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SELF DIRECTED LEARNING AND STUDENT ENGAGEMENT: A CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

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Abstract

IT revolution has taken the world by storm and has dramatically changed the education sector which has become increasingly dynamic and competitive. The challenge is in bringing up an educated , self-motivated and capable workforce capable of being productive right from day one in any organisation.Therefore individual learner effort is important to boost their academic well being towards strengthening their learning engagement. This study seeks to understand how the identified factors of Self Directed Learning like Academic Resilience, Curiosity, Achievement Motivation to improves Student Engagement which in turn will lead to successful completion of courses for which they have enrolled for.

[Key words: Self Directed Learning, Academic Resilience, Curiosity, Achievement Motivation, Student Engagement.]

1.0 Introduction

The Education sector is constantly evolving and it is essential to move with the times to succeed in these times of stiff competition. In this era, the amount of information increases exponentially each day, while the life of the existing knowledge decreases with equal acceleration. Turbulence and rapid change characterize this era and the challenge is in equipping a highly educated, self- motivated, capable and innovative workforce. This is very much dependent upon developing a younger generation willing to learn and evolve with the need of the times. Even though individuals generally have the self-initiative to learn (Cross, 2006; Knowles 1975), some of them are prominent in taking initiative to learn but some of them depend on other's direction. The learning, in this case, would involve the ability of individuals to understand how knowledge is acquired, to develop strategies for learning based on discerning their capacities and

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limitations, to monitor their own learning, and to be aware of their own ways of knowing in approaching new bodies of knowledge. It is important to realize that the requirement is for individuals who are not just awake to the importance of learning but must have initiative and willingness to take learning as their own responsibility. This initiative of the learners has become a significant factor that should not be ignored for their continuous growth and development. The Institutions are also striving hard to help their students to enhance their outcomes and produce results to sustain competitively. The concept of continuous development to stay viable need be inculcated at the pre-employment stage itself ; most significantly during professional education. The norm of majoring in a specific subject and acquiring the skills and knowledge for work in a specific field of practice, as is common cannot be viewed as the culmination of all learning in life. Furthermore, the younger generation of aspiring professionals should be educated to stay competitive and continue learning 21st new skills and literacies to enable them to stay abreast with survival skills needed in any working environment. Understanding and identifying how students learn, their ability to direct themselves in learning and their readiness to learn not only increases the students' confidence in their own ability, but also improves their capacity to learn in novel situations.

Given the exponential growth of information, learning self-directedly beyond the formal schooling years is requisite. This has led to greater interest in the area of Self Directed Learning(SDL) and hence this study. When initial SDL modelsweredeveloped,face-to-faceinstructionwasthepredominantmodeinProfessional colleges. Education, today is occurringinavarietyofcontexts,rangingfromface-to-faceclassroomstovirtualclassrooms. Within each of these settings, a variety of methods may be used to enable interactions, including 100% physical classroom interactions toablend of face-to-face and online interactions to 100% online interactions. While there are indications that self-directedness is a desirable trait for learners(Shapley,2000),the study is on the influence of identified factors (Achievement Motivation, Self-Efficacy, Curiosity and Academic Resilience) on Self Direction leading to better Student Engagement, enabling them to successfully complete their courses.

2.0 Literature Review

Self-directed Learning

More than 30 years ago, Knowles (1975), defined Self-directed Learning as a process in which individuals take the initiative, with or without the help of others, to diagnose their learning needs, formulate learning goals, identify human and material resources for learning, choose and implement appropriate learning strategies, and evaluate learning

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outcomes. Long (1998) identified three aspects of Self-directed Learning: the Sociological, Pedagogical, and Psychological. Long contended that much of the discussion around Self-directed Learning has focused on the Sociological (independent task management) and Pedagogical (application in educational contexts).

Costa and Kallick (2004) described the Self-directed Learners as being 1)Self-Managing, (the willingness to be engaged in activities with awareness of the results for their learning and the academic load, and essential information they need, and use of prior experiences, looking forward to signs of achievement, and generating substitutes for accomplishment), 2)Self- Monitoring (having adequate self-awareness about what is effective, employing cognitive and metacognitive strategies to assess their learning), and 3) Self-Modifying (thinking over, assessing, and constructing meaning from experience and utilizing their knowledge to future activities, and tasks).

