THE IMPORTANCE AND THE MEANINGS OF INDEPENDENT LEARNING

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Annotation:
In this article, it is stated about how important to encourage your students to become independent learners because it will have direct repercussions on their academic performance, as discussed in the previous section.

Key words: e-learning, independent learning, case study, problem-solving, skills, learning goals, expert training.

Independent Learning is essential aspect which enables people to discover new ideas, knowledge and helps to boost a person's imagination and creativity. As individuals can learn without the same level of support from teacher that usually get in school. The independent learning helps in self discovery. Self discovery is essential in student life particularly while pursuing higher education as it organized the students learning. It even helps students to set goals towards improvements that need to be made.

'Independent Learning' is often linked with other approaches to learning such as 'personalization', 'student-centered learning' and 'ownership' of learning. Discussion of independent learning frequently arises in the context of important issues such as student teacher roles and relationships, and the role of information and communications technology (ICT) in learning.

The aim of this literature review was to identify reliable, robust and relevant research to provide a detailed picture of independent learning and its possible impact on students. The review found a number of different terms to describe independent learning, the most common reflecting the idea of 'self-regulated learning'. The review highlighted some evidence of benefits to students particularly in the form of improved motivation and better management of their learning. The authors of the review emphasized that independent learning does not merely involve students working alone and stressed the important role teachers can play in enabling and supporting independent learning.

The review suggested that successful independent learning depends on a number of external and internal factors. External factors involve the creation of a strong relationship between teachers and students and the establishment of an 'enabling environment' in which ICT can be an important element. Internal factors are the skills that individual students have to acquire.
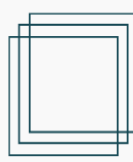
These include cognitive skills such as focusing of memory and attention and problem-solving, metacognitive skills associated with an understanding of how learning occurs, and affective skills related to feelings and emotions.

The review found some evidence of the benefits of independent learning, including:

☐ improved academic performance;

☐ increased motivation and confidence;

☐ greater student awareness of their limitations and their ability to manage them;

☐ enabling teachers to provide differentiated tasks for students; and

☐ fostering social inclusion by countering alienation

Supporting students in self-regulation, providing feedback and helping them highlight progress was found to be especially important among remedial readers and other students with special educational needs. Studies in the review found that using independent learning approaches enabled teachers to organize a wider range of activities in their classrooms and to focus more on teaching and learning than on organization or behavior. For example it enabled teachers to work with specific groups while other groups worked independently. Two studies suggested that students who are independent learners work to higher standards, are more motivated and have higher self-esteem than other children. The students develop skills that help them further their own learning by using their own ideas to

form opinions; solving problems and using a range of strategies in their learning.

External' elements which supported independent learning included the development of a strong relationship between teachers and students, and the establishment of an 'enabling environment'. Research in the review described an 'enabling environment' as one which included an appropriate 'physical environment', a flexible approach to time that teachers gave students to work on specific tasks and a shared willingness to undertake independent learning on the part of students. Appropriate resources were also necessary and it was important that teachers were knowledgeable about the work being done. An essential element of independent learning identified in the review was positive relationships between teachers and students, based on trust. A mutual responsibility for learning, which drew in students' experiences in their family and local community, was also necessary.

The skills which the review found to be necessary for successful engagement in independent learning are covered in the next section.

The review identified a number of skills that students needed to acquire in order to engage successfully in independent learning:

• Cognitive skills: such as being able to construct informal rules for solving problems; classify objects according to given criteria; form hypotheses; and reason logically. The review authors suggested that these skills were important for creating 'learner readiness'. An early years study cited in the review concluded that by the age of seven, with the right assistance, students are generally able to hold an internal dialogue using 'thinking language'.
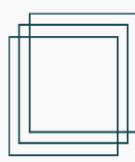
• Metacognitive skills: the review found evidence that Year 6 students were able to describe how they learn, and to identify key activities essential for learning such as listening, remembering, applying previously learnt knowledge and using formal strategies. One group of students specifically referred to the 'look, cover, write, check' strategy. Other studies highlighted the importance of students being able to reflect on what they had done, monitor their progress and use self-assessment in order to take responsibility for their own learning.

• Affective skills: these skills are related to managing feelings. Studies in the review identified motivation as the most important affective attribute in relation to independent learning. One study suggested that another important affective skill, which is related to motivation, is 'delay of gratification'. This refers to the ability to wait for achievement outcomes.

The review stressed the key role of teachers in assisting students to become independent learners by ensuring that students were actively involved in learning. The research found a number of strategies that supported students' independent learning including:

• scaffolding: this refers to the supportive structure provided by skilled others, in this case teachers, which aids students in their learning. The objective is the gradual transfer of responsibility from the teacher to the student step by step, the teacher responding flexibly to students' responses rather than following a predetermined teaching path;

• providing students with opportunities to self-monitor: the review suggested self monitoring depends on the two processes of establishing goals and receiving feedback from others and from oneself. Teachers encouraged students to self monitor by helping them use internal and external feedback to see whether the strategies they were using were effective for achieving learning goals;

• offering models of behavior: independent learning was promoted by encouraging students to model the behavior of their teachers, including, for example, teachers showing students how categorizing information made it easier to remember;

• developing communication that included language focused on learning: this helped students become more aware of the steps involved in learning, understand their own learning styles and helped students and teachers share their thinking;

• providing feedback on homework: this was found to improve students' confidence in working independently and to help them develop the reflective aspect of independent learning.

The review concluded that in successful independent learning part of the role of the teacher shifted from an expert transmitting knowledge to that of a 'coach' helping students to acquire the strategies necessary for learning. It suggested a key activity was teachers helping children to create their own representations of learning goals.

The best learner is one with excellent skills in independent learning; and the best education consists of expert teaching. Combine those, and you have two essential
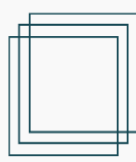
ingredients to excellent education: well-developed independent learning skills combined with expert training.

Literature

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