

Selvam Jesiah

Self-directed learning (SDL), also known as ‘active learning’ or ‘deep learning’, is a learning methodology where learners take primary responsibility for planning, implementing, and evaluating the effort. Even though SDL supports one’s continuous growth and development, it is largely misconceived, and badly administered by academia and students resulting in the latter not taking the fullest advantage of selecting, managing, and assessing their learning activities.

The Indian education system is largely obsessed with regular classes stuffed with more lectures and fewer practice sessions resulting in no room for students to reflect and handle things independently. There is no doubt that regular lectures help learners to become informed and knowledgeable but learning without deep understanding and self-construction of ideas may go in vain. Regular lectures are a teacher-centric approach leading to spoon-feeding that, in the long run, teaches the student nothing.

What is SDL?

The best educators design and develop their courses and methods to effectively prepare students for future careers, often by using various active and proactive learning techniques. SDL is one active learning technique that shows great promise in preparing students for their lives and careers. Further, students develop new insights by interacting with and transmuting received infor-



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Own your education

Self-directed learning contributes positively to the curiosity, creativity, motivation and satisfaction of students.

mation to own it and make it personally meaningful.

While designing and developing the curriculum, educators must allocate a significant number of credits to SDL in addition to lectures and practicals. The course plan should depict the units and topics where and when SDL methodology may be used.

Educational research has shown that SDL is positively associated with academic efficiency, performance, and productivity and, above all, will significantly contribute to learners’ curiosity, creativity, independent learning, intrinsic motivation, and life satisfaction. Research also shows that curiosity, creativity, and intrinsic motivation

have a positive effect on creative and innovative performance. That’s because when students are innately motivated, they feel a sense of ownership over their assigned tasks and learning, deep-dive into its metaphysical meaning, brush up on relevant skills that will make them more competent, and feel confident in their assignments.

SDL also contributes immensely to the readiness of students for their jobs and careers, irrespective of their education. It is highly emphasised even in medical education, primarily to produce learners who can manage their learning in their careers. There is an increase in the adoption of problem-

based learning (PBL) that underscores SDL. It is because health professionals need to be self-directed to enhance goal orientation, motivation, self-discipline in practice, independence, timeliness, and continual methodical learning owing to the knowledge explosion, medical advancement and new procedures.

There is a lack of understanding as to how SDL can

be used. Many think that SDL should be initiated by teachers while others assume that students should take complete ownership of the learning process. SDL becomes more effective when teachers and students are together involved in achieving the expected level of learning.

How to use it

Teachers should be facilitators where they explain a topic and promote collaborative sessions in class by asking questions, and students should read intensively to bridge the knowledge gap identified. This may induce the student to study beyond class hours to complete the task or solve the gi-

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ven problem.

Teachers should create curiosity among students by sustaining interest in topics, explaining the importance of solutions, and adequately questioning them during discussion hours. This is how learning may be stretched outside classrooms and can be converted from teacher-centric to learner-centric, where students make use of the outside classroom hours for their learning.

What deters SDL is that students are assessment-oriented. Unless SDL is subject to assessment, the student shows no interest. Hence, the formative assessment, which is part of the overall assessment, needs to consider the performance of students in assignments and tasks given under SDL.

SDL is a powerful approach to nurture growth and life-long learning in a rapidly changing world but it is neither widespread nor popular in the Indian education system. It is time that academia, both school and higher education, adopts self-directed learning as the major methodology, and provides an environment coupled with adequate orientation to both teachers and students. The existing teaching-and-learning practices may need to be re-examined and re-tailored. Faculty development and student orientation play important roles in implementing such changes. Are we ready for embrace it for the real benefit of education?

The writer is Professor and Principal, Faculty of Management Sciences, Sri Ramachandra Institute of Higher Education and Research (Deemed to be University), Chennai.

