Chapter V

Conclusions

There cannot be any doubt that self-directed learning and self-assessment are effectual. This researcher can vouch for it from his own experience. However, this efficacy is entirely dependent on numerous ‘ifs’ and ‘buts’. If the learner fulfils certain prerequisites then there are better chances of self-directed learning and self-assessment being more effective. The fact that they work, is an encouraging fact.

Several researchers have demonstrated and teachers would accept that giving responsibility back to learners in many instances is more beneficial than other approaches. For instances, employees with busy schedules in a given workplace can learn necessary skills at their own convenience through self-study. Some technical staff in organizations who must constantly upgrade their knowledge, on the basis of the assessment of their requirements, can access new information through various resources. Some will even thrive in ways never thought possible when they learn how to take personal responsibility and empower themselves for success as learners.
The confluence of self-direction in learning with self-advocacy, self-determination, or metacognitive learning has a great potential. It is impossible to measure the success of self-learning with tests, grades, and scores. Perhaps the most interesting successes are found among those learners who do not flourish in a traditional setting with standard measurements of success. These individuals are free to blossom in their own ways and do things in the way they like to do them – anecdotal evidence abounds about happy and successful learners who have travelled a non-traditional path to their own personal success. We find a good example of this in the Hindi film “Three Idiots”.

Self-directed learning is learning initiated and directed by the learner and can include self-paced, independent, and individualized learning as well as self-instruction. Irrespective of the terminology we used, self-directed learning places the responsibility for learning directly on the learner and responsibility works wonders. Learners who take the initiative in learning and are proactive learners learn more and better than passive learners (reactive learners). Proactive learners enter into learning more purposefully and with greater motivation. They also tend to retain and make use of what they learn for a long time to come and in a better manner than reactive learners. The independent learner is one who is more involved and active within the learning process.
Becoming an excellent self-directed learner takes time, because it is not just about academic ability, it is also about emotional maturity and self-awareness. For all learners to become self-directed may seem a tall order but is certainly not impossible. All that is needed is that they be highly motivated and take an active and critical approach to their studies rather than seeing themselves as empty vessels that will be 'filled' with knowledge by teachers/lecturers and other experts.

Researchers have found that as children grow, they have an increasing desire for autonomy. SDL may be one way of harnessing that natural desire to help achieve a meaningful learning experience that will last through adulthood. According to Cheryl Meredith Lowry (1989), self-directed learning does not depend on the subject or on the method. Self-directed learning depends on who decides what should be learned, who should learn it, which methods and resources should be used, and how the success of the effort should be measured. Everything depends on the learners. The learners make those decisions and that is why the learning is generally considered to be self-directed learning.

Self directed learners

1. understand that learning is a process that is ongoing and lifelong
2. realize that learning is an active construction of knowledge and understanding, not just memorization of facts and that this requires intentions and efforts

3. actively relate new information with prior knowledge and previous experiences by taking responsibility for their learning rather than expecting their teachers to do it for them

4. understand their preferred learning styles and self-manage their learning by using a range of strategies

5. have the capacity to think critically about what they are learning and take time out to reflect on and monitor their own learning

6. are confident, independent, prepared to take risks, are not afraid to ask questions, and seek help when they are in need of it

It is a universally accepted fact that learning occurs at various levels to varying degrees throughout our lifetime. However, self-directed learning exists as an often unrecognized, yet highly effective means of gaining knowledge, skill, and self-esteem. Deliberate and consciously self-planned learning must be fostered both by learner and by learning institutions. There can be no doubt whatsoever about the fact that self-planned learning will become increasingly prominent and pervasive as more and more learners take responsibility for
initiating, shaping, and promoting this movement. To get this done some of the suggestions are listed below:

**Suggestions***

1. Some self directed learners need assistance in determining learning goals, planning their learning, locating resources, etc. (We will need to make a provision for this.)

2. Educators need to be available as consultants or resources. (Such experts need to exercise patience in counseling, offering consultances, advice etc.)

3. Self-directed learning needs to be more widely recognized and accepted as a valid learning process. (Teachers need to try this out in their respective classroom. If self-assessment works as it did in our dictation lessons in primary classes, then self-directed learning should also be possible.)

