



## NEED OF SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING STRATEGY AS AN INTEGRAL PART OF TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMMES

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### ABSTRACT :

*This paper is an attempt to analyse the need, significance and role of self-directed learning strategy in teacher education programmes in Indian context. The world is changing faster than at any time in the human history. What is learnt today may not have any significance tomorrow. Technological advancements have entirely changed the patterns and designs of learning. Digital learning has become the reality of the modern globalised world. Learning, unlearning and relearning have become the need of the hour to fulfill the basic demands of daily life in the personal as well as professional life of an individual. In this scenario, the need of self-directed learning and its strategy has increased a number of times. Self-directed learning strategy helps a learner to learn according to his or her own interest, convenience, pace, place and time. It can be used as a powerful instrument in the hands of each and every learner to keep his or her knowledge, skills and ideas updated according to the individual and specific wants and necessities. So, the need of the hour is to include self-directed learning strategy as an integral part in the curriculum of teacher education programmes to make it more effective, creative and productive.*

**KEYWORDS :** *Self-directed learning strategy, teacher education, transformational learning, learning needs, self-management.*

### INTRODUCTION

Teacher education programmes play a significant role in the education system of any country directly or indirectly. It shapes the destiny of an individual, a society as well as a nation generation after generation. Hence, it must be highly effective, creative and productive to make a better India. The quality, effectiveness and productivity of any kind of teacher education programme can be enhanced or increased, if it gets integrated with self-directed learning strategy. Self-directed learning strategy is a powerful tool in the hands of a learner in the process of knowledge acquisition. It includes the adaptive thought process and behaviour in which the learner engages himself or herself. Commitment and motivation to learning goals gives a momentum to the use of self-directed learning strategy (Newman, 2002).



Self-directed learning strategy influences the way in which a learner acquires, selects, integrates and organizes new knowledge. It includes the learners' strategy to monitor and regulate their own learning motivationally, metacognitively and behaviourally (Nelson-Le Gall & Glor-Scheib, 1985). It is necessary that the learners should be equipped with self-directed learning strategy to utilise their full potential. It is also crucial that the learners extend their own roles in the

process of learning by continuously monitoring their own progress of learning and making a serious attempt in the direction of self-improvement. Self-directed learning strategy encourages self-independence, self-motivation, self-reliance, self-determination and self-engagement of a learner (Hiemstra, 1994).

### **CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING STRATEGY**

Self-directed learning is a voluntary, ongoing and self-motivated process of acquiring knowledge either for personal or professional reasons. The future is looking forward to proactive people, who can take ownership for their own capability to learn, unlearn and relearn in this rapidly changing world (Toffler, 1971). Further, self-directed learning strategy can be defined as the strategy by which individuals take the initiative, with or without the assistance of others, in diagnosing their learning needs and formulating learning goals; and identify human and material resources for learning, choosing and implementing appropriate learning ways and evaluating learning outcomes (Knowles, 1975). Help seeking, peer learning, effort regulation and time management are inseparable components of self-directed learning strategy (Pintrich, Smith, Garcia, & McKeachie, 1991). This strategy helps the learners to succeed in school as well as in life. It encourages transformational learning concerned with the process of awareness and reflection leading to behavioural changes. According to Candy (1991) there are four dimensions for self-directed learning: personal autonomy, self-management in learning, learner-control of instruction and independent pursuit of learning.

Zimmerman et al. (1996) describes self-directed learners as the learners who personally initiate and direct their own efforts to acquire knowledge and skills rather than relying on teachers, parents or other agents of instruction. Therefore, the purpose of self-directed learning is concerned with enhancing one's ability to be self-directed and nurturing transformational learning (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2006). Self-directed learning strategy is concerned with learners' consciousness, awareness and acceptance of personal responsibility for learning. It helps in the acquisition of new skills along with the enrichment of learning experiences. It gives emphasis on understanding the best individual practices for the best learning outcomes. It specifies what learning methods, procedures and techniques maximize learning output, how to prepare for the best way of knowledge acquisition, and how to learn effectively outside the formal classrooms (Bolhuis, 2003).

Self-directed learning strategy implies that a learner can certainly learn on their own without instructional interventions while discovering, analyzing and evaluating their own learning process. It is a process of deliberately monitoring one's own thinking and reflecting on one's own thinking patterns, plans, strategies, decisions and actions. Learners, who perceive themselves as active self-directed learners rather than passive receivers of facts and figures, become more committed, sincere and effective as self-directed learners (Black & William, 1998). In the present scenario educators are challenged to engage learners in their own process of learning with the efficient and effective use of different strategies and technologies. Self-directed learning can be perceived as students' self-awareness of their own learning and readiness to direct and engage themselves in their own learning activities (Loyens, et al., 2008). Self-directed learners need to be capable of self-assessing their own learning needs.

