

Self-Directed Learning of University Students in the Internet Usage: Challenges and Practices

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Abstract

The primary purpose of this study was to assess the practices and challenges of internet usage for academic purpose with pertinent Self-Directed Learning ability. The move into internet use has become very demanding of learner's self-control and rigorous engagement of students in the academic orthodoxy. This study is believed to bring this contemporary issue to be properly guided. Self-Direct Learning theory is denoted as a basis for conducting the investigation. From second year and above students in two higher education institutions, 210 were selected using stratified sampling. Primary data were collected from participant students. Questionnaire and interview were used as tools for gathering data. Mixed approach descriptive survey is the design of this study for conducting assessment with descriptive purpose. SPSS 25 was used for quantitative data analysis. Thematic analysis was employed for qualitative data from the interview. The finding revealed that most students are using internet as an academic self-support, for doing assignments, attending lecture, and reading references. Though there are such practices in the autonomous learning among students, there are serious difficulties and challenges the students face in relation to gaps in Self-Directed Learning. Few of the challenges include wastage of time (time management related challenge), much internet cost, and access interruption. In addition, flattering stimuli on internet snatch the attention of the learner. This is related with self-control challenges. As a way forward, trainings should be given to students about academic skills and self-management for helping them to be effective in the academia.

Keywords: Self-Directed Learning, Self-Directed Learning theory, Time management, Self-control

Introduction

Learning is a means from attaining relatively permanent behavioral outcomes as a result of experiences or practices. Self-directed or autonomous learning evolves following the learner's maturity and rich experience. The orthodox and efficacious readiness for controlling and guiding one's learning, the learner has chief role in responsibly actuating his/her learning. Learning is a lifelong phenomenon. The way that learning process occurs brings different facets of interaction. In the beginning, the learner is dependent on the educator and assimilates what is coming to him or her. But as he/she grows older, independent learning is expected.

In order to realize their full potential as learners, it is essential that students have good self-directed learning skills. It is also important that students develop their own roles in learning by continuously

monitoring their own learning progress, identifying areas of deficit, and making a conscious effort towards self-improvement.

Individual's self-initiation, monitoring and responsibility matter most for self-directed learning (SDL). Learners select, accomplish, and assess their own learning activities, which can ensue anytime, anywhere, through any means across ages. SDL describes a process by which the individual takes the initiative, with or without the backing of others, in diagnosing his/her learning needs, verbalizing/setting learning goals, identify human and material resources for learning, choosing and implement appropriate learning strategies, and evaluating learning outcomes (Knowles, 1975 cited in Nadi et al., 2011). In SDL, level of control transfers gradually from the teacher to the learner. Learners have greater independence in the learning goals and how to carry out a task. SDL emphasizes on the role of motivation and determination learners have at the beginning and continuation of efforts to achieve the goals (Saeid, & Eslaminejad, 2017; Nadi et al., 2011).

Statement of the Problem

Self-directed learning is demanding initiation and motivation from the learner's part. The strategies of self-directed learning allow students to cope better with their studies while fulfilling other commitments (Khat, 2015). In the learning process, asking the best questions possible yields both vital knowledge detection and powerful personal insights for the learner. To ask the right self-directed questions means helping nurture oneself as a lifelong learner, and becoming a global citizen striving for the betterment of self. Self-directed learners come in all ages, cultures, and levels of capability.

SDL is learning by oneself. In its largest sense SDL refers to individuals' ability to taking initiative to identify their own learning needs, their ability to determine their learning goals, their ability to define the sources they need in order to learn, and their ability to choose/use appropriate learning strategies and evaluate learning outcomes with or without help from an outsider. SDL is a process where individuals take primary charge of planning, continuing and evaluating their learning experiences (Merriam et al., 2007). In SDL, the responsibility to learn shifts from an external source (teacher, etc.) to the individual. Control and active involvement of the learner in the learning process is crucial in this process (Boyer and Usinger, 2015; Grover, 2015). Self-directed learning includes the conceptualization, design, implementation and evaluation of learning guided by learners (Brookfield, 2009). It may be referred as a method of organizing learning which learners control the task of learning. In addition to these, self-directed learning may also be viewed as a target that learners strive to achieve. In order to achieve it, individuals take responsibility for their own learning and embrace individual autonomy and preferences (Kaufman, 2003).

