens et al., 2017]. In the first case, the study of autonomy as functioning without the help of others (independence) is rooted in the theory of separation-individuation, the relationship between the degree of independence and age is emphasised. Autonomy as independence is defined through the degree to which a person behaves, decides or thinks without relying on others [Goossens, 2006; Steinberg, 2002]. Here the authors introduce the distinction of independence into emotional and functional independence [Hoffman, 1984]. The second aspect of autonomy-volitional functioning-is studied within the framework of self-determination theory [Ryan, 2023]. Volitional functioning involves actions that are consistent with an individual's deeply held accepted preferences, interests, and values. The opposite pole of this dimension of autonomy is represented by controlled functioning, acting under pressure to feel certain feelings and act in certain ways [Soenens et al., 2017]. This

distinction of autonomy can be used when interpreting the main provisions of the FSES. Autonomy as self-acceptance, as self-determination, as an internal position of the individual or self-concept can be described through the construct of volitional functioning. Independence as a skill, as the ability to do something without the help of another, rather corresponds to functional independence. The literature review also highlighted the conditions of autonomy support.

Research on autonomy and autonomous motivation as applied to learning contexts postulates the importance of the following conditions [Reeve et. al., 2018]:

-supportive autonomy-supportive pedagogical style;
-providing choices;
-requirements
-allocation of time for independent work.

If we distinguish the conditions of autonomy support and the ways of support outside the learning context, they are just as related:

-encouraging volitional functioning and the ability to take action based on one's own values and interests;
-providing opportunities to develop and express their beliefs, feelings, opinions;
-help in exploring their interests [Grolnick, 2002; Ryan et. al., 2005].

Theoretical approaches to understanding the nature of school in the context of opportunities to support autonomy

School is a complex social and pedagogical category. Having emerged as a mass phenomenon during the transition to industrial society, the school gradually began to fulfil a number of institutional functions to meet the needs of society in the reproduction and transmission of cultural experience.Husén, 2006]. However, the mere enumeration of institutional features does not exhaust the diversity of manifestations of the school phenomenon. As a result of the review of approaches to understanding the nature of the school, two ways of defining the school have been identified: as a social institution [Feinberg, Soltis, 2009; Parsons, 1998; Coleman, 1968; Durkheim, 1996] and as an educational space [Polivanova et al., 2022; Vlasova, Makarova, 2016; Lyubitskaya et al., 2018; Sorokin et al., 2021], which define the place and degree of schoolchildren's autonomy in different ways.

Different theories and approaches to understanding the essence, structure, functions of school question the possibility of supporting autonomy understood as volitional functioning. The theoretical perspectives on school considered in the review fix a teacher-centred approach in practices, highlight explicit (social order) [Tyack & Cuban, 2009Tyack, Tobin, 1994], justify the impossibility of the existence of elements of progressive or critical pedagogy in school by the logic of its historical development [Frumin, 1998]. At the same time, a new reality is unfolding today, challenging from the outside and manifesting itself from within the school as an institution, as an institution, as a historical and pedagogical phenomenon. Empirical data are reflected in the phenomenon of "de-structuring", "unpacking", "erosion" of the school. We assume that under such conditions, opportunities for supporting autonomy increase. Whether teachers see these new opportunities, utilise them in their practice, or strive to do so, depends on their beliefs.

Teachers' concept of beliefs as a model for analysing the autonomy support capability pole

The teacher is a key figure in implementing the requirements of the Standard [Sanders & Rivers, 1996]. The most extensive research on the teacher's role in children's educational outcomes is reflected in the work of John Hattie. He showed that teachers have a significant impact on learning. And although the purpose of Hattie's work was to find the size of the effects of certain factors that influence the academic achievements of students, it seems to be a strong argument in favour of a significant role of teachers in any results of students, not only academic ones [Hattie, 2012]. Teachers have both indirect and direct influence on a child's personality, range of traits and characteristics even into adulthood [Chetty et al., 2014; Rivkin et al., 2005]. The teacher's task is broader than subject matter instruction. Teachers are models of moral practices, agents of education [Murrell et al., 2010; Sanger, Osguthorpe, 2011].

