Chapter 3

Research Methodology

Every truth has four corners: as a teacher, I give you one corner, and it is for you to find the other three.

Confucius

There has never been any doubt that learning has a history as long as human civilization. From its primitive stage, the human race has risen and soared new heights that were even beyond its imagination just a few years ago. Learning continues and will continue as long as human civilizations exist. Learning has many forms. Various experiences in one’s life are a part of the modes of learning.

Learning in one’s routine life is different from that of learning in academic settings. Learning in day to day life is informal, for it does not involve any certification. Contrary to this is the academic learning, on which depend quite a few things in a person’s life. Academic learning helps a person to get recognition in his/her life. He/she acquires a good job, can make money and as a result of this, obtain a status in the society. Unfortunately we do not do so
until it is too late to mend. Academic learning today has acquired all the more importance in the fast moving global world.

The 21st century is called the Information and Knowledge Age. Advanced technology and fast growing world has opened up new vistas of knowledge. Unfortunately, academic learning can hardly give us the knowledge we require once for all, for it is a continuous process. Educationists find it difficult to include everything that is thought to be necessary in life in the syllabi. Even the latest syllabus on any topic is insufficient to teach everything that is required of a person. Moreover, the construction of syllabus has so many other constraints. It includes topics, keeping in mind the time allotted for them within the subject concerned. Teachers dealing with the syllabi face practical problems like heterogeneous groups, large classes and so on. It is in this context that individualized learning, self-learning and self-directed learning, as it is variously known, has become important. Also, as a result of this, self-assessment has come to gain acceptance in recent terms democratizing the entire process. This new-found freedom has also brought with it a greater responsibility. That is the charm of the entire process of democratization that is taking place, shifting the classrooms from teacher-led to learner-centred.
RATIONALE

Acquiring information and developing new skills is the need of hour for everyone today in view of the explosion of knowledge and multiplication of information and ever-widening possibilities to access to the information which has made it necessary for people to keep themselves abreast with everything that is the latest in any given field. Gone the days when everything necessary was included in the curricula. Today, much of the learning depends on learner’s initiative, which is now-a-days labelled as self directed learning in which a learner shoulders responsibility for planning, implementing and even evaluating the effort. The 21st century is characterised by rapid change and increasing complexity. Learning has become something that we must keep doing throughout our lives, with or without the support, not something that we can stop doing when we finish school or university. It is something that helps explore new avenues. This is what self directed learning is all about. Effective learners are those who have become self-directed learners.

Self Directed Learning is different from traditional learning in the sense that an individual takes the initiative and the responsibility for his/her own learning. The learner selects, manages, and assesses his own learning activities, which can be pursued at any time, in any place, through any means, at any age.
Teaching as we understand it now, also emphasizes SDL skills, processes, and systems rather than content coverage and tests.

When, we think of self-directed learning, automatically, we even need to think about self-assessment. Self-assessment, generally is understood to be a process to seek knowledge from the surroundings to make sense of uncertainty, conflict, and doubt, and to draw a clearer self-profile. The assumption behind self-assessment is that “only the learner can do the learning” (Savignon, 1983). This is truly in the spirit of a well-known proverb: one can take ten horses to water, but cannot make even one of them drink water (if they do not want to). As educators, we need to provide the most favorable environment to encourage our learners to find the learning paths that work best for them. In other words, we need to help our learners down the path to self-directed learning and autonomy.

In short, the current trends in learner-centered language teaching approaches have led to a greater interest in expanding the use of self-directed learning and self-assessment. Many language testers have been inspired to investigate whether students are able to make a meaningful contribution to their own learning and evaluation. It would be ideal if the findings of all the empirical
studies on the effectiveness of self-directed learning and self-assessment were consistent.

This, research has been taken up with a view to decide the efficacy of the much discussed and debated terms and practice in the recent times and to identify those factors which influence the efficacy on the basis of the research that is available already.

Aim

The main aim of the study is to find out the extent to which these new methods, in learning and assessment, are efficacious.

