



A Self-directed Learning Approach to Promoting Resiliency and Adaptability in Year 9 Boys

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Further Information
This poster and further information is available at <http://www.theibsc.org/>

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The Research Question

How might Year 9 boys' participation in self-directed learning in Economics develop emotional resilience and impact adaptability?

Introduction

Self-directed learning (SDL) is essential in assisting students to become adaptable and meet the challenges presented in the workplaces of the future. The aim of this research was to explore the concept of SDL and its relationship to developing emotional resiliency in boys. In the context of my school, the importance of "knowing what to do when you don't know what to do" is becoming increasingly important.

Adaptability is a crucial part of problem-solving, collaboration, and a range of other workplace skills; thus, many employers seek out employees who exhibit the ability and willingness to adapt. Research by Levin (2015) stresses the importance of cultivating adaptability among students to prepare them to enter the workforce and thrive in tomorrow's dynamic workplace.

SDL provides boys with such an environment, where rote learning for tests is put aside and the students develop their skills in collaboration, communication, creativity, and the ability to adapt when things do not go as planned.



Research Context and Participants

Aquinas College aims to educate boys to become the men the world needs. Since 1894, its purpose, in partnership with parents, is to provide a Catholic education for boys in the Edmund Rice tradition. The school accepts day students from Kindergarten to Year 12 and boarding from Years 7 to 12.

The research involved twenty-two Year 9 students and their teacher. The class included students of mixed academic ability. Students were selected to include a range of learning abilities—students with individual education plans, gifted and talented students, boarding students and international students.

The Research Action

The duration of the self-directed project was six weeks, with four lessons per week. The project included the following steps:

1. Readiness to learn self-assessment – a pre/post survey self-assessing their own adaptability and emotional resilience.
2. Setting learning goals – via the development of a learning contract. The learning contract included:
 - the goal/aim
 - the sequence of tasks
 - a timeline and resources materials
3. Completing the Innovation Project. The project included:
 - a project idea
 - an action plan
 - proposed cost and a marketing plan
 - personal statement on the entrepreneurial skills
4. Presentation of Innovation idea and group reflection.

"I now have a plan. The project doesn't seem so big when I break it up into parts"

Data Collection and Analysis

Qualitative data collection methods included:

- pre and post questionnaires – using the adaptability scale
- semi-structured interview notes recorded in teacher journal
- a student and teacher reflective log used to monitor emotional resiliency behaviours

Data were analysed using both data reduction and display to draw and verify conclusions.

- Data reduction included editing, segmenting and summarising.
- Descriptive and inferential coding was used to analyse the data.

"Not all tasks are simple and you cannot figure out everything by yourself. Sometimes you need help from one of the group members or the teacher to progress."

Key Findings and Discussion

Key findings included:

- Increased levels of **optimism** as the task progressed
- Improvements in **self-sufficiency** through engagement in self-directed learning
- Seeking **timely feedback** to enhance or maintain confidence
- **Control** over a situation and its outcomes affects perception of positive and negative events.

Conclusions

- The teacher's ability to **facilitate learning** influenced the success of a SDL approach.
- A **variety of teaching methods** should be used in delivering content, as not all students are naturally self-directed.
- The boys' **readiness to learn** needed to be assessed when judging the appropriateness of using SDL.
- The benefits of SDL included: increased **confidence, self-sufficiency, and motivation to learn.**

"With the right help at the right time we can move this project forward."

Key Readings

Hattie, J. A., & Donoghue, G. M. (2016). Learning strategies: a synthesis and conceptual model. *Science of Learning, 1*, 16013.

How self-directed learning can benefit every student. (2016) Retrieved from <https://globaldigitalcitizen.org/self-directed-learning-benefit-student>

Self-Directed Learning: A Four-Step Process. (2006) Retrieved from <https://uwaterloo.ca/centre-for-teaching-excellence/teaching-resources/teaching-tips/tips-students/self-directed-learning/self-directed-learning-four-step-process>

WHAT WE LEARNED DURING THIS TASK

- Teamwork - ability to complete tasks to a higher quality
- Vital in becoming successful entrepreneurs
- Good way to gain a competitive advantage



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