A cluster of work on the role of teachers' thoughts, feelings, attitudes has developed over the last 30 years [Richardson, 1996] due to the failed reforms of schooling in the 1960s [Richardson, 1996]. [Fives & Gill, 2015] and the search for reasons for the decline in the quality of education, even though new programmes of study were being actively introduced. It turned out to be important to understand what the teacher himself thinks and feels, what meanings he attaches to his activity and how he explains what is required of him. The interest in what teachers think and feel about different aspects of school life has resulted in conceptual diversity. The English-language education literature has developed a canon of studying teachers' thoughts, attitudes and perceptions through 'teacher beliefs'.

Teachers' beliefs about how things should be, what is right, what is wrong, play a key role in supporting all innovations [Thornburg, Mungai, 2011; Vähäsantanen, 2015].

Today, consensus on the nature and structure of beliefs has been partially achieved. Beliefs are psychological constructs that: (a) involve understandings, interpretations, or propositions that appear to be true; (b) determine a person's behaviour and support their decisions and judgements; (c) have highly variable and uncertain connections to personal, episodic, and emotional experiences; and (d) although undeniably related to knowledge, differ from knowledge in that they do not require confirmation of truth [Bryan, 2012].

The choice of construct is dictated by a number of methodological advantages:

-The beliefs represent a holistic image of the school, conditions, images of schoolchildren, and form an attitude towards the changes taking place in the school;

-Beliefs are influenced by experience. The institutional context of the school, filled with risks for not supporting autonomy, has a strong influence on their formation.

-belief content has a high explanatory potential in assessing the quality of particular transformations;

-The structure of beliefs, including value and knowledge components, allows us to analyse them.

The term 'teacher beliefs' is now widely used in the educational literature to explain classroom decision-making [Meirink et al., 2009; Pajares, 1992; Wallace, Priestley, 2011].

Teachers' beliefs about school in the context of change

(Study №1)

In order to describe teachers' beliefs about changes in the school institution as one of the conditions for the development of autonomy, interviews (n=15) with teachers of all levels of education were conducted. The sample is accessible, voluntary. Some teachers were recruited from the social network VKontakte, some teachers responded after placing an invitation in the TG channel of the Centre for Research on Modern Childhood. Further, the recruitment of respondents was carried out using the snowball method. The sample size was determined based on the criterion of maximising the information obtained. Teachers' age ranged from 25 to 60 years old. In order to capture the changes, we identified three key elements of the school structure as the most institutionalised, thanks to which one of the main functions of an institution - control and regulation of actions - is preserved [Durkheim, 1996]:

1) rituals;
2) disciplinary practices;
3) the type of relationship between teacher and student.

The following findings were highlighted from the interviews.

The course of the lesson, its beginning and end are traditionally filled with ritual practices. Most rituals demonstrate the teacher's authority over children. There are two ways in realisation of ritual practices. Either teachers keep them or there is a rejection of ritual actions.

"I start the lesson by getting up to switch attention and get them in the mood to work. I explain to them that we need to get our body in a working state and our brain switched on" (maths teacher, 36 years old, g.).

"I do not require children to stand up at the beginning of the lesson. Sometimes a few people stand up out of habit, but I don't pay attention to it" (biology teacher, 30 years old, g.).

Educators' responses regarding discipline and rules can be placed on a continuum from harsher scenarios to softer discipline.

"With weak children there is more strictness, discipline. In one class I spent two years fighting discipline up to the point of collective standing" (history teacher, 42, m.).

"I pick up assignments for them, explain, persuade, talk as equals" (history teacher, 29 years old, m.).

It was possible to identify two types of relationships between children and teachers: vertical and horizontal relationships.

"I like to lead the class and keep everyone on track" (Maths teacher, 59, w.)

"Often the children teach the teachers as well. They open new sources of information for me. They may know some details more deeply than I do" (biology teacher, 32, g.).