Self-directed learning can theoretically be initiated by putting two different predictors into place: a *readiness* to learn and a *willingness* to learn.

In SDL, the readiness to learn **means a learner has all the logical tools and circumstances for being a prepared and capable learner in place.** It can include things like basic skills (such as literacy, numeracy, and the like), research and information skills, cognitive skills, critical thinking skills, life skills, communication and collaboration skills, and more. It can also mean having an actual problem to solve or a challenge to face—in essence, a purpose for the learning to happen. This is the toolbox that enables learning to take place.

The second predictor, willingness to learn refers to all about the *desire* to learn. **It means having a real love of discovery and development and being curious and open to learning from failure.** It is a willingness to dig in and get busy with learning and make new realizations along the way. Here we also show an interest in the expertise and wisdom of others and see everyone and everything as a potential source of meaningful learning. These are things that make our learning appealing, relevant, useful, and rewarding.

Eventually the goal in education is to equip learners to think for themselves in order to build successful and prosperous lives beyond numeracy and literacy in schooling. In order to strengthen or empower SDL, there are issues to be raised.

First of all, a learner should figure out what he/she wants to learn. Then it is quite relevant to investigate the relevance of the content and experience including the problem to be solved and the anticipated challenges we could encounter. In SDL, learners should also look in to the contribution of what they learn for their hobby or skill; personal knowledge development; and learning for a job or a career.

It is important to deal with SDL, in motivating learners to seek for knowledge, for understanding the circumstances and context of learning, and for meaningful interaction with environmental stimuli. In addition, understanding SDL will help for personal development, problem-solving, facing learning challenges, and responding to various types of queries.

The learner can find what he/she needs for learning in SDL from both traditional and online sources. **Traditional sources** include books, articles, films, arts and designs, conversations/collaborations, courses, hands-on workshops, seminars, and mentoring/practicums. On the other hand, **online sources** embrace websites, blogs, wikis, videos, podcasts, online learning and social media (such as telegram, Facebook, YouTube, and the like).

An independent or autonomous SDL learner can ask for help from family, friends, and teachers. Support could be also provided from other professionals and experienced enthusiasts. Implementation and sharing knowledge could be achieved through developing and giving a presentation; writing/publishing a book; building and publishing a website or wiki; starting a blog; filming and hosting a video tutorial; and recording and hosting a podcast. In SDL, parts of learning (or the whole) can potentially be applied to other future problems of a similar nature. We can find

other ways to share our learning (e.g., teaching it to others). Knowledge retention and reuse can effectively exercise overall positive cognitive development. Employing these self-directed learning questions can lead to valuable experiences for the development of any independent learner. Feel free to expand on them and revise them for your own practices.

In order to excel at Self-Directed Learning, the learner should have self-motivation, create S.M.A.R.T goals; understand his/her learning style; set standards, monitor, and evaluate, and practice persistence. A good SDL learner possesses such qualities.

In self-directed learning, the main concern is the way to measure learning progress. In order to measure progress, it is important to know what SDL is, why it is important, and to understand the different levels associated with lifelong learning.

Grow, 1991 (cited in Manaye Adela, 2015) enumerates four specific levels. The first stage is named as “*The Dependent Learner*”. In this stage, the learner leans heavily on an instructor. There is no self-direction or even any hint of understanding that there may be more than a dependency to all learning. This learner will assimilate specific details and complete identified tasks. The learner is entirely dependent upon the teacher.

The second stage is “*The Interested Learner*”. The interested learners are beginning to realize that there may be something more to learning. They may not need to be directed all the time and can seek out opportunities as well as resources to learn. These learners may be recognized by setting their personal learning goals and recognize the need to start looking at where they want to be rather than checking off items from a pre-determined task list. They are building confidence in their abilities and skills. The educator can best help these students by showing enthusiasm for learning and motivation.

Grow’s third stage is “*The Involved Learner*”. The involved learners are in the intermediate stage of self-directed learning. They are recognizing the ability to learn by themselves and can participate in group activities. This type of learners is making some learning goals and creating a method to achieve these goals. The teacher has moved from the role of an educator to the less involved role of a guide.