Parasafar (2012) defined Self-directed Learning as a kind of learning that has characteristics like self-planned, self-initiated, and independent learning. The Self-directed Learning (SDL) Model views learners as responsible owners and managers of their own learning process and integrates self-management (management of the context, including the social setting, resources, and actions) with self-monitoring (the process whereby the learners monitor, evaluate and regulate their cognitive learning strategies) (Brockett,2002).

Overviews of SDL definitions were provided by prominent adult educators including Brockett and Hiemstra (1991), Brookfield (1993), Candy (1991), Hiemstra (2010), and Long (2010). Brockett and Hiemstra (1991) compared SDL in terms of an instructional method versus a personality characteristic using their Personal Responsibility Orientation (PRO) model. Candy (1991) discussed SDL's existence within four domains including personal autonomy, self-management, independent pursuit of learning, and learner-control.

Brookfield (1993) attempted to pull the definitions together, showcasing a consistent element among the definitions – the importance of learner control over decisions in the educational environment, a claim later supported by O'Shea (2003). Hiemstra (2010) recognized Long's four-part concept of SDL, which included the sociological, practical, methodological, and psychological domains. Long's (2010) newest description of SDL included certain information literacy skills, as well as finding and using information resources.

Other authors wrote about the differences in self-direction. Knox (1977) wrote that part of self-directedness involved problem solving and decision-making about change, elements shared with information literacy. He asserted that an emotional component of self- direction helped interpret events. Hiemstra and Brockett (1994) acknowledged

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there was no single way to think about self-direction. Jarvis (2004) suggested self-directed learning became an educational technique when used as a teaching method. Merriam, Caffarella, and Baumgartner (2006) discussed the goals of self-directed learning such as enhancing one's ability to be self-directed, fostering transformational learning, and promoting emancipatory learning.

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.

• They have self-motivation.

• They are open to learning.

• They are curious.

• They are willing to learn.

• They value learning.

• They have self-control.

• They take initiative to learn (Knowles, 1975; Knowles, 1977; Jennett, 1992 cited in Brockett and Hiemstra, 1991)

Self-directed learning 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 (Spencer and Jordan, 1999). 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 ability to take responsibility for determining one's own learning needs

• The ability to set goals

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• 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

• The ability to evaluate learning processes and outcomes (Knowles, 1977 cited in Kasworm, 1983).

Self-Directed Learning involves learner independent learning, through a process in which individuals take the initiative, with or without the help of others, to diagnose their learning needs, formulate learning goals, identify human and material resources for learning, select and implement strategies, and evaluate learning outcomes (Knowles, 1975; Merriam &Caffarella, 1999). It is related to self-regulated learning (SRL) when involving metacognitive awareness of active engagement and goal-directed behaviour; thus SDL encompasses SRL (Loyens, Magda and Rikers, 2008). This study operationalizes self- directed learning as a trait that is to be developed through progressive stages of growth.

Self-directed learning (SDL) refers to the psychological processes of learners that purposively direct themselves to gain knowledge and understand how to solve problems (Long, 1994). Self-directed learners usually more actively participate in learning tasks such as reading online learning material, completing classroom tasks, planning and evaluating milestones of learning. High-level self-management is important in SDL and learners to need to adopted different strategies in dealing with various problems (Lee &Teo, 2010). Similar to self-regulated learning, SDL also emphasises on goal setting and choice making, which are crucial to student collaborative learning (Gilbert & Driscoll, 2002). The difference between SDL and self-regulated learning lays in their required skills. The constructs of SDL are at the macro level, and constructs of self-regulated learning belong to micro-level (Jossberger, Brand-Gruwel, Boshuizen, &Wiel, 2010).Several models have been proposed to understand SDL, starting with Mocker and Spear's *Two* Dimensional Model in the early 1980s to a more recent model from Garrison's Three Dimensional Model in the late 1990s.