SCHOLARSHIPS

The Glasgow MBA Scholarship

An initiative from the University of Glasgow.
Eligibility: Open to citizens of India who hold an unconditional offer for the September 2024 MBA programme intake or a conditional offer contingent only on their IELTS score, and have had a successful MBA interview and demonstrated a strong academic record (first-class honours).
Reward: €18,750 one time
Application: Online
Deadline: July 26
www.b4s.in/edge/UGAS4

Kent Future Student Scholarship for Indian Students

An initiative from the University of Kent
Eligibility: Open to Indian nationals with a valid passport who have applied for a full-time UG or PG course for September 2024 intake and have paid their tuition fee by June 30 or July 31. They should not be receiving the GREAT Scholarship or the India Women in Leadership Scholarship
Reward: Discount in tuition fee up to £5,000
Application: Online
Deadline: July 31
www.b4s.in/edge/IFSL2

India Fellow Social Leadership Programme

An 18-month leadership programme to help participants develop their skills
Eligibility: Open to Indian citizens between 20 and 30 years who are graduates in any discipline or will graduate before start of the fellowship. Applicants must be ready to commit 18 months to the fellowship and to serve in any part of the country.
Reward: Up to ₹22,000 monthly and other benefits
Application: Online
Deadline: August 15
www.b4s.in/edge/IFSL2

Courtesy: Buddy4study.com

Widen your choices

Uncertain about your career options? Low on self-confidence? This column may help



OFF THE EDGE
Nandini Raman

I did Science in Class 12 (Biology stream) and B.A. English Literature. I don’t know what to do next. Is an MBA a good option? Alphonse

Dear Alphonse,

An MBA will provide you with a solid foundation in business and management principles, and open doors to various career opportunities in the corporate sector, entrepreneurship, and other industries. You could take on roles in marketing, finance, human resource management, operations management, international business, and entrepreneurship across corporate organisations, finance and banking sectors, marketing, advertising agencies, HR departments, and start-ups. With an M.A. in English Literature, you could find jobs in teaching, publishing, journalism, content writing, copywriting, editing, and public relations. An M.A. in Communication or Journalism can open doors in journalism, broadcasting, public relations, corporate communications, content creation, and media production. An M.A. in Linguistics could lead you to teaching and academia, translation and interpretation, speech and language therapy, and research. Consider your core strengths, passion, and career aspirations to choose a path that aligns with your long-term goals. A personality career profile will also help you identify your strengths.

I am a Humanities student. I want to do a Ph.D. but don’t know what I want to specialise in. If I want to study abroad, especially in West Asia, what additional qualifications do I need? Aftab

Dear Aftab,

Pursuing a Ph.D. requires a clear understanding of your interests, strengths, and long-term career aspirations. Start by self-introspection and reflect on your strengths, and academic achievements to identify potential areas of specialisation. Consult your professors and academic advisors to gain insights and advice on potential specialisations and research topics that best fit your interests. Research universities and Ph.D. programmes in West Asia that best fit your academic and research interests. Most programmes abroad require a Master’s degree in a related field. Depending on the country and university, prepare for the standardised language proficiency tests such as TOEFL, IELTS, or others if required. Gain relevant experience by participating in research projects, internships, and academic conferences to strengthen your academic profile and research skills. Apply for scholarships, fellowships, and funding opportunities to finance your studies abroad. You will need to prepare appropriate LORs and SOPs for your applications as well.

I am in the second year of B.Sc. Physics and want to do higher studies in Astronomy. Should I do an M.Sc. or an internship after graduation? Also, are there internships related to Astronomy? Hana

Dear Hana,

Pursue an M.Sc. in Astronomy or a related field and gain practical experience through internships on the side if possible. The Master’s will offer research opportunities, allowing you to work on projects, collaborate with faculty and open doors to various opportunities in research institutions, observatories, space agencies, universities, and educational institutions. It will also prepare you for advanced studies and research. Look for research internships across observatories and research institutions like NASA, ESA, and ISRO, universities and educational institutions, planetariums and

science centres or astronomy organisations and societies. As you do your Master’s, you will also understand if you want to pursue a research-oriented career or a one in space science, astrophysics, education, or science communication. Network and build relationships with professors, researchers, and professionals to gain insights, guidance, and opportunities for higher studies and internships.

I have finished B.Sc. Psychology and would like to do my Master’s with a specialisation in Educational Psychology. What is the scope in India? Shamlee

Dear Shamlee,

Educational Psychology focuses on understanding how people learn and the educational processes that influence learning and development. The scope is vast across educational institutions (schools and colleges, across special education, remediation), universities and research institutes, government and non-governmental organisations (to draft policies, programmes and initiatives), NGOs (educational and community programmes, counselling, advocacy, educational reforms), corporate sector (in training and development programmes for employees), healthcare and mental health organisations (across hospitals and clinics) and across private practice as a counsellor or a therapist. The job opportunities include being a school psychologist, a college counsellor, an educational consultant, a training and development specialist, a researcher or an academician, a counsellor or a therapist and as a special educator or a remediation teacher.

Disclaimer: This column is merely a guiding voice and provides advice and suggestions on education and careers.

