

Chapter 30

Self-Directed Learning Strategies in Adult Educational Contexts: Helping Students to Perceive Themselves as Having the Skills for Successful Learning

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ABSTRACT

Self-directed learning is a teaching model where the learning content which is predetermined by the educator as well as the students tends to learn at their own pace to enable them to master the content provided. The features of self-directed learning may include individual autonomy, learner control, and autoindexing. In addition, self-directed learning has grown to become a generic training model for medicine, business, and adult education. Problem-based learning also tends to involve elements of self-directed instructions in its model. Self-directed learning also has evaluation tools that enable it to measure the impact of the self-directed learning on the students such as the ability for the students to perceive themselves as having the skills as well as attitudes required for successful learning.

INTRODUCTION

Self-directed learning is explained as the process in which a person tends to take an initiative, without or with the aid of others, in diagnosing his or her learning needs, formulation of his or her learning goals, identification of learning as well as the human resources, choosing as well as the implementation of the learning strategies, and the evaluation of the outcomes. Basically, learning may be conducted with a group or individually, but the main aim of the self-directed learning concept is for every student in the self-directed learning to be able to take ownership of their learning process. For instance, an educator

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may provide his or her student with a general learning goal such as learning about a geographical area. The students and the teacher would work together to decide on the scope of the project, time as well as the outcomes which would demonstrate what the students learned. A single student may decide to focus on the entire South America region as well as create develop a website which is educational. Another student may opt to research the impacts of deforestation in Borneo as well as write a report for the government. In the same class, another student may opt to focus on a specific city's historical significance, develop a video vignette from individual interviews. Through allowing the students to be in a position of choosing different learning goals as well as outcomes, it tends to allow the students to be able to choose their learning objectives based on their individual strengths as well as interests. In this chapter, we are going to focus on the learning strategies used in self-directed learning and how in it contributes to adult education success. Currently, self-directed learning is essential because with the rapid advancement of the information technology one has to be updated with the current trends in his or her career field and thus make an individual to more competitive. With a self-directed learning, one is able to perfect his or her strengths in different areas he or she is good at and may enable the student to be more competitive.

For an individual to engage in self-directed learning the learner should feel the need to learn, authenticate control over the learning content, exercise, form as well as have a purpose for their individual learning. Also, the student should have the ultimate judgment in regards to the significance as well as the meaning of the experience one has. For the authentic control to be put in place the learner needs act on the basis of the alternative possibilities which are open to them and they should be fully informed. Also, the student should have the ability to choose from the possibilities which may be realized. It is believed that self-directed learning is more concerned with the internal change of consciousness. It involves a student becoming more aware of his or her conceptuality of ideas as well as the actions which are of the culturally constructed nature of beliefs as well as moral codes.

Self-Directed Learning Components

The main components of the self-directed learning aid the teaching process to be a success. The components include monitoring as well as management; this component focuses on the guidance that the teacher provides to the students, for them to be in a better position of defining the learning goals they may want to accomplish and be able to negotiate the time frame for the completion. After developing their goals the student are able to determine their weaknesses as well as the strengths they may possess and also they may be in better position to also identify any other obstacle that may limit them from achieving their goals. In this component, the role of the educator is to provide support as well as advice to the to the students while the students on the other side, their role is to manage their personal learning process as well as be able to monitor their individual progress.

Evaluating the learning needs is another component found in the self- directed learning; this component focuses on the evaluation of the students' needs as they progress with their learning process. The component enables the students to be able to find the learning resources they may need such as aid from the teacher, learning materials, or even a combination of both. Educators will offer support to assist the student to be able to attain the learning resources the student needs. Collaboration is another essential component of the self- directed learning, this component is essential to the learning process of the students in the self- directed learning. The students will collaborate with other students in the same class and other grades or even individuals from the community to be able to attain knowledge as well as experience and be able to reach their learning objectives.

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