Candy’s Four-Dimensional Model

In reviewing the literature on various views of SDL or related concepts, Candy (1991) concluded that SDL, as an umbrella concept, encompasses four dimensions: “ „self-direction‟ as a personal attribute (personal autonomy); „self-direction‟ as the willingness and capacity to conduct one‟s own education (self-management); „self-direction‟ as a

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mode of organizing instruction in formal settings (learner-control); and „self-direction‟ as the individual, non-institutional pursuit of learning opportunities in the „natural societal setting‟ (autodidaxy)" (p.23). The variety of the constructs in Candy's model added an element of depth to our understanding of SDL. Further, Candy's model was the first to state that a learners‟ self-direction might be different in different content areas. Yet, there are elements missing from the model. For example, the model does not describe how SDL is relevant in different learning contexts such as classroom learning or online learning.

Brockett and Hiemstra's Personal Responsibility Orientation Model (PRO)

Brockett and Hiemstra (1991) provided a rationale for two primary orientations in developing an understanding of SDL: process and goal. In the first orientation, SDL is viewed as a process "in which a learner assumes primary responsibility for planning, implementing, and evaluating the learning process" (p.24). In the second orientation, SDL is referred to as a goal, which focuses on "a learner's desire or preference for assuming responsibility for learning" (Brockett &Hiemstra, 1991, p.24). Brockett and Hiemstra (1991) combined both the process and personal attribute perspectives in the model. They also integrated social context as a component in the model in that they discussed the role of institutions and policies in SDL. At the time the model was developed, this was a significant addition to the SDL models. Yet, in today's educational climate, the context factor in the model is rather limited. Brockett and Hiemstra (1991) defined the social context as different physical institutions where learning takes place, such as community colleges, libraries, and museums. In today's educational situation, where virtual learning continues to experience exponential growth, a focus only on face-to-face settings

is rather limited.

2.1 Self Directed Learning Readiness

Self-directed learning readiness can be defined as 'the degree the individual possesses the attitudes, abilities and personality characteristics' to learn (Fisher & King, 2010).Self-directed learner may take control and have freedom to learn what they want and what they viewed as important for themselves (Fisher & King, 2010). SDL readiness was necessary and probably offers the best opportunity for learning (Guglielmino, 1977; Wiley, 1983).In a constantly changing environment, self-directed learning readiness is essential for enabling professional students to develop independent learning skills, a

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sense of accountability, responsibility and assertiveness that are essential attributes for a professional (Bastable, 2008; Levett-Jones, 2005).

3.0 Factors Influencing Self Directed Learning

Though there are many factors which may have an impact on Self Directed Learning, this study gives preference to some of the identified important personal attributes which enables the students to focus more (Achievement Motivation & Curiosity) and overcome the challenges they face (Self Efficacy & Academic Resilience). These factors will increase the Self Directed Learning Readiness in them, helping to actively participate, engage and complete the academic activities related to the course

3.1 Achievement motivation

Achievement motivation is a psychological construct that is concerned with what makes people do what they do and was developed by Mcclelland (1962). adherents of achievement motivation theory believe that people have innate need to succeed or to reach a high level of attainment, desire to perform well in a specified area and attain success, and people who experience great level of success are motivated to strive more for success (Mcclelland, 1962; Sandra, 2002). it has been postulated that people who achieve high level of excellence tend to regard those who do not, as not having tried enough, while those who are not high achievers tend to see those who are, as being lucky (bernard,1990). such individuals, he claims, set challenging goals for themselves, assume personal responsibility for goal accomplishment, are highly persistent in the pursuit of these goals, take calculated risks to achieve the goals, and actively collect and use information for purposes of feedback. Literature shows that gender is a strong predictor of human conduct and many differences have been identified between the behaviours, attitudes, and achievements of males and females. studies, which explain the influenceofgenderonthelearningoutcomesofstudentsdonotseemtohavereachedaconsensus on the effect of gender on students' performance in school (adegoke, 2003; akinbode, 2006). In the light of these, the roles of gender and achievement motivation are worth further studying in order to provide better insight on how they influence learning outcomes, especially under experimental condition. Motivation in education can have several effects on how students learn and how they behave towards subject matter (Ormrod, 2006). Because students are not always internally motivated, they sometimes need situated motivation, which is found in environmental conditions that the teacher creates. Motivation can be defined as the driving force behind all the actions of an individual. The influence of an individual's needs and desires both have a strong impact on the direction of their behavior. Motivation is based on your emotions and achievement-related goals. There are different forms of motivation including extrinsic,

