

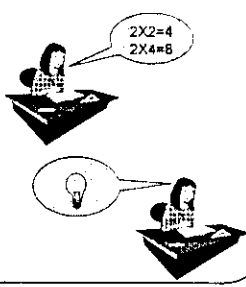
Independent Learning: The Best Way to Learn

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Learning

Two traditional meanings:

- To learn as in memorising & learning "off by heart"
- To change: knowledge or behaviour

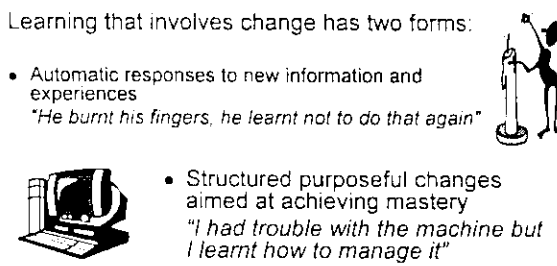


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Learning as Change

Learning that involves change has two forms:

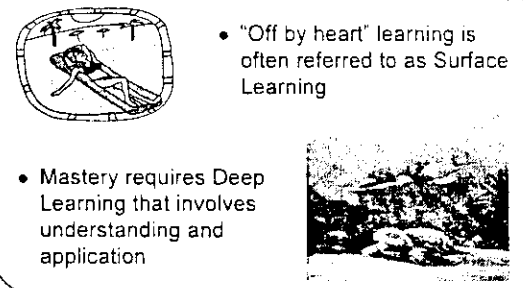
- Automatic responses to new information and experiences
"He burnt his fingers, he learnt not to do that again"
- Structured purposeful changes aimed at achieving mastery
"I had trouble with the machine but I learnt how to manage it"



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Levels of Learning

- "Off by heart" learning is often referred to as Surface Learning
- Mastery requires Deep Learning that involves understanding and application



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Mary Catherine Bateson claims

We are not what we know but what we are willing to learn.

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Terminology

- Autonomous Learner
- Self-directed learner
- Adult learner
- Home schooling
- Active learner
- Reflective Learner
- Experiential Learner
- Cooperating Learner
- Open Learner (IT)
- Discovery Learning



Information technology has lead to the Independent Learner gaining new meaning and popularity.

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Independent Learning

Independent Learning occurs when a person can utilise all types of learning to focus on a goal and achieve mastery.

It involves the ability to move from surface to deep learning.

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Independent Learning

- I = Independent
- N = Needs analysis
- D = Develop a joy of learning
- E = Engaging and active
- P = Personal
- E = Emotional stability & self understanding
- N = Need to learn how to learn
- D = Do it voluntary
- E = Excited about learning
- N = Needs to be responsible for your own learning
- T = Take risks

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Domains or Areas of Learning (Gagné, 1972)

- 1 Motor Skills which require practice
- 2 Verbal Skills: facts & information
- 3 Intellectual skills: using the facts & information
- 4 Cognitive Strategies: the way an individual learns, remembers, thinks and solves problems
- 5 Attitudes



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Montessori Schools

The Children's Tree: A Montessori Learning Place
Located in Westbrook, CT, USA

Key aims are:

- Develop a positive attitude toward himself/herself and the school and life.
- Become a self-confident, independent learner

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Montessori Approach

Bagby (2002) has demonstrated that the Montessori model of learning :

- provides a framework in the natural setting of a classroom that facilitates problem solving and the transference of learning

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Montessori Approach

Vaughn, (2002) identified 3 specific areas in which empowerment or independent learning was observed in the Montessori Method:

- the nature of the environment
- the management of discipline
- the social construction of learning

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Characteristics of an Independent Learner

8 Characteristics of the Successful Independent Learner
(Guglielmino, 1977):

- Love of learning
- Self-concept as an effective independent learner
- Tolerance of risk, ambiguity and complexity of learning
- Creativity
- View of learning as life long, beneficial process
- Initiative in learning
- Self-understanding
- Acceptance of responsibility for one's own learning.

