

## SDL in the Workplace

There is an ever-increasing abundance of *self-directed learning* in today's modern-day workplace. Whether it be because of the, "... unprecedented rates of technological and societal change that require increased flexibility and continuous learning..." (Hiemstra and Brockett, 1994, p.1) or "... the positive relationship between readiness for self-directed learning and performance" (Hiemstra and Brockett, 1994, p.1); both of these reasons are stimuli that are drawing multitudes of people towards working in the area of self-directed learning.

Self-directed learning has many unique advantages over other types of learning, such as dependent learning. The term "dependent learning" is used, because in contrast:

... in 1980, Brookfield used the term "independent adult learning" to describe a process that takes place in situations when the decisions about intermediate and terminal learning goals to be pursued, rate of student progress, evaluative procedures to be employed, and sources of material to be consulted are in the hands of the learner (as cited in <http://www-distance.syr.edu/sdilch2.html>).

As an "independent learner" one has the advantage to learn *when, where,* and *however* they wish to learn. This can be very beneficial in today's time, where money is a very valuable commodity. Speaking of money, self-directed learning in the workplace is very closely connected to money. As Hiemstra and Brockett (1994) write,

Corporate employees are in a scramble to gear up for future performance demands. The quest for knowledge is underway, and the path is highly individual. Self-directed learners will be the survivors. Only individual employees can make the choices appropriate to their individual learning styles and lifestyles. Corporations cannot do it for them (p.5).

Hiemstra and Brockett mentioning this "scrambling" are defining the dire need that the corporations are now in of individuals that are multi-faceted. Individuals that can "bring more than one thing to the table." Self-directed learners often have this characteristic. Similar to their discussion, is the writing of Schön's (1983) paradigm of reflection-in-action. According to Confessore and Confessore (1994), "Schön's paradigm of reflection-in-action is a practical response to Schein's assertion (1970) that one of the hallmarks of any profession is an "ability to take a convergent knowledge base and convert it into professional services that are tailored to the *unique* requirements of the client system" (p.45).

Whether it is a teacher, a doctor, a minister, a firefighter, etc., the plan that the professionals are looking for when using this action is to see if, under the control of the physicians, there is a continuing need of education that will appear, after performing the experimentation. This need should address the participants' unique and most pressing learning needs.

Also included in research studies in research on self-directed learning on learning in the workplace are studies on participants with disabilities. For example, in

1994, the Bureau of Census discovered that, “Of the more than 49 million Americans with disabilities, a large majority of those who are adults under the age of 65 have the intellectual capacity to learn at the postsecondary level and the desire to be employed in meaningful work” (Beziat, 1990) (p.1). This is an important statistic to take into consideration, because one has to consider whether or not people with disabilities were overlooked for employment because of their disabilities; or they were not given jobs because they could not perform the tasks because of their disabilities. When researching all of these considerations, and more, shed a new light on a subject.

A last topic that I would like to look at, concerning “SDL in the Workplace,” is the topic of *Leadership*. Clampitt and DeKalb (2001) indicate that, “... under conditions of uncertainty, successful leadership requires leaders who have *uncertainty management competencies*: the ability to cultivate awareness, the ability to communicate and the ability to catalyze action (p.107).” These “competencies” are linked to self-directed learning. The competency of communication is especially closely related. A self-directed learner is very communicative with all persons around them. He/she often takes initiative in meetings / conversations in meetings. For example, Collins (2001) writes, “... in his 5 leaders, who took internally to find solutions to leadership problems and develop and work with self-discipline and self-disciplined team members.”