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intrinsic, physiological, and achievement motivation. Individuals will satisfy their needs through different means, and are driven to succeed for varying reasons both internal and external (Ellliot& Covington, 2001) Motivational researchers share the view that achievement behavior is an interaction between situational variables and the individual subject's motivation to achieve. Two motives are directly involved in the prediction of behavior, implicit and explicit. Implicit motives are spontaneous impulses to act, also known as task performances, and are aroused through incentives inherent to the task. Explicit motives are expressed through deliberate choices and more often stimulated for extrinsic reasons. Academic motivation is a student's desire (as reflected in approach, persistence, and level of interest) regarding academic subjects when the student's competence is judged against a standard of performance or excellence.Academicmotivationisasubtypeofthegeneralconstructofreflectancemotivation, whichisdefined as the "need" to be successful or effective in dealing with one's environment (McGrew, 2008).

3.2 Curiosity

The learners carry out SDL because of the spirit of curiosity or willingness to deepen their knowledge related to their field. This curiosity could be internally driven based on their reading or observation or past experience. Some learners also triggered by external factors, such as by getting new information from colleague they were triggered to know more. This is relevant with some previous study which curiosity was identified as important factor that need to be exist to drive self-directedness in learning (Guglielmino, 1977; Nursyamilah Annuar & Roziana Shaari, 2014; Yang, 2004). Moreover, Tough (1979) urged that satisfaction of curiosity is the second most frequent reason for adults to involve in a learning project. Kashden et al. (1994) asserted that curiosity has attributes similar to intrinsic motivation and other variables, and people who are curious are more attentive, "process information more deeply, remember information better, and are more likely to persist on tasks until goals are met" (p.988). Kashden et al. (2009) discussed two central facets to curiosity: a) exploring and actively seeking opportunities for new information; b) embracing the unknown and ambiguous nature of daily life. Kashden et al. (2009) believed that curiosity can contribute to overall emotional, psychological, and social well-being, and that willingness for learning, exploring, and immersing in an activity are innate traits. Further, curiosity elicits improved attitude and motivation, in-depth processing of information, improved ability to retain information, and persistence. Loewenstein (1994) discussed that curious people tend to also better retain information, devote more attention to the process or activity,

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and persist with their outlined goals. Kashden et al. (2009) discussed two central facets to curiosity: a) exploring and actively seeking opportunities for new information; b) embracing the unknown and ambiguous nature of daily life. Kashden et al. (2009) believed that curiosity can contribute to overall emotional, psychological, and social well-being, and that willingness for learning, exploring, and immersing in an activity are innate traits. Further, curiosity elicits improved attitude and motivation, in-depth processing of information, improved ability to retain information, and persistence. Loewenstein (1994) discussed that curious people tend to also better retain information, devote more attention to the process or activity, and persist with their outlined goals.

3.3Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy is one of the important psychological structures and because of it role plays in proper behavior often have been considered important in multiple areas of psychology. In fact, the enhance in self-efficacy and to identify affecting factors on it will affect in the achievement of learners. Self-efficacy is competence and ability to cope with life's challenges. Self-efficacy is the extent or strength of one's belief in one's own ability to complete tasks and reach goals (Ormrod, 2006). Bandura (2004) has defined self-efficacy as one's belief in one's ability to succeed in specific situations or accomplish a task. One's sense of self-efficacy can play a major role in how one approaches goals, tasks, and challenges (Luszczynska&Schwarzer, 2005). High self-efficacy can affect motivation in both positive and negative ways. People who have high self-efficacy to learn more trying (Hanaffin et al., 2003). People who have high self-efficacy remove obstacles from your path and standing up against problems but those who have low self-efficacy when you encounter a problem keep stop trying. Learners with high self-efficacy have stronger motivation and more perseverance. They make more effort than those with low self-efficacy (Puzziferro, 2008). However, those with low self-efficacy sometimes experience incentive to learn more about an unfamiliar subject, where someone with a high self-efficacy may not prepare as well for a task. Social-cognitive models of health behavior change cast self-efficacy as predictor, mediator, or moderator. One of the factors most commonly associated with self-efficacy in writing studies is motivation. Motivation is often divided into two categories: extrinsic and intrinsic. Motivation for the behavior can range from a motivation or unwillingness, to passive compliance, to active personal commitment. According to self-determination theory (SDT), these different motivations reflect differing degrees to which the value and regulation of the requested behavior have been internalized and integrated Internalization refers to people's "taking in" a Academic Motivation of Students (Ryan &Deci, 2000, p. 71). Deci and Ryan (2000) apply a very narrow definition of intrinsic

