
CONSTRUCTIVE TREND OF SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING

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Education is the process of disseminating knowledge, building skills and developing character traits to thrive in a competitive world. Here, the purpose of education is not only to impart a myriad of knowledge and skills, but also to create structural patterns of thinking towards developing learners' multifarious strengths and a kind of scaffolding within which learners need to grow, learn and evolve diverse imaginative abilities. In this digital era, educators desire to equip students to develop innovative learning experiences and an explorative landscape of classroom climate. This will serve them in a world driven by global competition that not only meets the present needs of the learners, but also invokes a structural change in the development of the mental horizons of learners and thus leads to continuous success in their future.

The goal of education intervention in the wake of neo liberalism concentrates too much on the learners, and they need a strong grip on the underlying values, standards and integrities of the society so that they are able to recreate those values, standards and integrities in new situations. As the situation demands, in alignment with the modern society, education should be placed to enhance a constructive background and thus promote decision-making, problem-solving, analytical thinking, self-direction, self-empowerment, self-empowerment and self-discovery with an emphasis on futuristic perspective, which in turn helps them in the creative cascading. Ormell and Coles (1999) believe that education is to enable individuals to think for themselves, to examine prejudices and to take ownership of their own learning and actions. Education should contribute to building a strong base for rational thinking, knowledge generation and self-sufficiency through integrated thematic conceptualization and an interdisciplinary approach to curriculum.

Self-directed learning

Self-directed learning became popular among the 21st century educationalists, and they designed it to nurture, broaden and deepen learning to help students to channelize and refine their learning. The secret of self-directed learning in education is a self-built way that immensely brings transformative enrichment to the learners through the pathways of self-discovery. Teachers should prepare students to become independent in choosing methods on how to learn and guide them in their struggle of adolescence. Teachers should challenge their pupils to challenge themselves to excel in their respective fields of knowledge. These initiatives from the teachers are always valuable. Students must know how to learn every day, how to adapt to rapidly shifting circumstances, and how to take independent initiative when opportunity disappears. Self-directed learning prepares students to cope with the new challenge-oriented world where only the active learners survive.

Various definitions of self-directed learning have been presented in the literature. The most cited definition of self-directed learning is by Knowles (1975), who defined self-directed learning as a process in which individuals take the initiative with or without the help of others, in diagnosing their learning needs, formulating learning goals, identifying human and material resources for learning, choosing and implementing appropriate learning activities, and evaluating learning outcomes. Maurice Gibbons (2002) explains that self-directed learning is an increase in knowledge, skill, accomplishment or personal development that an individual selects and brings about by his or her own efforts using any method in any circumstances at any time. Recently, Guglielmino (2008) explicated self-directed learning in terms of context, activation, and universality. She argued that self-directed learning is an innate, basic, and natural characteristic of any human being when he/she encounters challenges, and this characteristic varies on the continuum, depending on situations.

Self-directed learning originated in the field of adult education, and it has been referred to as the following variants of learning that give learning a specific identity of its own, like self-direction in learning, self-instructed learning, autonomous learning, self-planned learning, self-regulated learning, self-managed learning, self-education, and independent learning (Hiemstra, 2004). The concept of self-directed learning applies autonomy of learning events in this Information Age. It is also viewed as an effective mode of learning for students who require a learning environment that is self-empowered to make them transformational decision makers, as they need to be creative in their own learning dynamics. Self-directed learning is important because it enables students to customize their

approach to learning tasks, combine the development of skill with the development of character, and prepare them for learning throughout their lives. It empowers students to think for themselves, work at their own pace, learn in their own way, choose their own goals, and design their own programmes. (Gibbons, 2002)

Self-directed learning as an educational approach

As an educational approach self-directed learning focuses on the self-direction of the individual, and it teaches students to complete the requirements of their learning programme independently and to go beyond the requirements to follow their own challenging goals in life by creating the best possible learning experience for the students for their successful completion of education. Huang (2008) notes that the origin of self-directed learning can be traced back to John Dewey. Dewey proposed that all persons are born with an unlimited potential for growth and development. He defined education as the agency that facilitates this growth and cautioned that the teacher should be the one who guides but does not interfere with or control the process of learning (Dewey, 1938). Later, the terminology self-directed learning was presented by Houle (1961) in his research based on the motivation of learners and the research of adult learning by Tough (1979). Knowles' (1975) book on self-directed learning made the concept popular, and it effected an increased consciousness of its importance for adult learners and then specified self-directed learning as a prominent concept in educational theory and research.