We found small changes in three highlighted elements of the structure: rituals, disciplinary practices, type of relationships. Strategies of response to the processes of school transformation took place in the form of:

- adaptation and their use (rejection, mitigation, emergence of new practices);

- to retain elements of the structure, to maintain the status quo.

Teachers' beliefs preserve and reproduce the established orders. Teachers are not ready to take a proactive stance towards institutional orders. The risks of control and not supporting autonomy are increasing. But, on the other hand, it was possible to record different degrees of readiness of a part of teachers to change, soften, bypass inviolable, stable structural elements. The transition to more flexible and soft practices can provide support for children's autonomy in school and act as a necessary condition for it.

Teachers' beliefs about child autonomy in school: content, structure, support conditions, practices (studies №2,3,4)

In order to analyse both the content and structure of beliefs about autonomy, the conditions and practices of its support, a series of empirical studies were conducted (№ 2,3,4).

Let's present the results for each study.

Study № 2

To analyse the diversity of meanings that teachers put into the everyday concept of autonomy, a series of interviews were conducted (n=21). The sample of teachers to be interviewed was constructed in order to create the most diverse cases possible. Initially, respondents were sought through social networks (VKontakte, Telegram channel of the Centre for Research on Modern Childhood). Teachers were sent messages describing the study and asking them to participate in interviews. Further, the recruitment of informants followed the snowball principle. The decision to stop data collection was made when a saturation point was reached. Interviews were conducted both face-to-face and online, with a maximum duration of 1.5 hours.

As a result of thematic analysis of the interview materials, three groups of beliefs were identified depending on their content, practices applied.

The content of the autonomy beliefs of the **first** group boils down to a set of characteristics manifested in a child's successful learning process.

"They are diligent, responsible <...> and the children themselves are like that: whatever you ask, whatever you say, whatever task you give them, they always respond. Their answers at lessons are detailed. They learn well" (teacher of Russian language and literature, 56 years old, w.).

The following pedagogical practices correspond to this interpretation of autonomy:

- control of lesson activities, availability of clear sanctions;
- assignments and tasks that the teacher gives to students;
- minimising choice, appealing to duty.

The second group of beliefs is characterised by a less consistent and holistic system of beliefs. The content of beliefs about independence is also filled with predominantly academic characteristics, i.e. an independent child is considered to be one who fulfils academic tasks by himself/herself. However, in the interviews there are also descriptions of independent behaviour beyond the scope of the lesson, related to solving small difficulties in life, showing initiative, and expressing one's own opinion.

"I, of course, try to defend the school's point of view - naturally, as a teacher. Although sometimes, you know, you think and agree with them that every child should have his/her own trajectory of development (English teacher, 33 years old, g.).

In the teachers' perceptions, which we attributed to the **third** group, the content of the concept of "independence" is significantly enriched by attributing to this concept children's activity, their initiative, volitional behaviour and decision-making.

Teachers associate with independence the child's adaptability, ability to overcome difficulties, intelligence.

"As a teacher, of course, I like children who are responsible, but knowing our modern realities of life, children who know how to get out of any situation - they are more successful and prosperous in life" (primary school teacher, 32 y., w.).

This interpretation of autonomy corresponds to the pedagogical practices we have defined as:

- reflective conversation;
- Recognising the value of life experience;
- A broad offer of extra-academic activity;
- minimisation of control

Study № 3

To test the hypothesis that teachers do not tend to think of autonomy in categories close to volitional functioning, but rather understand autonomy as independence, a questionnaire was developed to assess teachers' beliefs about autonomy and a survey was administered to a sample of 713 mainstream teachers.

The final questionnaire included 9 statements:

The concept of "Performance"

- An independent child has a well-developed sense of duty
- The independent child agrees to all suggestions/requests from teachers, not wanting to let the class, teachers down.
- An independent child, as a rule, studies well, trying to avoid external negative consequences: deterioration of relations with parents/teachers, decrease of authority in the class.

The concept of "Volitional Functioning"

- The independent child expresses his preferences, desires, discontent
- An independent child is selective with regard to the tasks and activities offered to him/her.
- An independent child knows what he or she wants and learns well only in subjects that meet his or her goals and values

The concept of "Independence"

- The independent child is in control of his/her own learning process, without reminders
- A self-reliant child sees things through to completion
- The independent child does without help/ with minimal help from the teacher when solving difficult tasks.