### **SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING AS A PROCESS AS WELL AS AN OUTCOME**

Self-directed learning is both a process as well as an outcome in the process of learning (Leary, 2012). Self-directed learning is a continuous process of self-management, self-monitoring and self-modification. Self-management uses a systematic approach to planning, problem solving and decision-making. Further, self-monitoring is concerned with self-reflection and self-evaluation. Moreover, self-modification revises the strategy and attempts to maximize his or her effectiveness on the basis of feedback given (Hiemstra, 1994). As a process, the primary function of self-directed learning is concerned with planning, executing and evaluating learning experiences. In the active and constructive process of self-directed learning, contextual, personal and behavioural factors interact in such a way that learners get an opportunity to regulate their own learning (Zimmerman et al., 1996). Here learners themselves set their

goals for learning and they try to direct, monitor and control their motivation, cognition and behaviour (Pintrich, Smith, Garcia, & McKeachie, 1991).

As an outcome self-directed learning functions as an acquired skill where the learner can recognize and apply the new skills learned (Leary, 2012). Communication skills, critical thinking, analytical approach, logical decision-making and continuous self-evaluation are necessary for an individual to become a self-directed learner (Engel, 1991). Personal responsibility and learner self-direction are two important criteria essential for self-directed learning (Brockett & Hiemstra, 1991). Personal responsibility is the process in which a learner accepts the prime responsibility for planning, implementing and evaluating the process of learning. Further, a learner's self-direction is concerned with his or her preference or desire for accepting the accountability for learning (Brockett & Hiemstra, 1991).

### **TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMME IN INDIAN CONTEXT**

Teacher education is a continuous, ever-evolving and dynamic process. In the broader sense 'teacher education' refers to the total of educative experiences which contribute to the preparation of a person for a teaching position in schools, but the term is more commonly employed to designate the programme of courses and other experiences offered by an educational institute for the announced purpose of preparing persons for teaching and other educational services and for contributing to their growth in competency for such services. Such teacher education programmes are offered in teachers' training colleges and universities. The teacher education programmes in India have evolved over time and is based on recommendations given by various committees and commissions on education. Within the broad objective of improving the learning achievements of school children, the purpose of teacher education programme is to prepare teachers for the school system and to improve capacity of existing school teachers. The crux of the entire process of teacher education programmes lies in its curriculum, design, structure, organization and transaction modes (Newman, 2002).

Teacher education programmes include the policies, procedures and provisions designed to equip future teachers with the knowledge, attitude and skills they require to perform their tasks effectively in the classroom, school and community. According to National Council of Teacher Education (NCTE), these programmes are concerned with education, research and training of persons to teach from pre-primary to higher education level. Teacher education is level-specific in nature. It means programmes on teacher education vary according to the needs of pre-primary, primary, secondary, higher education and vocational education. There are specific methods and strategies for classroom transaction at different levels. There is no uniformity in the country in the teacher education programmes. The programmes widely vary in content and process from one state to another state.

### **SIGNIFICANCE OF SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING STRATEGY IN TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMMES**

The world is changing rapidly. Technological advancements have altered the speed of change drastically. Every aspect of life whether social, economic or political is getting influenced by this speed of change. Academic world is also getting influenced severely. In educational sphere what we are learning today is getting obsolete or outdated tomorrow. Teachers and learners are facing much difficulty. How to handle this situation is a challenging task for the academic community throughout the world. Self-directed learning strategy helps a learner to face the situation effectively and handle it successfully. This strategy is the need of the hour to fulfill the daily demands of a teacher's as well as a learner's academic life. Development in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has further sharpened the edge of self-directed learning strategy. This strategy can be used as an instrument in the hands of a teacher educator to enrich themselves with new knowledge, skills and experiences. Hence, self-directed learning strategy should be an integral part of the curriculum of teacher education programme throughout the world.

Inclusion of self-directed learning strategy in teacher education programmes can make the programmes more effective, creative and productive. This is because this strategy helps a learner to learn according to his or her own needs, desires and pace and in this process he or she becomes an independent

and lifelong learner. Since rapidly changing world and technological advancement have changed the way of learning drastically in all the spheres of life, teacher education programmes must be updated. Encouraging the idea of self-directed learning strategy in the curriculum of teacher education programmes can help in the betterment of these programmes. Self-directed learning strategy can reduce the dependence of the learners enrolled in teacher education programmes on teacher educators for new knowledge, skills and experiences. Further, the development of ICT has encouraged, strengthened and sharpened the idea of self-directed learning strategy to a great extent and converted the world into a global village where each and every individual are learning with each other.

## CONCLUSION

Teacher education programmes influence the entire education system directly and indirectly. Since a teacher must be a self-directed learner as well as a lifelong learner to be effective, productive and creative in the ever changing digital world of 21<sup>st</sup> century, self-directed learning strategy must be an integral part of the curriculum of all kinds of teacher education programmes. The present world around us is full of uncertainties and rapid technological advancement is making the world more uncertain. To cope up with this situation self-directed learning strategy can be used as a potential weapon. Self-management, self-monitoring and self-modification are integral components of self-directed learning strategy. Furthermore, help seeking, peer learning, effort regulation and time management are important dimensions of self-directed learning strategy. This strategy helps a learner to learn according to his or her interest, convenience, pace, place and time.

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