4. Institutions of learning need to adequately address the issues related to self-directed learning – they are not aware of the phenomenon of self-directed learning. (A lot of training needs to be imparted and a good beginning can be made through Personality Development Programme.)

***Interpolations in brackets are those of the researcher on how to implement these suggestions.
5. Traditional educational institutions need to undergo changes to accommodate, adjust, and/or determine their roles for supporting self-directed learning. (This will require policy changes, ideological shifts etc but can be done if there is a will to do it.)

6. Agencies need to provide time, facilities, resources, and recognition of self-directed learning. (This can also be done in consonance with 5 above. We could at least begin by trying this out in classroom tests, quizzes etc where self-assessment and peer-assessment can be used for comparison.)

The discussion in the previous chapter affirms that self-directed learning presupposes self-assessment, an ability of a student to observe, analyze, and judge his/her performance on the basis of criteria and determine how s/he can improve it. Students need to know what their abilities are, how much progress they are making and what they can (or cannot yet) do with the skills they have acquired. Without such knowledge, it would not be easy for them to learn efficiently. From an educational viewpoint, knowing to what extent students can appraise their own performance is also important. If they can do it accurately enough, they do not have to depend completely on the opinions of teachers, and at the same time, they can make teachers aware of their individual needs.
Self-assessment in an organizational setting can be systematic and regular review of an organization's activities and results. The self-assessment process allows the organization to distinguish clearly its strengths and areas in which improvements can be made and culminates in planned improvement actions, which are then monitored for progress.

Self-assessment in an educational setting involves students making judgments about their own work. Assessment decisions can be made by students on their own essays, reports, projects, presentations, performances, dissertations, and even exam scripts. This can be compared with the results from peer assessment and teacher’s assessment. Self-assessment can be extremely valuable in helping students to critique their own work, and form judgments about its strengths and weaknesses. For obvious reasons, self-assessment is more usually used as part of a formative assessment process, rather than a summative one, where it requires certification by others. Also known as “assessment for learning” and “educative assessment” formative assessment is carried out throughout a course or project and can be effectively used to aid learning wherein a teacher (or peer) or the learner, provide feedback on a student's work, and would not necessarily be used for grading purposes. A common form of formative assessment is diagnostic assessment and self-
assessment is a form of diagnostic assessment, which involves students assessing themselves.

A learner’s development relies greatly on what they learn in the classroom, at workplace or own his own. It is not only about reciting facts like Bitzer and Sissy Jupe in Dickens’ Hard Time, or being able to critique a piece of literature, but also includes his/her ability to assess his or her own performance. Self-assessment is important for building lifelong skills that will be used in work and interpersonal relationships.

Self-assessment teaches a learner to recognise his/her limits, and makes him/her aware of how s/he learns, and where s/he fails. Self-assessment requires that a student not rely strictly on a teacher's opinion of his/her performance, which may be biased or otherwise compromised, but instead teaches him/her how to be a good judge of his/her performance. Students will also be able to assess what they know, what they do not know and what they can do to improve that performance. In contemporary educational systems, it is sometimes easy for a student to get lost in the shuffle. This does not benefit the learner. Unless the learner can make his/her own plan of action for education based on self-assessment, s/he will fall further behind.
In the classroom, self-assessment should be promoted through a mixture of teacher critique, peer assessment and self-assessment. The first step in a child who learns to use self-assessment is for teachers to promote fair and weighted criticism. This needs to include both praise and criticism of the child's performance in the classroom. Once the children in the classroom have come of age where they can handle criticism from the teacher, peer assessment is the next step. Peer assessment should be done in a group, so that the peer assessment can be monitored by the teacher. The peer assessment should be documented by both the reviewing students and the students being assessed. The students being assessed should be encouraged to discuss any points they disagree with in a constructive manner.

