

SELF - DIRECTED LEARNING: A PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

“Experience is the best teacher”. Though the proverb proves its strength, it is miserable to note many of the educational institutions do not change accordingly to the changes that have been emanated in the Educational System. The administrators still pester the teachers and the students to follow the traditional way of teaching and rote methods. In the examinations, the questions test the retention power of the student but not the application of concepts to solve or answer the problem. The students have been habituated to select only few concepts with the help of the study guides and decided to pass the exams. The time has come to rethink and design the curriculum in such a way, so that the students can face the challenges in the work front. It is essential for the authorities to note that the learning attitudes of the students have been changing. The teaching methodology has been changed from the teacher –centred to learner-centred. The teachers’ role is not restricted to teaching, instead he is expected to become a facilitator, mentor and motivator and designer of the learning situation and at times he has to become a co-learner. The students should be encouraged to learn by themselves by providing them with the problems. In the present paper, the author tries to discuss the problems of the Self-Directed Learning good for the professional students or not and tries to find out whether there is a correlation between self – directed learning and academic achievement.

KEYWORDS: *Experiential Learning, Challenges of Teachers and Students, Administrative Problems*

Article History

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INTRODUCTION

The term SDL (Self-Directed Learning) is not a new concept in the world. It has existed from classical olden days. To name a few, the Greek philosophers like Socrates, Plato, Aristotle and others included Alexander , the Great, Caesar, etc., were mastered their skills through self- learning. If we observe the epics and ancient history of India, the Gurukul teachers followed this technique to prepare the students fit for life. Those teachers were very good at active learning techniques. Experience helps the students learn more concepts practically. The teachers were monitoring their learning and guided when need arises. A book on “Self Help” by Smiles (published in 1859) explains the value of personal development. Students do not show interest unless they are not curious to become skilled at. The students have to be involved in the learning experience.

It is evident that Self-Directed Learning has been debated at length. SDL has become an interesting area to pursue research by many for the last three decades. Adult learners have a motif to achieve the goals that they have created to achieve and based on the goals an action plan is prepared while doing so learning happens.

In Self-Directed Learning, students will enterprise their skill to establish their own learning needs and create goals and search for materials and resources for the sake of their learning initiative. They formulate their own strategies and analyze their own learning outcomes. At the end, they become goal-orientes, Activity oriented and Learning –oriented. The authors try to explore whether Self-Directed Learning helps the students and teachers or not. It is purely theoretical.

PREVIOUS STUDIES

Van Briesen (2010) defines self-directed learning as an individual attitude which incorporates initiatives and responsibility to learn, select, manage, and assess self-learning activity, motivation and interest, freedom in setting goals and determination of appropriate learning objects. Grow (McCauley and McClelland, 2004), suggests self-directed, difficult to define, as a sole concept as it incorporates a variety of elements such as attitude, perception, thought, experience, and communication. Knowles (in Hoban & Hoban, 2004), defines self-directed learning as a process in which an individual undertakes initiatives to identify learning needs, construct learning goals, identify learning resources, select and employ learning strategies and evaluate learning outcomes. Hoban & Hoban (2004) argue that there are primary and secondary dimensions in defining self-directed learning.

INTRODUCTION

The focus of educational especially professional education is witnessing the students' active participation in learning process.

The professional education has made the teachers mere facilitators. Students have become active in the learning process. The focus has been moved from the teacher and faster to the student. The role of students has become more important in the learning process. In the previous days, the teacher is given more priority and most of the time his/her teaching has to be followed and implemented. But now, the availability of the knowledge is free of cost in the web resources. This moved the focus away from the teacher and more rapidly to the student. The resources are equally available to the both. The teacher is expected to be a catalyst and at times she or he is one among the students in the learning process. The teacher is expected to practice it by assimilating the basic and professional disciplines, engaging the students in small group activities and introduce problem based teaching and learning and integrate various discipline students to do a project on any society need. It involves the students to explore the concept that they receive from the teachers and implement the knowledge to solve certain problems either in the work front or in their personal level.

Education system has included active learning techniques and teachers are advised to involve the students in the learning process. Now the teachers started small group learning activities. Team work is encouraged Peer learning has shown its impact on the learning process. If the students receive the degree, it is not enough. They should be in a position to use the knowledge when they are trying to solve a problem. In the process, he has to browse internet resources. It is not a challenge for him to understand but he should make use of the knowledge. He should understand and answer where and how to use the conceptual knowledge while addressing the real time problems. With the help of the gathered information, he will become self-reliant. He understood the importance of reading. Even if he browses, he has to read for selecting the topic from various resources. He is now forced to skim and scan the pages. He incorporates all the information that he gets

from different resources. In the entire process of learning, the role of a teacher needs to be appreciated. Involving the students in the learning process and creating interest in reading and participating and encouraging the discussions and debates, challenge them to identify the problems in around and preparing them to give engineering solutions in an acceptable manner.

ONGOING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

So far the teachers who teach the professionals do not require any certificate of training to work in the adult and professional colleges. With one's master's degree he/she can be employed in any educational institution as a teacher. But the School Education prefers only those teachers who have the certified training certificate. All the people with doctorate degrees cannot become the teachers only few of them become the teachers and enlighten the students and prepare them to face the challenges of personal and professional front challenges to solve on their own.

