

**Self-Directed Learning (SSDL) model**

According to Grow's Staged Self-Directed Learning (SSDL) model, self-directed learning has four different learning stages and corresponding teaching styles (1991). And the style of teaching needs to be matched to the learner's learning stage at first (Grow, 1991). The four stages are dependent, interested, involved, and self-directed (Grow, 1991). Mark Tennant (1992) criticizes that the SSDL model is not applicable and has serious problems and limitations. Tennant states his point in three main aspects, which include: a. there is a hierarchical structure of teaching styles; b. a mismatch between learning and teaching style is more effective than a match; c. self-direction is not a generic quality.

**In Defense of the SSDL Model**

According to Tessant (1992), there is a serious hierarchical structure of the SSDL teaching styles, and some teaching methods for the lower-level self-directed learners will cause resistance and stifle initiative. The idea of SSDL model is to propose a way teachers can be vigorously influential while empowering students towards greater autonomy. And for lower-level students, teachers need to raise their authorities and leaderships to inspire students and help them figure out their needs in life and study. On the contrary, by controlling and playing an authoritative role, teachers can easier facilitate learners to diagnose their learning needs, and keep the right pace and level of difficult of the class. Moreover, there is no one teaching method that is intrinsically superior to others. According to Grow (1994), the SSDL model depends on getting the right trajectory toward self-directed learning. It does not account for using "the most stereotyped and damning fashion" (Tennant, 1992, p164) teaching methods to lead students reach autonomy. And being the "expert role" (Tennant, 1992, p164) in a course, does not means to treat learners without respect, openness and a degree of flexibility

The second problem Tennant states is a mismatch between learning and teaching style is more effective than a match (Grow, 1994). It is true that mismatches between teacher style and learner stage can lead to difficulties. However, Grow (1991) also underscores the gradual adjustment of teaching methods according to learners' needs, development, and willingness. Moreover, according to Noe (2010), one's needs are deficiencies that he or she is experiencing at any point in time. Once people satisfy their lower-level needs, they tend to desire for higher-level achievements (Noe, 2010). In other words, a learning program is a flexible and ever-changing process, and it is not only aim at a teacher's first impression or decision but also focus on the needs, feedbacks and improvements of learners. In this case, even if there is a mismatch, teachers will have the ability to reevaluate and adjust their teaching styles, in order to adapt teaching style to suit the situation and learner.

Tennant also argues that self-direction is not a generic quality like psychological maturity (Tennant, 1992, pp. 165). And he also raised the question that "who should be the judge of ability, the teacher or the students?" (Tennant, 1992, pp. 165). It is true that students' ability of learning influenced by their culture, parenting, education, and other factors. However, a person's psychological maturity is also affected by these external environmental conditions. On top of that, deciding the judge of ability depends on the specific stages of self-directed learning. According to Grow (1991), learners at the dependent and interested level need coaching, guiding, and motivation to set and reach their goals. In other words, stage 1 and 2 students do not clearly understand their learning purpose, potential, and learning strategies. Under this circumstance, teachers should dominate the judge of ability, and guide learners to advance towards greater self-direction. On the other hand, for involved and self-directed students, who have already formed a sense of self-direction, they have the ability to find out the right teaching style for them. In this

case, teachers' role could gradually change to delegator and partner (Grow, 1991). In other words, the SSDL model does not set a strict framework to limit teaching practices. Although it is a teacher-orientated model, the model also emphasizes the importance of differences between students, such as ability, motivation, willingness, need for direction, and dependence.

### References

Noe, R.A. (2010). *Employee training and development* (5th ed.). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

Grow, G. (1991). Teaching Learners to be Self-Directed. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 41, 125-149.

Grow, G. (1994). Teaching Learners to be Self-Directed. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 44, 109-114.

Tennant, M. (1992). The Staged Self-Directed Learning Model. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 42, 3, 164-166.