The results show a good fit of the 9 items to the selected three-factor structure. The number of factors coincided with the number of constructs on the basis of which the statements were formulated. In teachers' beliefs there is an understanding of autonomy as independence, volitional functioning, and performativity. The tables present the results of factor analysis, calculation of statistical model and assessment of scale reliability (Tables 2,3,4)

Table 2. Factor loadings

Factor	Assertion	Factor loadings
Diligence	An independent child has a well-developed sense of duty	0.383
	The independent child agrees to all suggestions/requests from teachers, not wanting to let the class, teachers down.	0.842
	An independent child, as a rule, studies well, trying to avoid external negative consequences: deterioration of relations with parents/teachers, decrease of authority in the class.	0.610

Volitional functioning	The independent child expresses his or her preferences, desires, discontent	0.485
	The independent child is selective about the tasks and activities he or she is offered	0.753
	An independent child knows what he or she wants and learns well only in subjects that meet his or her goals and values	0.540
Independence	The independent child is in control of his/her own learning process, without reminders	0.669
	A self-reliant child sees things through to completion	0.556
	Independent child does without/with minimal help from the teacher when solving difficult tasks	0.314
Cumulative %	-	

Table 3: Estimates of model fit

RMSEA	90% CI for RMSEA (upper)	TLI	BIC	χ^2	df	p
0.0248	0.05	0.986	-61.5	17.3	12	0.139

Table 4: Scale Reliability Indicators

			If item dropped	
Items	**Mean**	**SD**	**Cronbach's α**	**McDonald's ω**
Performance scale				
1	3.76	0.985	0.672	0.679
2	2.86	1.252	0.660	0.669
3	3.19	1.178	0.650	0.660
Volitional functioning scale				
4	3.49	1.063	0.666	0.680
5	3.65	0.975	0.679	0.692
6	3.27	1.118	0.706	0.710
Independence scale				
7	4.16	0.841	0.694	0.702
8	3.84	0.935	0.655	0.658
9	3.46	0.991	0.659	0.668

Table 5. Standardised mean and median scores for each scale

	Performance (factor 1)	Volitional functioning (factor 2)	Independence (factor 3)

Mean	3.27	3.47	3.84
Median	3.33	3.67	4
SE	0.0334	0.0295	0.0255

Figure 1. Confidence intervals of mean values for three factors
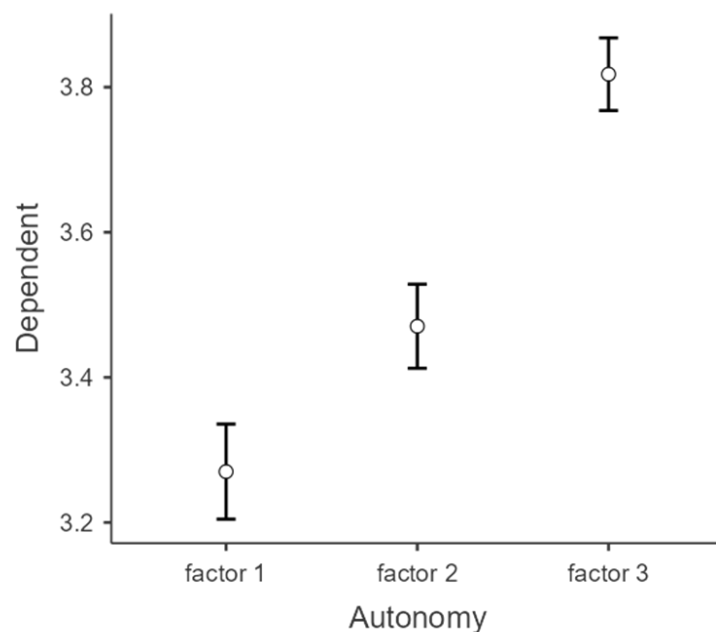
The beliefs that autonomy is manifested in independence in the academic sphere (Table 5, Diagram 1) testify to the preservation of teachers' practical logic related to preparation for exams and graduation from school. The value of a child's volitional functioning within the school walls, within the framework of a lesson is questioned. It is easier and clearer for a teacher to orient a child to perform tasks without the teacher's help than to support his/her values and interests. If in the first case, the experience of work at school suggests that the teacher's task in terms of independence is to make the child learn by himself/herself, i.e. to possess a skill or a sum of skills responsible for independence in learning (as it is prescribed in the meta-subject results), then the task to support volitional functioning in the lesson is not routine and trivial.   Understanding autonomy as a child's ability to express his or her preferences, to act on the basis of his or her values has medium agreement