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motivation. A person is intrinsically motivated if an activity is done for itself and for the pleasure that derives from doing the activity. The development of intrinsic motivation is dependent on the degree in which the innate psychological needs of autonomy, relatedness, and competence are supported by the social environment. In turn, if behavior is not restricted by external forces, people can experience their actions as self-determined. Intrinsic motivation "refers to doing an activity for the inherent satisfaction of the activity itself" (Ryan &Deci, 2000, p. 71). In contrast extrinsic motivation is related to behavior that is not done for its own sake but for external reasons. These external reasons can be rewards or punishments: "People behave to attain a desiredconsequencesuchastangiblerewardsortoavoidathreatenedpunishment"(Ryan&Deci,2000,p.236).

Self-directed learners are learners who are ready to take initiative and control of their learning, they are not waiting to be directed and helped by others such as supervisor The participants had a clear understanding of their own personal learning needs, they are confidence and able to locate learning resources and know when they would need them. They took difficult tasks as challenges not obstacles to be avoided because they believed if they learn they will be able to perform whatever needed. Self-efficacy was recognized as important component of self-directed learning pursuits (Brookfield, 1986; Candy, 1991; Merriam,Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007; Taylor,1995) and self-efficacy helps improve the level of self-directed learning Appelbaum& Hare, 1996). Furthermore, Fisher and King (2010) asserted that the learners who have a high self-efficacy are more successful in carrying out self-directed learning compared to learners with low self-efficacy

3.4Academic Resilience

Resilience is a psychological condition which enables a personto handle stress, complication, and adversity (Hobfoll et al., 2003). Accordingly, academic resilience refers to the ability of a student to 'sustain motivation and focus despite of stressful and adverse occurrences in studies' (Alva,1991). It is an attitude of not giving up on to difficulties and challenges based on the belief that these efforts would ultimately yield success (Dweck, 1999). Students who are found to be academically resilience tend to express higher levels of achievement despite of prevailing risks and difficulties (Alva, 1991). The idea of academic resilience dates back to early 90s when Alva discussed how students can handle and manage hardships and adverse situations in their studies to obtain better results.

Past studies have suggested that students encountering risks in studies or facing difficulties need to be more academically resilient to effectively manage difficulties and obtain success (Borman and Overman, 2004; Martin and Marsh, 2008) This in a way is

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similar to the experiences of students at the higher level university courses and degree programmes whereby, they have to deal with bundles of work tasks, assignments, projects and course reports which becomes really challenging for many students (Vaez and Laflamme, 2008) Likewise, there is a greater deal of decision making, efforts, struggle and initiative taking is required at the university level which thus, requires an individual to be more resilient to attain success (Munro and Pooley, 2009). Therefore, it would be important to underline how students are experiencing academic resilient behaviors across the different levels are capable of boosting their Self Directed Learning behaviours and becoming engaged in what they do despite the different challenges they face in the duration of their studies

3.5 Student Engagement

Student engagement is defined (Lamborn et al,1992) as the psychological involvement and investment of a student towards learning and acquiring the necessary skills. Engaged people invest their full selves into work roles whereby they don't even realize how times passes by(Bakker,2011). It has been highlighted that individuals engaged in their job, tasks, roles and/or assignments tend to produce far better results compared to the ones who aren't. Therefore, academics should ideally focus on looking at prospects through which the student engagement could be harnessed, thus making them to perform with zeal, immersion; absorption and dedication in academics.