The writer is a practising counsellor and a trainer. Send your questions to eduplus.thehindu@gmail.com with the subject line Off the Edge



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Design beyond language

English-only assessments in Design education lead to the exclusion of those who are rich in the knowledge of their diverse cultures and sustainable practices

Anunaya Chaubey

India is one of the most linguistically diverse countries in the world with 22 official languages and countless dialects spoken by its 1.4 billion inhabitants. Given our history, English continues to be an important official language. Though India comes second only after the U.S. for the number of English speakers, only one-fifth of its population is familiar with the language, which significantly reduces access to publicly available opportunities.

Design is an emerging field of study in India and many private universities have set up programmes to cater to the growing needs and aspirations of young Indians. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 called for the curricular inclusion of contemporary subjects like Design Thinking.

Designers are expected to be multi- and in-

terdisciplinary problem-solvers who use the design thinking process to combat real-world problems such as climate change, water scarcity, healthcare, and more. Young creative individuals are increasingly opting to pursue undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral programmes in fields that impact our built environment as well as harnesses future technology to reimagine the world.

Context aware

Such innovation requires strong creative ability, critical thinking, and analytical skills to design impactful solutions. In order to do so, the first steps begins with empathy, and being aware of the context or culture. Design calls for an amalgamation of logic, creativity, and Science with one’s experiences and roots.

In India, in comparison to Engineering, Medicine and the Liberal Arts, Design institu-

tions are fewer in number. Nonetheless, a sizeable number of aspirants appear for entrance exams that are designed to test creativity, innovative abilities, and analytical skills but can admit only a limited number of students.

Testing aptitude

So far, all Design entrance tests in India are conducted only in English. Does this process effectively test aptitude? Aptitude is an individual’s natural or acquired capacity or potential to acquire specific skills or knowledge.

Musical or athletic talents are assessed by demonstration and not by the individual’s ability to communicate in a specific language. It embraces cognitive, meaning-making, analytical and creative capabilities which are built over time, through childhood, in one’s mother tongue and local context. The language and

culture of students opens up a wealth of indigenous knowledge systems that is of tremendous valuable today. The initiative of multilingual assessments expands the pool of students and demonstrates the institution’s commitment towards education for all. Today, with massive technological advances in real-time translation, multilingual students can get access to good quality education only if the access points are equitable and inclusive.

Practices such as English-only assessments lead to excellent problem-solvers being excluded and deprives the nation of changemakers who are rich in the knowledge of their diverse culture and sustainable practices that could help solve many problems that plague the world.

Given that Design education is, by nature, more experiential and studio-based with juries that follow a continuous and cohesive assessment pattern, the entry points to such a system must be in line with the needs of the curriculum and industry. This system has been awaiting a creative disruption, and multilingual entrance assessments would be revolutionary as the number of programmes and applicants increase.

Designers across the globe are making our real and virtual world more liveable by thoughtfully crafting effective interaction, visual, sound and haptic experiences. Purposeful design draws from diverse knowledge, experiences and professional domains. Let us rethink, restructure and redesign the education system to empower the next generation of designers.

The writer is Provost, Anant National University.

SAVE THE DATE

Admissions

The University of Sheffield, the U.K. invites applications for its four-year B.Sc. Computer Science (Artificial Intelligence) with an Industrial Placement Year.
Eligibility: Between 80 and 90% in Class 12 (depending on board) with Maths and Computer Science as subjects; IELTS grade of 6.5 with a minimum 6.0 in each component or equivalent.
https://tinyurl.com/5d2m32b5

The Design Village invites applications for its Bachelor of Design (B.Des.) and Master of Design (M.Des.) programmes for 2024-25.
Eligibility: For B.Des., at least 50% aggregate in any stream in Class 12 board exam or equivalent. For M.Des, minimum aggregate of 50% in undergraduate course in a related creative field.
Deadline: July 15
https://apply.thedesignvillage.org/

The Institute of Bakery and Culinary Arts (IBCA) has opened admissions for Culinary Arts and for Bakery and Pastry Arts.
Eligibility: Pass in Classes 10 and 12 board exams from a recognised Board of Education
Deadline: July 15
https://www.chefibpa.com/

Shiv Nadar University Chennai has launched the Shiv Nadar School of Law, which will offer a five-year BA.LLB programme from August.
Eligibility: Marks in Classes 10 and 12 or CLAT and LSAT-India scores.
https://tinyurl.com/3k922ntt

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