ratings compared to independence. The value of volitional functioning remains hidden from the teacher, because manifestations of will most often disrupt the established order, require constant response and change of action plan. The teacher's desire to build learning skills for independent learning clashes with the child's will to learn those skills. An independent learner is not one who is selective, but one who is able to learn without the teacher's help.

Study № 4

A survey (n=260) was conducted to describe and analyse practices. The sample was formed through distribution to schools. The survey was conducted in the Kemerovo, Leningrad, Moscow and Rostov regions. Qualitative and quantitative content analysis was used. The following results were obtained based on the results of the survey.

Some teachers saw the solution to the problem of non-independence in even more control and order. Independence can be taught through familiarisation with rules, clarification of their duties, labour education.

Another pool of practices was related to the reduction of both parental and teacher control. The theme of parental role in education, when examined in more detail, broke down into two semantic blocks. On the one hand, it was necessary to reduce parental control in order for the child to do homework on his/her own, to be responsible for the learning process. Excessive guardianship, doing homework instead of or together with the child indirectly confirm the conclusion about the importance of independence. On the other hand, teachers believed that parents did not support the child in his/her endeavours enough, did not trust him/her, hence the child's insecurity and lack of independence. In both cases there is a reduction in parental control, but the projected ideal image of independence is fundamentally different. The practices taken out of the lesson could also be categorised into those that supported independence (e.g., assigning the task of preparing a school concert) and those that would support volitional functioning (giving children the opportunity to express themselves, to be supportive). Self-management practices were a popular measure to support independence. It allowed children to become involved in decision-making, planning their activities, to be active and proactive. But explanations of the necessity of self-management varied. In some cases, self-governance was seen as an opportunity to express oneself, to include children in the decision-making process. And some saw self-governance as an opportunity to give children new duties, new sphere of responsibility. Giving assignments to children was equated with an opportunity to prove themselves. Giving a child new responsibilities was included in the range of practices used to develop autonomy.

Among the practices mentioned was the teacher's opportunity to make mistakes. But here, too, it was viewed from different poles. Mistake as an opportunity to try without consequences and mistake as paying for the consequences. In the first case, the teacher psychologically supports the child; in the second case, it is the practice of "learning from one's own" mistakes and facing negative consequences.

Teachers saw trust as a measure of support for independence. In their opinion, trust contributes to the child's confidence in his/her abilities, and thus increases the likelihood of doing something independently, i.e. independently of an adult. Teachers suggested motivating and inspiring children to come up with different ideas and helping them to realise them.

Some teachers directly recognised the inability to support independence in the classroom due to preparation for tests and inflexible assessment systems.

To calculate the frequency of mentioning certain practices, we analysed each category. The calculation was made by correlating all mentioned practices with one or another aspect of autonomy. For example, the category "Beyond school" included the codes "school activities", "extracurricular activities", "project activities" and each code included several quotations that were matched for support for autonomy or volitional functioning. Thus, the coded fragment "Appoint duty officers, clean the school and classroom, decorate the school by children's efforts" was identified in the group of "practices supporting independence", and "Create space and allocate time for free creative activity" in the group of practices supporting volitional functioning. Of the 186 who responded to this survey question, we obtained a quantitative predominance of independence support practices. Not all codes were included in the calculation (n=260), as some of the mentioned practices did not refer to either the practices of supporting independence or the practices of supporting volitional functioning. The frequency of mentioning independence support practices n=34% of the number of respondents, and the frequency of occurrence of supporting volitional functioning practices n=20%.