Scholarly works have also highlighted that individuals engaged in their job, tasks, roles and assignments tend to produce far better results compared to the ones who aren't. It has been identified that students who are high potential for Self Directed Learning are involved and engaged better in achieving their goals. As engagement is concerned with bringing energy, vigor, and dedication; there are evidences, suggesting lack of student engagement in different academic and learning activities. For instance, Pointius and Harper (2006) in their review have indicated towards the lack of graduate and further degree level students' engagement in studies. The authors have also highlighted it as an urgent issue to resolve. Accordingly, Adams et al. (1996) empirically highlighted lack of student engagement in education, learning, and feelings of no responsibility. Importantly, studies in the commercial sector have outlined that psychological resources like self-efficacy and resilience can significantly enhance engagement (Xanthopoulou et al., 2009). Accordingly, student engagement can bring multiple benefits such as teach (Carini et al., 2006), achievement and grades (Akey, 2007; Kuh et al., 2008), student motivation (Skinner and Belmont, 1993) whereby, these benefits would help businesses to establish stronger prospects for promising professional careers. Hence these empirical evidences have ascertained that students' engagement in academia can be of

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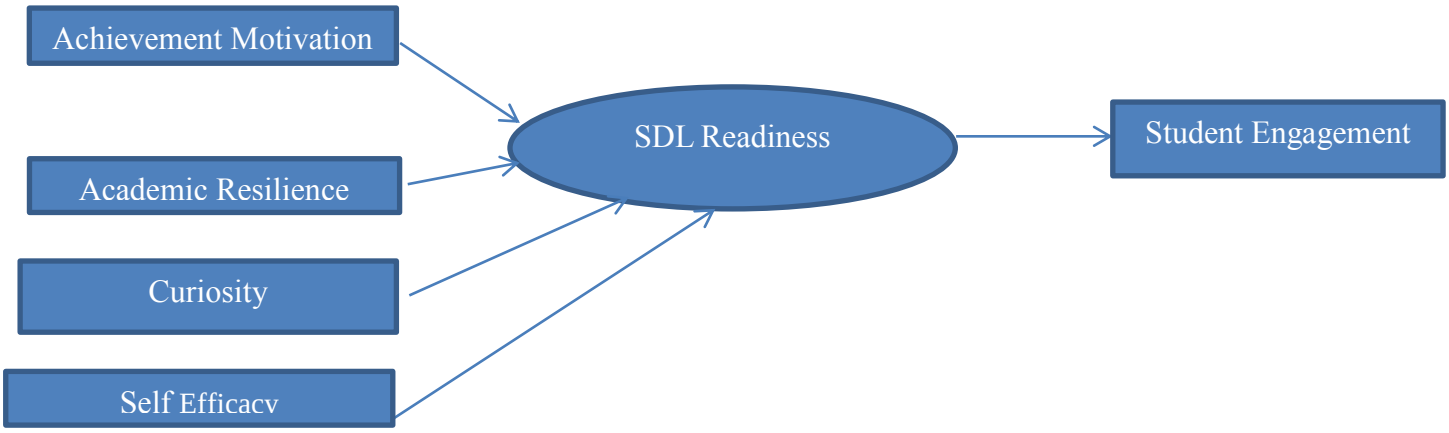
robust significance in numerous ways. The results also assert that, academics should ideally focus on looking at prospects through which the student engagement could be harnessed, thus making them to perform with zeal, immersion; absorption and dedication in academics.

4.0 Conceptual Model



4.1 Discussion

In this study, the effort was to develop a conceptual model based on reviews the literature available in this broad area of Self Directed Learning. The study basically focused on different identified factors which will lead a person to engage in self directed learning, actively involving oneself in the different aspects of learning, thus leading to their successful completion. It can be understood from the study that Achievement Motivation and Curiosity will propel a student to learn effectively as they want to know more and reach the goals they have set for themselves. Lf On the other hand, Self Efficacy and Academic Resilience will enable him to face the adverse challenges that they encounter in the course of their studies and overcome them to willingly and actively engage in the course related activities leading to their successful completion.

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5.0 Conclusion

Self Directed Learning is a dominating philosophy in adult education(Garrison,1992).The existing literature on SDL has established a good understanding of SDL as a process and the study of SDL needs to continue, especially relating it to formal educational context, such as Professional Colleges(Merriam&Caffarella,1999).Especially in the current turbulent times, it is important that both educators and learners have a clear understanding of the concept and nature of self-directed learning and how it can enhance student engagement (Williamson, 2007). This study is an attempt to bring forth the relevance of the factors under study on Self directed learning which will allow students to be engaged enough to complete the programmes they enroll for.

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