The fourth stage is referred as “*The Self-directed Learner*”. The self-directed learners are at the pinnacle of the levels. These learners not only set their own learning goals but have already determined how to assess the goals. These learners can cultivate their desires and know how to pursue them. They are able to determine the validity and reliability of their acquired information. They also create their personal direction for learning. In this level, the teacher is a peer, a learning consultant (Grow, 1991). Self-directed learners have the following characteristics: they set clear goals for themselves; they shape their learning process in line with goals and plans; they monitor their own learning process; they evaluate the outcomes of their own learning; they are autonomous;

and they have self-motivation. In addition, self-directed learners are open to learning; they are curious; they are willing to learn; they value learning; they have self-control; and they take initiative to learn (Knowles, 1977).

SDL enables individuals to improve their self-confidence, autonomy, motivation and lifelong learning skills (O'Shea, 2003). It turns learners into active participants in the learning process and encourages them to become deep learners. However, there are several competencies that self-directed learning requires. Knowles (1977) lists them as follows: the ability to enter into a close, respectful and learning-friendly relationship with learners; the ability to establish an environment which is physically and psychologically comfortable, open to interaction, based on cooperation, open and secure. The other competences are the ability to take responsibility for determining one's own learning needs; the ability to set goals; the ability to plan, implement and evaluate learning activities; the ability to help learners to self-direct their learning; the ability to be a facilitator and a source; the ability to effectively use small group processes; and the ability to evaluate learning processes and outcomes (Knowles, 1977).

Research Questions

The study poses the following research questions:

1. How is the self-directed learning practice of university student in internet use?
2. What are the perceived challenges of self-directed learning in internet use among university students?
3. Is there relationship between self-directed learning and internet use?
4. Are there statistically significant differences among students in year level in self-directed learning practices?

Objectives

The main purpose of this study is to assess the practices and challenges of self-directed learning in internet use. The specific objectives are to:

1. Identify self-directed learning practices in internet use among university students;
2. Diagnose challenges of self-directed learning practices in internet use among university students in Addis Ababa; and
3. Find out if there is a statistically significant difference in year level in self-directed learning practices.

Significance of the Study

This study is important for initiating and empowering independent learning of students to autonomously guide their learning practices. So, it is helpful for higher education and researchers to capitalize upon the advantages of self-directed learning.

Delimitation/Scope

This study is conducted in Addis Ababa. Second year and above university students from private and public higher education institutions were considered in the population.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework and Implications

Self-Direct Learning Theory is denoted as a basis for conducting this study. SDL has self-determination and self-management as goals. The process encompasses learner control and auto didaxy which are related with self-educating.

There are three critical dimensions of Self-directed learning (SDL).

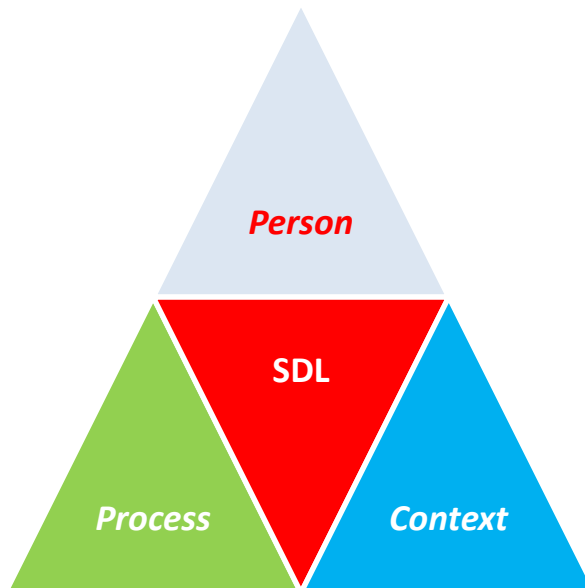


Figure 1: Dimensions of Self-Directed Learning

As it is depicted in the above diagram, SDL is affected by the learner characteristics, process, and context. Hence, this study has taken those elements into consideration for the investigation of practices and challenges of SDL.

