

STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT: PERCEPTIONS OF SELF-EFFICACY, CONTROL, AND PERSONAL ORGANIZATION

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Abstract

This article explores the relationship between self-efficacy, perceived control, and personal organization as key components of academic success in international medical students. In multicultural academic environments, these students often encounter challenges related not only to the complexity of the curriculum, but also to the need for effective communication in a non-native language — particularly Romanian, which is used during clinical practice and patient interaction. Building on psychological theories of self-regulated learning and educational frameworks that emphasize student autonomy, the study aims to highlight how learners perceive and manage their academic responsibilities. Through the analysis of relevant literature and empirical data, the article examines the role of internal beliefs and behavioral strategies in coping with academic demands. The findings may inform teaching practices that promote academic adjustment, foster adaptive learning behaviors, and support students in organizing their tasks effectively. Furthermore, the article emphasizes the need for responsive and inclusive pedagogical approaches that account for individual differences in cultural background, motivation, and academic habits.

Keywords: academic success, self-efficacy, perceived control, personal organization, international students, medical education.

1. Theoretical Foundations: Self-Efficacy, Perceived Control, and Personal Organization in the Context of Academic Success

Academic success for international students is conditioned by a complex set of cognitive, motivational, and behavioral factors. Among these, self-efficacy plays a central role — it refers to an individual's belief in their capacity to organize and execute the necessary actions to achieve desired goals (Bandura, 1997). In higher education, especially in multicultural environments, self-efficacy is essential for perseverance, self-regulation of learning, and taking academic responsibility. It influences not only performance but also how students respond to failure, set realistic expectations, and maintain long-term motivation. For students learning Romanian for clinical practice alongside their English-based medical studies, confidence in

their ability to cope with language demands helps reduce anxiety and sustain motivation..

Perceived control, as a dimension of intrinsic motivation, refers to the belief that academic outcomes depend on personal effort and chosen strategies rather than external factors (Skinner, 1996). Students with a higher sense of control over their educational path tend to show active engagement in learning and better adaptability to university demands. Without this perception, passivity, procrastination, and increased dependence on external support often appear. Thus, fostering perceived control through self-reflection activities and formative assessment is essential for the transition to academic autonomy.

Another relevant aspect is personal organization — the ability to plan, prioritize tasks, and manage time effectively. In the medical context, where the volume of information is large and continuous assessment pressure exists, the capacity to organize learning becomes a significant indicator of success (Zimmerman, 2002). Students with well-developed organizational skills can identify key study moments, alternate intense effort periods with recovery, and avoid emotional and cognitive overload. Therefore, personal organization should be seen not just as discipline, but as an integrated component of academic self-regulation.

The interrelation of these factors can be explained by theories of self-regulated learning, according to which effective students monitor their own behaviors, set realistic goals, and apply appropriate learning strategies (Pintrich, 2000). Studies show that high self-efficacy contributes to better organizational strategies and a stronger perception of control over academic results (Schunk & Pajares, 2002). Thus, learning self-regulation becomes a cyclical and conscious process where motivation, planning, monitoring, and self-reflection intertwine and reinforce each other.

For international students, challenges related to language barriers, cultural differences, and adapting to a new educational system can influence their perceived level of self-efficacy and control. Adapting to academic communication norms, especially in Romanian, requires not only learning specialized terminology but also adjusting to different teaching and evaluation styles. Therefore, pedagogical support within courses — especially Romanian language classes — is essential not only for linguistic competence development but also for fostering self-regulatory behaviors that facilitate academic success. The teacher can act as a facilitator of personal organization, a model of self-regulation, and a source of validation, thus contributing to strengthening students' sense of efficacy and belonging to the academic community.

2. Analysis of International Students' Perceptions Regarding Motivation, Organization, and Control in Learning Romanian

To better understand factors contributing to efficiency and motivation in learning Romanian as a study and professional communication tool, an online questionnaire was applied to a group of 45 second-year international students at “Nicolae Testemițanu” State University of Medicine and Pharmacy of the Republic of Moldova. The questionnaire addressed dimensions such as personal efficacy perception, sense of control over the learning process, ways of organizing study tasks, and motivation for learning Romanian.

Although many students report only partial confidence in their ability to learn Romanian and mention difficulties with self-organization, responses to closed questions also indicate that 66.7% set goals and 55.6% plan their activities — suggesting that elements of personal organization are present and gradually developing. Moreover, 60% believe they can manage academic tasks despite obstacles, which reflects a generally positive perception of control. These findings confirm the relevance of the examined dimensions to the academic experience of international students.

Complementing this quantitative analysis, the open question “What helps me to be motivated and efficient in studying Romanian language?” generated valuable answers grouped into four categories: teacher influence, personal motivation, learning strategies, and practical applicability of the language.