Thus, in teachers' practices there are tendencies to increase control, to preserve the lesson structure, to minimise choice. Practices aimed at support, development of independence prevailed over practices oriented to support volitional functioning, which confirms the previously obtained results of the survey and interviews.

Study № 5. Limits of supporting autonomy in the classroom. Opportunities and risks

Previous research results indicate the presence (but not prevalence) of understanding of autonomy as volitional functioning in teachers' beliefs, close to the conditions described in the review of autonomy support practices. However, references in the responses to the inability to support autonomy in school led to the need to question the fundamental limitations of its support. To do this, teachers who had previously participated in interviews and expressed a desire to participate in the

autonomy support practices project were invited to participate. Of the 36 respondents, 6 responded. Three remained committed until the end of the project. Two fulfilled all the conditions of the project. Their cases are described below. The research was carried out in a case study methodology using action research technology [Feldman, et al., 2018].

Alexandr`s case

As a result of participation in the project, the teacher realised the narrow limits of the lesson and the limits of independent learning. The teacher realised that the lesson is not the place to support such independence, which is connected with the child's volitional functioning. The form of the lesson does not envisage familiarity with life situations, does not envisage expansion of freedom, and reduction of control, structuring of activity turns out to be a risk of failure in uninvolved children. The lesson cannot give different children different experiences of success. The need for certification narrows the area of manifestation and support of different interests and aptitudes of a child, except for narrow learning skills.

"Even the gradual introduction of all these practices leads to segregation and inequality based on the existing learning experience, family upbringing and classroom atmosphere. I have absolutely no idea what to do about it, as well as on the scale of the entire Russian education".

Before participating in the project, Alexander's knowledge of developing and supporting autonomy was based on the theory of learning activities. The ultimate understanding of a child's autonomy as being able to learn without the help of a teacher, choosing the track of learning the material independently, was expanded in the process of participation in the project by adding practices to support children's suggestions and initiatives.

"It's clear that solving 150 assignments on your own is not independence in any way."

"The very same "quasi-research" from developmental learning against this background leads the student to a specific outcome that he cannot change in the process and even the route himself is not able to make different either (i.e., we are still "putting into the child's head what we need", albeit with much prettier manipulation)."

Tatiana's case

Participation in the project influenced the dynamics of beliefs. Under the influence of visible changes in children's behaviour and achievement of the goals set before the project, the teacher became even more convinced of the effectiveness of such practices.

"The first lessons worked out to my satisfaction, I was only a regulator there. It was unusual for me. And then I said, maybe you don't need me? And they said, 'Let's give it a go'. For most of the children it was a good thing.

Tatiana's beliefs about the need for such autonomy-supporting practices were further strengthened in a situation of conflict with colleagues over the introduction of autonomy-supporting practices. However, there was a regret that the children began to see a clear difference between the forms of lesson organisation of different teachers. Previously they had not noticed this.

"And I ended up getting discouraged because the children became unhappier in other lessons also because of me. They started to notice this difference between my lessons and those of other teachers. I have nothing to say to them."

If earlier Tatiana doubted her own competence, despite the high value of autonomy, and did not know how to organise the learning process in such a way that autonomy would be a priority, then after participating in the project, she firstly confirmed in the idea that all her practices were intuitively correct, and secondly, she understood the limits of the opportunities offered by the school. She, just like Alexandra, faced the impossibility to support individual choice and initiative of a child in the classroom, and the reduction of control for all caused fears for uninvolved children and exacerbated the risks of failure.

"I felt like a criminal, throwing the children to the wolves. The decrease in supervision has partly led to some of the children actually stopping working."

Conclusion

This study identified and described opportunities and barriers to supporting autonomy in the institution of mass schooling through the lens of studying teachers' beliefs. The concept of teachers' beliefs was a methodological tool for studying school conditions that hinder or promote autonomy.