A lot is known about self-directed learning such as: individual learners can become empowered to take increasingly more responsibility for various decisions associated with the learning endeavor; self-direction is best viewed as a continuum or characteristic that exists to some degree in every person and learning situation; self-direction does not necessarily mean all learning will take place in isolation from others; self-directed learners appear to be able to transfer learning, in terms of both knowledge and study skill, from one situation to another; self-directed study can involve various activities and resources, such as self-guided reading, participation in study groups, internships, electronic dialogues, and reflective writing activities; and effective roles for teachers in self-directed learning such as dialogue with learners, securing resources, evaluating outcomes,

and promoting critical thinking are possible, This study mainly deals with the way how university students practice SDL and the challenges they face.

Research Methods

This part of the study consists of the methodology aspect of the study: population, sampling, study design, data gathering tools, and methods of data analysis.

Locale, Population, and Study Design

The study was conducted in four higher education institutions (two private and two public universities) in Addis Ababa. The population of the study represents second year and above university students in these universities. The study followed descriptive survey design; the approach used was Quan-qual mixed triangulation approach.

Sampling Techniques

Stratified random sampling was used for selecting 210 participants. Strata was based on academic year level and department. After department and year level stratification, Yamane's formula was used for recruiting respondents from each stratum.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N * (e)^2}$$

Yamane, 1967

N – Population size

n – Sample Size

e – Level of precision (0.05 is used)

Data Gathering Tools/Instruments

Questionnaire (open-ended and close-ended) and interview were the instruments used for gathering data from primary sources. Secondary data sources were used to look into the engagement of university students in internet use, especially in social media such as YouTube, Telegram, Facebook, and the like.

Construction, Piloting and validation

First the researcher reviewed literature for instrument construction. After preparing items or questions, the development of the questionnaire was followed by piloting and validation. The Chronbach Alpha was 0.89 which showed the usability of the instrument.

Administration and Ethical Concerns

Direct administration of questionnaire and survey-monkey was used. Semi-structured interview was also in use.

Data Analysis Mechanisms

For quantitative data analysis, SPSS 25 was used. Thematic analysis was employed for qualitative data from interview.

Analysis, Findings and Discussion

Analysis was done based on the research questions of the study. The analysis encompassed;

- ✓ SDL (self-management, motivation, self-monitoring)
- ✓ Internet Use (Online Learning Proficiency, Online Discussion Proficiency, Technical Proficiency, and Time Management)

Respondents' Background

This part of the analysis presents demographic characteristics of respondents. Four variables with their corresponding categories are displayed.

Table 1: Participants Demographic Characteristics

SR	Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
1	Gender of Participants	Male	108	51.4
		Female	102	48.6
		Total	210	100.0
2	Age of Participants	Below 18 years old	33	15.7
		18-20 years old	113	53.8
		Above 20 years old	64	30.5
		Total	210	100.0
3	Educational Background or College/Faculty of Participants	Business and Economics	29	13.8
		Social Science and Humanities	62	29.5
		Engineering and Technology	70	33.3
		Education	24	11.4
		Natural Science	14	6.7
		Others	11	5.2
		Total	210	100.0

4	Year Level of Participants	Second Year	75	35.7
		Third Year	73	34.8
		Fourth Year and above	62	29.5
		Total	210	100.0

In the gender of participants, 108 (51.4%) are males and 102 (48.6%) are females. There is proportionally equivalent gender distribution. As far as age is concerned, 33 (15.7%) are below 18 years old; 113 (53.8%) are from 18 to 20 years old; and 64 (30.5%) are above 20 years old.

In view of educational background or college/faculty distribution, 29 (13.8%) of the respondents are from College of Business and Economics; 62 (29.5%) are from College of Social Science and Humanities; 70 (33.3%) are from College of Engineering and Technology; 24 (11.4%) are from College of Education and Behavioural Studies; 14 (6.7%) are from College of Natural Sciences; and the remaining 11 (5.2%) are from other faculties. In the year level of the respondents, 75 (35.7%) are second year students; 73 (34.8%) are from third year; and 62 (29.5%) are fourth year and above students.

Practices

This part of the analysis displays the practices in the use of SDL. SDL practices are statistically significantly affected by prior experiences, initiation and context related empowerment. There is problem in online learning and discussion proficiency in relation to SDL.

ANOVA depicted that there is statistically significant mean difference in SDL practices in year level. Highest mean is for those who are third year and above as compared to their juniors.