A significant proportion of students (over 40%) emphasized the positive impact of the teacher: “The teachers are very very good”, “A good teacher”, “The teacher motivates”, “My Romanian teachers and the Moldovan people.” These statements support the idea that pedagogical support and a positive emotional climate directly contribute to maintaining motivation and developing self-efficacy. According to Bandura (1997), perceived efficacy can be stimulated through behavior models and social support, explaining the teacher's impact on academic performance.

Intrinsic motivation and personal goals clearly emerge from responses like: “Set clear goals, practice daily”, “I love the language and the culture”, “To learn a new language and interact with local people.” Ryan and Deci (2000) emphasize that autonomous motivation (based on personal interest and internal values) favors deep engagement in academic tasks. For these students, the desire for cultural and professional integration becomes a catalyst for learning.

Regarding personal organization, many students mention: “Using language apps”, “Tracking progress”, “Rewarding my small milestones.” These behaviors reflect clear self-regulation strategies, as defined by Zimmerman (2002), who

describes self-regulation as the process of planning, monitoring, and adjusting one's learning behavior.

A particularly relevant aspect is respondents' emphasis on the practical applicability of Romanian: "The need to communicate in daily life", "Learning medical terminology", "When what ma'am teaches in class I use it in real life." According to Pintrich (2000), learning is more effective when content is perceived as relevant to real life.

Therefore, students' answers confirm the validity of psychological and pedagogical theories related to self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997), intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000), and self-regulation strategies (Zimmerman, 2002; Pintrich, 2000). In the multicultural medical education context, these dimensions become essential not only for learning Romanian but also for overall academic success.

3. Conclusions and Recommendations

The analysis results show that second-year international students learning Romanian in medical studies demonstrate significant engagement in their learning process. The questionnaire revealed not only preferences and individual learning organization styles but also a variety of self-regulatory strategies used to face academic challenges.

The most frequently mentioned motivating elements were: the presence of an involved and empathetic teacher ("The teachers are very very good", "A good teacher"), setting clear and practical goals ("Set clear goals, practice daily", "What keeps me motivated... is setting small goals"), and the desire to communicate effectively with locals ("I want to speak Romanian with people of Moldova", "The need to communicate in daily life motivates me to learn Romanian"). Some respondents also highlighted the importance of social and cultural context ("Learning Romanian makes my life easier in Moldova", "I love the language and the culture") as motivating factors.

These answers underline both the essential role of the teaching staff as support for academic success and students' need for a predictable, clear, and accessible learning framework.

Based on these findings, the following recommendations are formulated:

1. Promote a positive and personalized educational climate

Creating an empathetic environment where teachers show openness and patience favors motivation and active involvement. Continuous communication, individual support, and constructive feedback are recommended. A positive teacher-student relationship contributes to developing a sense of competence and belonging.

2. Encourage setting individual and realistic goals

Students who set clear goals better regulate their learning behaviors. Teachers can guide this process through reflection activities, self-assessment sheets, or progressively challenging tasks. Such a framework allows identifying personal progress and maintaining motivation.

3. Integrate personal organization strategies into teaching

Explicit sessions or moments dedicated to developing planning skills (time management, task prioritization, stress management) are advisable. These skills can be cultivated through concrete examples, practical exercises, or digital app recommendations (e.g., Duolingo, calendars, task lists).

4. Adapt teaching methods to diverse learning styles

Given the culturally heterogeneous group, using mixed methods (auditory-visual-kinesthetic) is essential so that each student finds an effective learning path. Interactive activities, vocabulary games, communication simulations, and collaborative exercises can balance cognitive style differences.

5. Strengthen the link between language and professional context

For Romanian to become a useful and functional tool, teaching activities should include real-life professional scenarios. Exercises such as medical form writing, simulated patient dialogues, or medical case studies help students correlate linguistic knowledge with medical practice.

6. Stimulate self-reflection and responsibility

Encouraging students to analyze their own progress, obstacles, and solutions may foster self-regulation development. Learning journals, self-assessment questionnaires, or guided discussions at module ends can be used.

In conclusion, the academic achievement strategies of international students result from a complex and dynamic interaction among individual, contextual, and institutional factors. Individual elements such as perceived self-efficacy, personal control, and intrinsic motivation strongly influence how students engage with their studies and overcome challenges. Contextual aspects, including teacher support, pedagogical methods, and peer interactions, create an environment that can either foster or hinder academic success. Institutional factors, such as curriculum design and available resources, further shape the learning experience. Within this multifaceted framework, the teacher's role extends far beyond mere content delivery; it includes acting as a mentor, motivator, and adaptive facilitator who tailors instruction to students' diverse needs. By cultivating students' self-organization skills and reinforcing their sense of personal efficacy, educators can

empower learners to achieve sustained academic success and thrive in demanding educational settings.

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