Self-directed learning researchers suggested and put forward various conceptual models to explicate the heterogeneity of self-directed learning and make out the progress of learners' self-directedness in learning. Huang (2008) notes that these conceptual models fall into three categories: linear, interactive, and instructional models. (Merriam and Caffarella, 1999). The most significant example for linear model was developed by Knowles (1975). Models such as the Personal Responsibility Orientation (PRO) model by Brockett and Hiemstra (1991) and Garrison's model (1997) formalized the concept of self-directed learning at an interactive level. Gibbons (2002) explains four stages or approaches to self-directed learning, namely teaching students to think independently, teaching self-managed learning, teaching self-planned learning, or teaching self-directed learning. The instructional models, including Grow's (1991) Staged Self-Directed Learning (SSDL) model and Hammond and Collin's (1991) models, represent "frameworks that instructors in formal settings use to integrate self-directed methods of learning into their programmes and activities" (Merriam and Caffarella, 1999).

Pedagogical Dimensions of Self-Directed Learning

The central decision for teachers moving towards self-directed learning is deciding how to structure the course or present the course and implement its pedagogical dimensions. Although self-directed learners may choose to learn by themselves, many researchers strongly believe that for effective self-direction, self-directed learners should interact and value the contributions of others in their learning (e.g. Gibbons, 2002; Griffiths, 2008; Merriam et al., 2007). In these circumstances, the role of educators is significant, particularly when they direct and guide these learners to become successful self-directed learners. Likewise, with regards to the notion of educators as mediators and facilitators during the learning process, Brockett and Hiemstra (1991) highlighted four pertinent pedagogical strategies that could potentially promote SDL: (a) using various teaching and learning resources; (b) encouraging students' active engagement; (c) maximising peer learning activities for meaningful interaction; and (d) fostering supportive atmosphere and constructive interaction.

The transfer from directive to facilitative teaching approaches indicates that learners, rather than educators, are the key component who promote the learning and teaching process. This shift requires educators to acknowledge students as active agents of learning by empowering them to take control and be responsible for their learning (e.g. Trigwell & Prosser, 1991; Tekkol & Demirel, 2018). It is reasonable to insinuate that active learning is essential to promote SDL. Furthermore, Grow (1991) proposed that to design effective SDL pedagogical practices, strategies should be devised consciously based on the students' readiness and their level of self-direction. Although the findings by Grow (1991) are considered old, they have continued to be the main source of reference for many researchers who explored learning and teaching methodologies.

Grow (1991) proposed the Staged Self-Directed Learning (SSDL) model and highlighted the need for educators to ensure a coherent match between predetermined learning and teaching activities, with students' readiness and ability in self-direction. The two basic principles of Grow's (1991) model are: (a) pedagogical approach should be designed to be intellectually challenging, but within the student's zone of proximal development, and (b) the educator is held responsible for matching the pedagogical approach with the student's level of self-direction, while

preparing them in their transition towards a higher degree of self-direction. In relation to the SSDL model, Grow (1991) made three important assumptions: (a) being a dependent learner is not an offence, but it may restrict the learner's full potential; (b) the ability to self-direct oneself is situational, where one may be self-directed in one area but he/she can become dependent in another area; and (c) self-directed learners generally work collaboratively with other learners and experts.

Based on the literature reviewed, self-directed learning is a purposeful mental process, normally accompanied and backed by behavioural activities involved in the identification and searching for knowledge and ideas. Both educators and students play a significant role in the development of learners' skills for self-direction. The learner consciously and voluntarily accepts the responsibility to make decisions about goals and objectives, and hence becomes self-sufficient in designing one's own learning opportunities. Loyens, Magda and Rikers (2008) remark that self-directed learning is a process in which the learner takes the initiative and responsibility for setting his own learning goals, identifying and addressing gaps in his learning, identifying resources, selecting and carrying out learning strategies and evaluating his own learning.

Conclusion

The emerging learning environments of the 21st century combine different pedagogies and technologies and provide ample reason to re-examine the opportunities for self-directed learning. This attention to learning for life reminds us that when we address students in the classrooms, we are dealing with a whole life, not just intellect, but emotions and performance as well. Each student has a unique personality, preference, ability, talent, learning style, thought, feeling, likes and dislikes, thinking and the like. Instructional transactions based on innovative initiatives, differentiated paradigms that intensify appropriate processes, integrated thematic conceptualization and interdisciplinary approach to curriculum have recently gained much research support. It highlights the need for developing a discourse based on self-initiated creative instructional practices that play a vital role in constructing a positive learning climate in the classroom.

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