Table 2: ANOVA Summary

ANOVA Summary					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	16511.656	2	8255.828	217.858	.000
Within Groups	7844.367	207	37.895		
Total	24356.024	209			

Self-Management

This sub-section is about students' self-management in the self-directed learning practices. Responses of eight items are presented below.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics of Self-management

SR	Self-Management Items	Mean	Std. D
1	I am well-organized in my learning.	3.67	1.15
2	I set up strict timeframes to learn something new.	3.71	1.27
3	I have good management skills.	3.79	1.29
4	I set up planned solutions to solve my problems.	3.7	1.24
5	I can decide about the priority of my work.	3.86	1.1
6	I can manage pursuing my own learning.	3.97	1.11
7	I prefer to plan my own learning.	3.91	1.03
8	I am efficient in managing my time.	4.07	0.96
n=210			

1=Strongly Disagree; 2=Disagree; 3=Neutral; 4=Agree; 5=Strongly Agree

For the item ‘they are well-organized in their learning’, 45 (21.4%) chose strongly agree, 103 (49%) agree, 27 (12.9%) remain neutral, 18 (8.6%) disagree, and 17 (8.1%) strongly disagree.

For the second item on setting up of strict timeframes to learn something new 24 (11.4%) of participants have chosen strongly disagree, 13 (6.2%) disagree, 25 (11.9%) neutral, 87 (41.4%) agree, and 61 (29%) strongly agree. This implies that there is higher level of agreement on learners’ timeframe.

More than half of the respondents, i.e., 154 (73.3%) agreed that they have good management skills. 23 (11%) were neutral, while 11 (5.3%) chose disagree, and 22 (10.5%) strongly disagree.

Participants were asked whether they set up planned solutions to solve their problems. 13 (6.2%) disagreed, 20 (9.5%) strongly disagreed, 15 (7.1) were neutral, while half of the respondents, 116 (55.2%) agreed, and 46 (21. (%)) strongly agreed ($M = 3.17$; $SD = 1.24$).

Participants were asked if they can decide about the priority of their work. 63 (30%) strongly agreed, and 93 (44.3%) agreed ($M = 3.86$; $SD = 1.1$). On the other hand, 12 (5.7%) agreed and 13 (6.2%) strongly disagreed while 29 (13.8%) were neutral.

For the sixth item, which is about managing and pursuing once own learning, 77 (36.7%) strongly agreed, and 85 (40.5%). However, 23 (11%) of the respondents have chosen disagreed. The remaining 25 (11.9%) were neutral.

For the item “I prefer to plan my own learning”, 172 (81.9%) of the respondents agreed, 16 (7.6%) were neutral, 9 (4.3%) disagreed, and 13 (6.2%) strongly disagreed.

In the efficiency of managing time, i.e., 10 (4.8%) responded that they strongly disagree, 5 (2.4%) chose disagree, 14 (6.7%) were neutral, 113 (53.8%) agree, and the rest 68 (32.4%) strongly agree ($M = 4.07$; $SD = 0.96$) which shows high level of agreement.

Motivation

The analysis below presents the motivation of respondents in practicing of SDL. The responses for the Likert scale questionnaire are presented below.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics of Motivation towards SDL

SR	Motivation related items	Mean	Std. D
1	I take the challenge to learn.	4.06	1.01
2	I am a ‘why’ person.	4.08	1.07
3	I critically evaluate new ideas and knowledge.	4.04	0.93
4	I would like to evaluate the level of my learning progress.	3.87	1.04
5	I would like to learn from my mistakes.	3.85	1.08
6	I believe in effort to improve my performance.	3.78	1.04
7	1. I enjoy learning new things.	4.05	1.01
8	I trust my abilities to learn new things.	4.06	0.96
9	I have positive expectations about what I am learning.	3.74	1.07

1=Strongly Disagree; 2=Disagree; 3=Neutral; 4=Agree; 5=Strongly Agree

The analysis of motivation related items on SDL are presented below.

175 (83.3%) of the participants agreed that they take the challenge to learn. However, 20 (9.5%) were neutral, and 15 (17.7%) of the respondents have chosen disagree and strongly disagree. About majority of the respondents agreed towards the item ($M = 4.06$; $SD = 1.01$).

For the second item which stated “I am a ‘why’ person”, 22 (10.5%) of the participants indicated their choice of disagree and strongly disagree. On the other hand, 172 (81.9%) of the entire sample have chosen agree and strongly agree. 16 (7.6%) remained neutral.