Teaching students self-assessment in the classroom would benefit them in the future. According to academic studies, it has been shown that students who learn self-assessment in school will have the desire to continue learning once they are done with formal education. Not only will they have the desire to learn, they will also have the ability to know the best ways in which they learn, and how to monitor their performance as they take on these new learning activities.
People may consider performing self-evaluations for any number of reasons. For instance, some people may wish to determine their personality type. Various types of self-assessment tools exist to assist in the process of helping individuals gather the information they seek. Self-awareness also leads to people becoming better team members. Whatever the motive for the evaluation, the advantages of self-assessment certainly far outweigh any disadvantages.

According to the Riley Guide\(^2\), which has offered free career and employment resources since 1994, one of the benefits of performing self-assessments comes in learning areas of weakness. Understanding where they need improvement leads to seeking ways to raise standards. Often individuals may be blind to their own faults. Performing honest self-assessment forces the person to admit shortcomings. Once a person reaches this stage, he/she may see things clearly and use assistance, education and counsel required to meet the specific need he/she discovered. Additionally, the assessment process may uncover undesirable behaviours that require correction. Having experienced the evaluation procedure, participants become better judges of how to avoid issues in the future.
Gaining understanding of about core qualities may lead the seeker to appreciate their innate value. For example, following the use of a self-assessment tool evaluating professional capabilities, the individual may experience a pleasant surprise and learn that they have the talent considered desirable to become a principal of an institution. Had the evaluation not taken place, this knowledge might have remained hidden even from them.

Sometimes people find themselves in a place where they have to make important choices. Standing at a crossroad in life may result in confusion and frustration. However, participating in self-assessment may help. By clearly understanding talents, gifts and personality tendencies, the person may have a clearer vision of the best direction to pursue.

Many researchers have done with respect to self-directed learning and self-assessment all over the world. However, not much reference is found about the in India. Probably, the concept of self-assessment and self-directed learning has not got much momentum in our country as yet. Probably, teachers too are a bit hesitant in implementing these concepts actively. Nevertheless, following are the topics that require a deeper research to implement the twin concepts of self-directed learning and self-assessment more effectively with all the zest and zeal and of course all the necessary precautions.
1. Determining the most appropriate approaches for promoting self-direction among learners

2. Finding the ways of increasing the metacognitive (learning to learn) skills adult learners

3. Efficacy or validity of The Learning Preference Assessment, formerly called the Self-Directed Learning Readiness Scale, and the Oddi Continuing Learning Inventory be tested in terms of Indian learners, or one such measurement tool be developed and tested.

4. The efficacy of various resources, tools and techniques employed for SDL needs to be assessed thoroughly

5. Role of Socioeconomic, Psychological Factors, Previous Knowledge and Motivation in self-directed learning needs to be examined

6. Ways to facilitate self-directed learning and enhance critical thinking skills needs to be considered and adopted

7. Ways of incorporating computer technology and electronic communication into self-directed learning needs to be explored and implemented

8. Design and methodology for studying self-directed learning needs to be further researches into

9. Developing the competencies necessary for effective self-directed learning need serious attention and must be adequately examined
10. Methodologies of self-directed learning resources must be researched into
11. Ways of measuring and maintaining quality in self-directed learning need
to be determined.
12. The most appropriate roles for educators and educational organizations in
   relation to self-directed learning need to be explored
13. Ways for learners and others to evaluate the value and effectiveness of
   self-directed learning need to be developed.

To sum, it is quite clear that the self-directed learning phenomenon has
generated considerable interest, research, and scholarly activity. Most adults
appear to engage in some study each year, with certain adults committing
almost unbelievable numbers of hours to learning activity. In addition, much
of this activity apparently is self-planned, self-initiated, and self-directed.
However, it is also clear that our understanding of this whole area is still
incomplete. Like most aspects of the human condition, more study over a
number of years is required. It is hoped that this effort will contribute to a
better understanding and to future study of self-directed adult learning.

It is important to add that individuals will vary in their readiness for self-
direction thereby requiring varying degrees of assistance by facilitators,
especially as self-directed learning skills are developing. Another point is that
self-directed learning will not always be the best way to learn for certain people. It would more appropriate to think that self-directed learning is not all apt for individuals or relevant in all situations. It is more effective for certain individuals having certain prerequisite skills.

End Notes:


2. www.rileyguide.com