

Who benefits from autonomous learning?

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Abstract

This article aims to investigate concepts of autonomous learning and its significance in contemporary education and professional development. In the era of rapid technological advancement with global demand for lifelong learning, the ability to direct one`s own learning is more essential than ever. Autonomous learning helps learners to establish their own goals, select resources and think carefully about their progress, encouraging them for personal and professional growth. Traditionally, autonomous learning is associated with higher education, can provide benefits for a broad range of people including students, professionals and lifelong learners.

Key words: Autonomous learning, lifelong learning, contemporary education

Autonomous learning has been one of the most discussed themes in educational practice and research area for more than three decades. The word autonomy is derived from auto-nomos, a Greek word ¹, auto meaning “self” and nomos meaning “rule or law “. Auto-nomos refers to a state where one gives oneself his/her own law. Originally, learner autonomy in language education was defined as an “ability to take the charge of one`s own learning”² and this definition has become the most cited about this phenomenon in different sources. Later “ability “and “take charge of” were often replaced by “capacity” and “take responsibility for” respectively. These word replacement seem to be a matter of linguistics only, and the semantic aspects of the construct remain unchanged ³.

Autonomous learning has been perceived and interpreted in several ways. At the beginning, it is generally considered as an ability to know how to learn⁴. Later, it is seen as an ability to “control” one`s learning activities . Then, it is regarded as an

¹ Volts, D.(2008) Autonomy. New World Encyclopedia. Retrieved 2012 from <http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Autonomy?oldid=795378>

² Holec, H. (1981) Autonomy in foreign language learning. Oxford : Pergamon.

³ Dang, T.T.(2010).Learner autonomy in EFL studies in Vietnam :A discussion from socio –cultural perspective. English Language Teaching ,3(2),3-9

⁴ Wenden, A.L.(1991).Learner strategies for learner autonomy . Hemel Hempstead: Prentice Hall.

ability for “detachment”⁵. Next, it is described as an ability “without the involvement of a teacher”⁶. Furthermore, it is explained as a “capacity to make and carry out choices”⁷ or an ability to perform rational decision –making processes over learning activities .

Autonomous learning is of great significance for several category of people due to the profound advantages. It evolves skills and mindset that are useful in different contexts, from education to personal and professional development.

The first category that autonomous learning is crucial is the students in higher education. University education that promotes independent thinking, critical analysis, problem-solving and the ability to engage in autonomous learning improves students` academic success.

In today`s rapidly changing world, the necessity for lifelong learning more essential than ever. Lifelong learners who aim to get knowledge throughout their lives can implement autonomous learning as a tool for their personal development, professional development or even hobbies. They are often motivated by strong desire to know and learn or stay current in the field. Autonomous learning enables them to engage with the topic, autonomously finding resources and organizing their learning journey.

Autonomous learning is highly beneficial for people from marginalized or underserved communities including low-income population, rural residents or women in particular cultures. It can provide a path to education allowing to overcome barriers, such as limited access to traditional education. This probably enables them to succeed academically and professionally.

This approach is useful for people with physical, cognitive or sensory disabilities providing them with the flexibility in terms of learning that is suitable for their specific needs. Such learners can benefit from a slower pace distinct resources than those usually used in traditional classroom. Autonomous learning encourages the improvement of strategies self-regulation and independent problem-solving which are helpful for overcoming challenges posed by disability.

Professionals in dynamic work environments such as technology, healthcare, finance, education, professionals have to continuously renew their knowledge and

⁵Little, D.(1991) .Learner autonomy 1: Definitions, issues and problems. Dublin : Authentik.

⁶ Dickinson, L. (1987). Self-instruction in language learning. New York: Cambridge University Press.

⁷ Littlewood, W. (1996). “Autonomy”. An anatomy and a framework. System, 24(4), 427-435



skills to remain competitive. Autonomous learning helps people to stay relevant and adaptable to innovations, methods, and industry shifts.

The next category is the students in non-traditional education settings. Autonomous learning is crucial learning environments such as online courses, alternative schools, or home schooling. The level of structure and guidance in this settings is not same with typical classroom environment, so this approach allows them to take the responsibility of their own learning, set their own goals, search the resources that suits best for their learning style.

Autonomous learning is necessary for next category of people. Adult learners especially who return to education after a break highly benefits from this approach. As these people often mix education with work and family, flexibility in autonomous learning allows to suit their learning to their personal needs and schedules.

In conclusion, autonomous learning is of great importance for anyone who is involved in learning, regardless of the structure and setting of education, at any stage of life. From students to professionals, and from creative individuals to lifelong learners, the ability to learn independently is an empowering tool for growth and success. This approach fosters critical skills such as problem-solving, self-regulation, motivation, and adaptability that are vital for managing both personal and professional challenges in our rapidly changing world. Encouraging and nurturing autonomous learning in different layers of populations is crucial for fostering a generation of independent, proactive, and resilient individuals.

List of used literature:

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