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Becoming an Independent Learner

Ask Yourself the following questions:-

What do I want out of this? (MOTIVE)

Where do I want to get to? (AIM)

What will it look like when I get there? (GOAL)

What do I need to do to get there? (TASK NEEDS)

What can I use? (RESOURCES)

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Becoming an Independent Learner

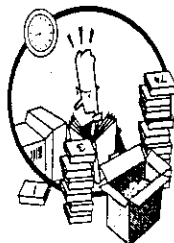
What limits are there? (CONTEXT)

What am I able to do? (ABILITY)

What should I do in this situation?
(STRATEGY)

What will I do? (PLANS)

Where does this all fit in? (THE BIG PICTURE)



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Department of Education & Science

Mission Statement

To provide high quality education that will enable individuals to achieve their full potential as members of society

And contribute to Ireland's social, cultural and economic development

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Why is Independent Learning Important?

- Achieves the mission of educators
- Supports learning as life long (Minister Michael Woods in DES Strategy Statement 2001-2004)
- Provides quality education (Fenwick, 1992)

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Disadvantages of Independent Learning



- Education tends to be focused on course work and courses which may be an inefficient use of the independent learner's time as the course may be inappropriate and contain more or less information than is needed (Whale, 1987).
- Potential to confuse the learner if no initial framework is available.
- It requires a lot of work on the part of the student.

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Criticisms of Independent Learning

- An emphasis on independent learning has adult characteristic
- Current studies conducted mostly with middle class participants
- Research concerning the quality of independent learning projects needs more attention
- May be treated as disconnected from wider social and political forces

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Advantages of Independent Learning

- Supports active engagement of the learner in the learning process
- Fosters curiosity
- Enables the development of life long learning skills
- Personalises the learning experience
- Highly motivating as it allows individuals the opportunity to experiment and discover something for themselves
- Builds on learner's prior knowledge and understanding
- Creates a joy for learning

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Supporting Independent Learning

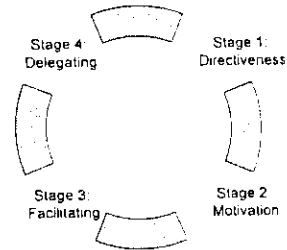
- One contribution educational institutions can make to independent learners is to teach them the process of gaining access to and make judgments about information (Whale, 1987).
- Focuses on the process by which a person takes control of their own learning.
- Encourage a person to sets their own learning goals, locate appropriate resources, decide on which learning methods to use and evaluate their progress.



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Teaching Style to Support Independent Learning

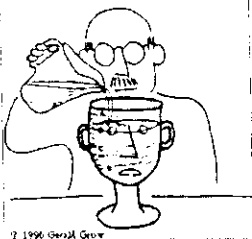


(Adapted from Grow, 1996)

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The Stage 1 Teacher Directs



Teaching style involves:
tell, impart, transmit,
give, propound,
convey, expound,
transfer, direct, fill,
inform, & drill.

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The Stage 2 Teacher Motivates



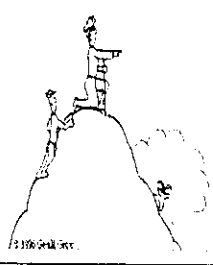
Teaching style involves:
develop, mould,
produce, instruct,
reinforce, prepare,
demonstrate, push,
motivate, inspire,
shape, drive,
persuade, & sell.

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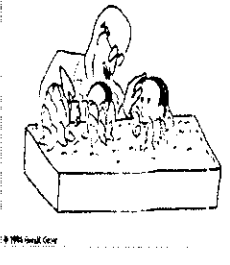
The Stage 3 Teacher Facilitates



Teaching style involves:
lead, guide, initiate,
help, show, point the
way, explore,
discuss, share,
participate, offer,
suggest, negotiate, &
collaborate.

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The Stage 4 Teacher Delegates



Teaching style involves:
cultivate, encourage,
nurture, develop,
foster, enable, bring
out, mentor, plant,
challenge & advise.

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**Michael Yacobian, Internationally
Renowned Trainer**

**"People love to learn
but hate to be taught"**

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