It was shown that autonomy is included in the list of educational outcomes. However, in the official documents regulating the school work, autonomy is expressed in multiple meanings, not specifically, and especially that part of educational results, which is called personal results. The analysis of official documents, on the one hand, actualised interest in the topic of independence, and on the other hand, acted as a separate factor influencing the content of the concept of independence in teachers' beliefs. Thus, the process of achieving outcomes related to autonomy is problematised at the stage of interpreting official sources.

Assigning the task of supporting and developing autonomy, among other things, depends on how teachers believe school. The contemporary view of school as an educational space creates

opportunities for teachers to support autonomy. Such a view of school allowed to capture and mediate a process of destructuring that is potentially rich in new conditions of autonomy support. A part of the teachers participate in and support the trend to reduce the binding power of the school structure. School in their views and practices is not a total institution. There is a place in school for manifestation of their own intentions, realisation of their ideas, trying things out. But the other part of teachers do not see and do not use new opportunities due to the trend of de-structuring. They stick to the strategy of preserving the old rules and rituals.

An attempt to penetrate into the meanings that teachers give to autonomy reveals similar findings. A part of teachers at the level of their own beliefs reduce the understanding of autonomy to the child's ability to learn, to fulfil the teacher's assignments independently of the adult. Uses appropriate practices that are aimed at developing independence. Another part of teachers enrich independence with features related to volitional action, self-understanding, activity, initiative. Beliefs about autonomy and school as a set of conditions favourable to support autonomy can be a separate opportunity factor or a barrier factor for achieving educational outcomes related to autonomy.

However, even that small group of teachers who are ready to join, to support the transformational processes in school, who have beliefs favourable to support volitional functioning and who possess an arsenal of means, methods, in the purposeful implementation of practices to support autonomy in the classroom, hit a "glass ceiling". The results of the study of their own action showed that the main barrier to the development of independence is the class-lesson system. The main risks voiced and reflected upon in the action research were related to academic loss, the emergence of a group of failing and/or uninvolved children. Teachers voiced the reasons for the emergence of these risks: mass learning and impossibility to provide individual support in case of failures, the need to master the subject content within a given time frame reduced the opportunities for choice, increased the difference between well-performing and unsuccessful children.

Summarising the research results, it is important to note that the measure of teachers' support for autonomy as an important educational outcome is determined by several factors:

-the clarity and possibility of operationalising the educational outcomes related to autonomy formulated in official sources;

-teachers' views of school (as an educational space or as an institution);

-understanding of autonomy (as the ability to rely on and act in accordance with one's own views and interests, or as the ability to fulfil independently of an adult a specific learning task set by an adult);

-practices consistent with these beliefs (related to supporting and developing independence or related to supporting volitional functioning);

-support of the teacher at the stage of realisation of practices of independence development by administration, team, parents;

-the choice of forms of adolescents' activities to support independence (giving preference to extracurricular forms of organising activities).

It also seems important to provide a number of recommendations for practitioners. The results of the series of studies allow us to compactly formulate a number of theses that could be correlated with these or those recommendations (Table 6)

Thesis	Recommendations
The modern view of school as an educational space provides teachers with new opportunities to support autonomy.	The task of changing teachers' beliefs about the school as an educational space involves the following measures. In the literature, the measures are associated with professional development courses that include a variety of experiences: active learning, group work, seminars, case studies [Hall, 2005; Lunn Brownlee, 2017]. Participation, being in a community of like-minded people, also has a proven effect on changing teachers' beliefs. In it, teachers find support, participate in solving practical cases, share experiences, and hear alternative viewpoints [Goodnough & Hung, 2008].. According to self-determination theory, teachers feel more autonomy, connectedness, and competence when they participate in such horizontal groups [Antinluoma, Ilomäki, & Toom, 2021]. A separate promising avenue for changing persistent beliefs that exclude an understanding of autonomy as volitional functioning is teacher participation in action research. If teachers, as a result of their own research, guided by a tutor or a group of like-minded teachers, become convinced of the effectiveness of their actions, see a measurable result of their own efforts, then there is a high probability that beliefs will change in favour of a broader understanding of autonomy [Laux, 2019].. In addition, at the level of school management, it is important to encourage the process of saturating the school with various activities of an educational nature, but without the features of the subject-oriented classroom-lesson system.