For the item which goes “*I critically evaluate new ideas and knowledge*”, 13 (6.2%) of the participants disagreed (chose strongly disagree and disagree). On the other hand, 15 (7.1%) chose neutral, and 182 (86.7%) of the sample chose agree and strongly agree.

52 (24.8%) of the respondents strongly agreed and 115 (54.8%) agreed that they would like to evaluate the level of their learning process. 13 (6.2%) strongly disagreed, 10 (4.8%) disagreed, and the remaining 20 (9.5%) were neutral.

For the item “I would like to learn from my mistakes”, 22 (6.2%) of the respondents disagreed, 36 (17.1%) were neutral, 91 (43.3%) agreed, and 61 (29%) strongly agreed.

Most of the respondents, i.e., 151 (71.9%) have chosen agree and strongly agree that they believe in effort to improve their performance. 13 (6.2%) chose disagree, 11 (5.2%) strongly disagree, 35 (16.7%) indicated the neutral option from the scale.

Participants were asked if they enjoy learning new things. 16 (7.7%) indicated that they disagree, and 24 (11.4%) were neutral. On the other hand, 77 (36.7%) of the participants have chosen strongly agree and 93 (44.3%) agree.

170 (80.9%) have indicated agreement to the item whether they trust their abilities to learn new things. 16 (7.7%) of the respondents showed disagreement by choosing disagree and strongly disagree. The residual 24 (11.4%) remained neutral.

For the last item in motivation category, 166 (79%) of the respondents indicated that they have positive expectations about what they are learning. However, 30 (14.3%) of the respondents disagreed and 14 (6.7%) of the respondents were neutral.

Self-Monitoring

The analysis below presents about self-monitoring of respondents.

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics on Self-monitoring of Respondents on SDL

SR	Self-monitoring items	Mean	Std. D
1	I am aware of my own weaknesses.	3.87	1.17
2	I can link pieces of information when I am learning.	4.08	0.94
3	I pay attention to all details before taking a decision.	4.02	1.14
4	I would like to set up my goals.	3.65	1.09
5	I correct myself when I make mistakes.	3.67	1.15
6	I am a responsible person.	3.69	1.15
7	I judge my abilities fairly.	4.02	1.06

8	I think deeply when solving a problem.	2.13	1.07
9	I prefer to set up my criteria to evaluate my performance.	4.02	1.07

1=Strongly Disagree; 2=Disagree; 3=Neutral; 4=Agree; 5=Strongly Agree

The level of agreement on the items towards self-monitoring are provided here. For the first item, whether they are aware of their own weaknesses, 103 (49%) of respondents strongly agreed, and 60 (28.6%) agreed. 20 (9.5%) were neutral, 13 (6.2%) disagreed and the remaining 14(28.6%) strongly disagreed ($M = 3.87$ $SD = 1.17$).

177 (84.3%) of the respondents agreed they can link pieces of information when they are learning, but 14 (6.7%) showed disagreement and 19 (9%) were neutral ($M = 4.08$; $SD = 0.94$).

More than half of the respondents, i.e., 169 (80.5%) responded that they pay attention to details before taking decision ($M = 4.02$; $SD = 1.14$). However, 15 (11.9%) chose disagree, and 16 (7.6%) were neutral.

For the item “*I would like to set up my goals*”, 34 (16.2%) and 116 (55.2%) of the respondents have chosen strongly agree and agree, respectively. 30 (14.3%) of the respondents were neutral; 12 (5.7%) disagreed, and 18 (8.6%) strongly disagreed.

For the fifth item, which is about whether they correct themselves when they make mistakes, 16 (7.6%) strongly disagreed and 19 (9.0%) disagreed. However, a great deal of number of respondents 47 (22.4) and 97 (46.2%) favored the choice of strongly agree and agree scales, respectively. The remaining 31 (14.8%) were neutral.

Participants were asked about their feeling of responsibility. 48 (22.9%) strongly agreed and 100 (47.6%) agreed that they are responsible person ($M = 3.69$; $SD = 1.15$). On the other hand, 17 (8.1%) of the participants preferred strongly disagree and 16 (7.6%) disagree whilst 29 (13.8%) were neutral.

