

Theory and Practice of Self-Directed Learning (SDL)

2018 STFM Conference on Medical Student Education: Pre-Conference Workshop

Half of what you'll learn in medical school will be shown to be either dead wrong or out of date within five years of your graduation; the trouble is that nobody can tell you which half—so the most important thing to learn is how to learn on your own. - Dr. Dave Sackett: “Father of EBM”

DEFINITIONS OF SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING

- “... ‘self-directed learning’ describes a process by which individuals take the initiative, with or without the assistance of others, in diagnosing their learning needs, formulating learning goals, identifying human and material resources for learning, choosing and implementing appropriate learning strategies, and evaluating learning outcomes” (Knowles, 1972)
- “Self-directed learning involves medical students’ self-assessment of learning needs; independent identification, analysis, and synthesis of relevant information; and appraisal of the credibility of information sources” (LCME Standard 6.3)
- “Self-directed learning (SDL) views learners as responsible owners and managers of their own learning process. Self-directed learning integrates self-management (Management of context, including the social setting, resources and action) with self-monitoring (the process whereby the learners monitor, evaluate and regulate their cognitive learning strategies” (Bolhuis, 1996 & Garrison, 1997)

SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING & PRINCIPLES OF ADULT LEARNING

Key Elements of Self-Directed Learning

The learner takes the initiative for:

- Diagnosing learning needs
- Formulating goals
- Identifying research
- Implementing appropriate activities
- Evaluating outcomes

Principles of Adult Learning

Adults are motivated by learning that:

- Is perceived as relevant
- Is based on, and builds on, their previous experiences
- Is participatory and actively involves them
- Is focused on problems
- Is designed so that they can take responsibility for their own learning
- Can be immediately applied in practice
- Involves cycles of action and reflection
- Is based upon mutual trust and respect

Source: Spencer, J. A. & Jordan, R.K. (1993). Learner centered approaches in medical education. *BMJ*, 318, 1280-1283.

SDL APPLICATIONS

Individual Projects: A student may undertake research projects individually with the guidance of the teacher/mentor and their own personal goals. These projects can vary in scope and purposed based on learner input and/or course objectives.

Case studies: Case study as a method of teaching probably has been used in the teaching of healthcare professionals more extensively and for longer time than any other method. The case study describes the life history of an individual or all of the factors which affect a situation. It tries to give as much breadth and depth of an individual in situation.

TAKING IDEAS HOME

Where have you seen examples of self-directed learning?

How could you implement self-directed learning into your clinical teaching?

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Medical Education: Self-Directed Learning Overview

<http://medicaleducation.wikifoundry.com/page/Self+Directed+Learning>

How to Promote Self-Directed Learning Skills in Medical Education

<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/how-promote-self-directed-learning-skills-medical-linda-carr-ph-d/>