Objectives

The study has following aims and objectives in particular:

a. To make an effort to trace the development of self directed learning and self-assessment.

b. To compare and contrast self directed learning and self-assessment with the methods of learning and assessment in traditional education.

c. To determine the role of tutors and technology in terms of tools and resources in self directed learning
Null Hypotheses

1. Self-direction and self assessment in learning is a way of life that has attracted attention of researchers in recent times.

2. Self-directed learning and self-assessment is a part of our survival skills for our own benefit.

3. Self-directed and self-assessment are basic human competencies - the ability to learn and evaluate on one's own – that has suddenly become a prerequisite for living in this new world.

4. Self-directed learning and self-assessment will always be the best way for certain people to learn. What they wish to.

5. Self-directed learning and self-assessment do not necessarily mean that all learning will take place in isolation from others.

6. Self-directed learning and self-assessment involve various activities and resources, such as self-guided reading, participation in study groups, internships, and reflective writing activities and one’s own assessment of one’s performance.

7. Teachers are facilitators in self-directed learning and self-assessment in term of ongoing interaction with learners, securing of resources, helping evaluate outcomes, and promoting critical thinking.
Tools of Research

A critical survey of all the available reading material – primary or secondary – on the subject in our libraries. The researcher used desk/library research as the mode for the purpose. It is a pity that neither self-directed learning nor self-assessment has found its way into our own education system quite formally, except in renowned institutions like Universities of Bombay, JNU, Delhi etc where we have practitioners of these methods using these informally.

The data analysis and review involved collecting and analyzing a vast array of information. To help us stay focused, our first step should was to develop a statement of purpose: Efficacy of self-directed learning and self-assessment. Having a well-defined purpose, i.e. a clear understanding of why we were collecting the data and of what kind of data we wanted to collect, analyze, and better understand – helped us remain focused and prevent us from becoming overwhelmed with the volume of data. The first step towards data collection was to collect all the material, connected with learning and assessment in general and self-directed learning and self-assessment in particular, that we could lay our hands on through preliminary sources like libraries, search engines, and newspapers. On that basis, a baseline was prepared. We even started observing the students, teachers, and teaching, learning and testing process consciously. Preliminary data sources were Research Institutions,
Libraries, Library Search Engines, Scholarly Journals and Literature Review Articles. Literature review articles were those articles that assembled and reviewed original research dealing with this specific topic. There were many reviews that discussed and listed all the relevant publications from which the information was derived which in turn helped us to dig deep into the topic and aided in deriving related information as well as evidences to validate the things said.

**Evaluating the Quality of Information Sources**

We kept in mind Suitability, reliability and adequacy of data to evaluate the quality of information sources.

**Determination of the Original Purpose of the Data Collection**

The purpose of the data or publication was looked into carefully which helped to evaluate the quality of the data and discern the potential level of bias as we referred to each source one by one.
Ascertaining the Credibility of the Source(s) or Author(s) of the Information

We took into account educational background, past works/writings and the citation impact to ascertain the credibility of the source as well as the author, the authors or sources. In addition to this, if it was a survey, it was ascertained if it included a method section that discusses the methods used to conduct the study and whether or not the methods used were sound. If it did not, it was kept for additional supporting information or data. If the research methods were discussed, they were reviewed to ascertain the quality of the study with the help of the research supervisor for this research. The next thing that the researcher tried to ascertain was whether the source accurately relates information or not. This was done keeping in mind that if and when the data and/or figures were given, they were followed by a footnote, endnote – which provided a full reference for the information at the end of the page or document – or the name and date of the source. We also ensured that the document was well-referenced and that the numbers (quantitative data provided in the document) made sense.

Evaluation of the data sources that disagreed: While conducting secondary data analysis, we came across data sources that disagreed or conflicted with each other. To overcome this we looked for a citation and for more data
sources covering the same topic and determined the most widely held conclusion. If two independent secondary data sources agree, the information is probably more believable.