169 (80.4%) of the respondents stated that they judge their abilities fairly. On the other hand, 21 (10%) disagreed. The remaining 20 (9.5) were neutral.

142 (67.6%) of the respondents indicated that they do not think deeply when they solve a problem. But 24 (11.5%) of the respondents indicated that they think deeply when they solve problems. For this item, 44 (21%) of the respondents remained neutral.

77 (36.7%) of the respondents strongly agreed and 90 (42.9%) agreed that they prefer to set up their criteria to evaluate their performance. For this final item on self-monitoring, 12 (5.8%) disagreed, 11 (5.2%) strongly disagreed, and 20 (9.5%) were neutral.

Table 6: Mean of Categories in the Variables

Category	Mean
Self-Management	3.83
Motivation	3.95
Self-Control	3.68
SDL practices	3.38
Online Learning Proficiency	3.29
Online Discussion Proficiency	3.04
Technical Proficiency	3.71
Time Management	3.83

1=Strongly Disagree; 2=Disagree; 3=Neutral; 4=Agree; 5=Strongly Agree

Challenges

There are various challenges that make university students not to be self-directed learners. The causes emanate from the learners, instructors, learning ecology, and academic culture. Learners with negative efficacy and with low self-confidence stay dependent on the instructor. Most participants indicated that they expect a lot from instructors to instruct them and take the lion's share in their learning process, even in sending links for internet use. Though it is good to have guidance, dependency could become preventive from SDL. These are intrinsic challenges that make learners be dependent.

Another challenge is related with classroom teacher-made tests and assessments. Participants indicated that they limit their scope into module or handout that the instructor uses because exam items are prepared from handouts the instructor uses. This restricts the reference reading territory.

The study has revealed a few challenges including wastage of time (time management related challenges), high internet cost, and failure to focus on what they are doing. In addition, distracting stimuli on internet snatch the attention of the learner.

This is related with self-control challenges. As a way forward, trainings should be given to students about academic skills and self-management to help them be effective in the academia.

Discussion

Perhaps the direction of giving exit exam for graduating students of higher education in Ethiopia (Eyob Ayenew, Abreham Gebre Yohannes, 2022) may help to overcome the challenge emanating

from focusing on materials that can make learners be effective on classroom teacher-made tests and assessment.

The teacher dominated trend in the teaching methodology is a stumbling block to practice SDL. Knowles (as stated in Manning, 2007) says the following in relation of self-directed learning: “Individuals who take the initiative in learning, learn more things and learn better, than people who sit at the feet of teachers, possibly waiting to be taught do. However, the situation in our universities goes contrary to what Manning (2007) claims; students in Addis Ababa have less independence in carrying out SDL practices.

Conclusion and Ways Forwarded

Conclusion

As the learner’s age and year level increases, there is the need for high level of independent learning. It has been found that senior students have high practice of SDL as compared to their juniors.

The finding revealed that most students are exercising SDL using internet for academic self-support, for working independent academic tasks/assignment, for attending online lecture, and for reading references. Though there are such practices in the autonomous learning among students, there are serious difficulties and challenges the students face in relation to gaps in Self-Directed Learning. Challenges such as wastage of time, high internet cost, and failure to focus on what they are doing were identified as obstacles to fully integrate SDL practice in their learning. Moreover, attention seeking stimuli on the internet have been found to be destructors to some extent. Such self-control challenges can be overcome by providing students with trainings in academic and self-management skills that will ultimately help them be effective in the academia.

The Way Forward

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are forwarded:

- ✓ Higher education institutions should create platform which can enhance students’ self-directed learning through which students should be engaged in learning to be a learner.
- ✓ Instructors should work for strengthening independent learning of students.
- ✓ Further research should be done in mainstreaming SDL in to the curriculum and teaching methodology so as to give more shares to learners than sticking to the teacher dominated practice.
- ✓ Trainings should be given on motivation, and self-monitoring in the internet use for SDL.
- ✓ Students should be encouraged to execute autonomous tasks, especially in internet use by browsing through what they want to acquire.
- ✓ Student-centered activities should be exercised at secondary education or early ages.
- ✓ Studies should be done on how teaching methods and learning styles affect SDL.

Further Study

- ❖ Further research can be conducted on how Self-Directed Learning contributes to the effectiveness in Exit Exams.

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