Teachers' beliefs about autonomy boil down to a student's independent performance of learning tasks or assignments.	Within the framework of the theory of self-determination of personality, ASIP (Autonomy Support and Integration Programme) school autonomy support courses have been developed. These are training workshops with elements of group discussion aimed at introducing practices to support the autonomy of schoolchildren [Cheon et.al. 2018].
Teachers in implementing practices to support autonomy faced barriers to support related to the classroom-lesson system of learning	Due to the fact that the lesson form of teaching makes an individual approach unlikely, reduces the quality and quantity of options for choice in the classroom, requires time and emotional expenses of the teacher, it is recommended to bring the practices of autonomy support to other, extracurricular forms of activity. At the same time, it is recommended to adhere to the pedagogical style that supports autonomy in the classroom [Haerens et. al., 2018; Reeve J., 2006]. The implementation of project, extracurricular activities, organisation of events on the initiative and idea of children can become an alternative to the scarce practices of supporting autonomy in the classroom. And also to increase teachers' sense of self-efficacy, professional development programmes are recommended; creating conditions for sharing experience with more experienced colleagues [Tschannen-Moran, 2002; Schunk and Pajares, 2009].

In relation to the study, it is necessary to articulate both some of its limitations and new areas of research and practice.

1.   At the research level, the processes of transformation of modern institutions are descriptive, poorly operationalised and theorised. The assumption adopted in this paper that these processes act as necessary conditions for supporting autonomy requires further confirmation and new data.

2 The abundance of educational offerings, both in and out of school, is not only a condition for supporting autonomy, but can also be a new challenge for the entire education system, as it further exposes the problem of inequality. In other words, supporting autonomy reinforces the differences in children's educational outcomes. In the long term, consideration and research on the autonomy deficit in schools should be complemented by other factors that mitigate educational inequalities by supporting autonomy.

3. The study of teachers' beliefs is a promising area because there is no comprehensive empirical evidence on their nature, variability, and factors influencing belief dynamics. This study assumed that beliefs (both explicit and implicit) are realised in practice. This is a significant limitation as there are

other approaches to understanding the links between practice (actions) and beliefs. This issue was partially resolved through case study research and the use of action research technology, but without observation. Testing this assumption requires further exploration of the practice-belief link, incorporating observation, videotaping of lessons, and ethnographic research in the school into the research design.

Thus, we believe that the study opens up a new research field and produces new research questions. This dissertation research allows us to formulate the following defence statements:

1.	FSES and FOP define the development of children's autonomy as one of the most important results of education. The concept of " autonomy" is defined in the texts in multiple ways: as a set of skills responsible for independent learning (the block "Subject Outcomes") and as personal characteristics of a pupil: readiness and ability of students to self-development and personal self-determination (the block "Personal Outcomes").

2 Historically, the school emerged as an institution for preparing a child for life in an industrial society. Today the school is transforming, expanding the nomenclature of expected educational results. Opportunities for supporting autonomy in the conditions of institutional processes associated with the trend of destructuring are found.

3.	Institutional changes taking place in the school lead to different strategies of response on the part of teachers: from retention, preservation of the structure of the school institution (inherent regulations, rituals, rules) to active use of emerging opportunities.

4.	There are two poles of teachers' beliefs about autonomy. Most teachers reduce the understanding of autonomy to the skill of independence in the sphere of learning. They hold only one task: learning. A smaller proportion of teachers link autonomy to volitional functioning in curricular and extracurricular domains. Practices supporting independence prevail over practices supporting volitional functioning. The task of developing autonomy is accepted only to the extent that teachers see changes at the institutional level. A tool for assessing teachers' beliefs can be the author's questionnaire, which distinguishes such constructs as, diligence, volitional functioning and independence.

5.	According to the teachers' opinion, the obstacles to support volitional functioning in the classroom are the constraints external to the teachers related to the classroom-lesson system. The most favourable conditions for supporting independence can be created in extracurricular activities.

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