Because of the accreditation process, the professional colleges have started giving importance to Bloom's Taxonomy and asking the teachers to teach and test the students based on Bloom's levels. On the paper, everything is well and accreditation is granted and institutions started using it for advertising purpose to attract the students to join. The educational institutions, especially professional colleges need to implement experiential learning where the teachers are allowed to experiment with the learning process.

Even the Higher education in India summons the educational institutions must appoint only those candidates who have the doctoral degree. But here a question arises, can anybody with a doctoral degree be a teacher. A teacher is the one who should enjoy teaching and be with the students in the learning process. So much of paper work and the teacher is not given free time to experiment. If any joins the teaching profession out of passion, he is not given enough support.

Inadequate support is given to the newly joined teachers in the Higher education. The experienced will not be assigned with the challenging classes. In spite of having knowledge in the subject, the novice fails to handle the class. Classroom management will be a difficult task. Exactly here, a new teacher can experiment with his self- Directed learning concept and manage the class. If these are provided support they can handle the classes better. Since the resources are open, anyone can comprehend the knowledge to deliver accordingly. Most of the professionals will take up teaching as a stop gap arrangement; hence, they do not show interest in learning teaching techniques. The learning environment all the time to be enriched with debates, discussions, providing blended teaching techniques or encouraging peer learning, small group activities etc will motivate the students .

If it is done systematically, this process fetches good results. Internet is providing equal opportunity to the both. Teacher can implement blended teaching with the help of podcasts, videos, PPTs etc., and students can have blended learning. It gives better opportunity for the students to involve in the learning process. Mentoring from the experienced colleagues is critical to the successful development of a new recruit. Ongoing professional development helps them to become self –reliant and they can create the same learning environment in their classroom. The experiential, collaborative learning is the best professional development and connected to and derived from working with students and empathizes.

Pandemic has brought a situation where a student can learn and earn any number of qualifications through virtual learning. The teaching is done virtually and the students can learn any concept at one's own pace. Qualification matters. Hence, some of the students make use virtual courses to enrich their knowledge and some or not.

Self directed learners will have an action plan for themselves. They set their goals and chalk out a plan to attain those goals in a time frame imposed by them. Since they are autonomous, they can evaluate their own learning process. Since they are interested and self-motivated, they have self control and will be able to evaluate their outcomes

Self-learning can be done anywhere at any time! It is unlimited but not unstructured. A good record-keeping system is recommended so the student can look back and glimpse the steady progress he or she is making. The students should be prepared to use every resource in or out of educational institutions for the personal growth and development. The educational institutions should provide a source of learning. They need to match the new movement. In adult and professional education, they need to understand the difference between pedagogy and andragogy to introduce the PBL curricula.

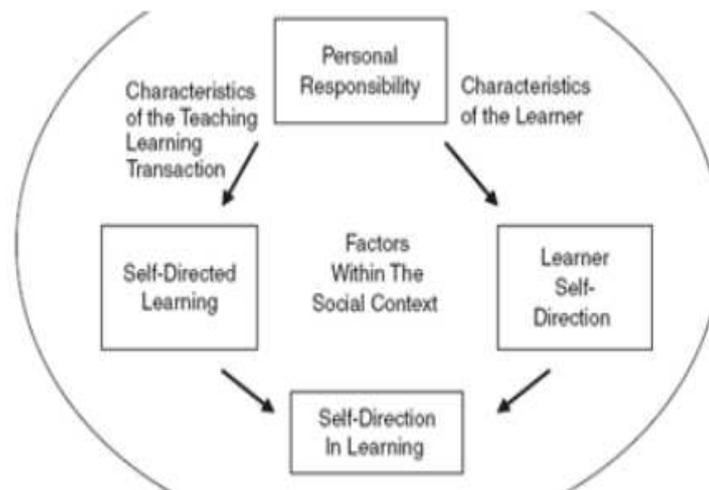


Figure 1

Courtesy: The personal responsibility orientation modelling: (Brockett, R. G., & Hiemstra, R. (1991).

The SDL is powerful because the teacher, being a facilitator, makes the students understand the learning needs and goals. They help to identify the learning objectives and introduce activities and learning evaluation.

The Role of a Facilitator:

- Build a co-operative learning environment
- Help to motivate and direct the students' learning experience
- Facilitate students' initiatives for learning
- Be available for consultations as appropriate during learning process
- Serve as an advisor rather than formal instructor

The Students Responsibility:

- Do self-assessment of readiness to learn
- Define learning goals and develop learning contract
- Do self-assessment and monitoring of learning process

- Take initiative for all stages of learning process – need to motivate selves
- Re-evaluate and alter goals as required during unit of study
- Consult with advising faculty member as required

CONCLUSIONS

As the online learning initiative has gained momentum, awareness in determining individual characteristics associated with successful learners continues to grow. E-learning apps are readily available. Knowledge has been digitized. It is available for every enthusiastic learner. Since the knowledge is ready to be reckoned, individuals should not misuse it. Digitization has given a chance to learn accordingly but it should be goal oriented.

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