

ATTITUDE OF M. Ed. STUDENTS IN PANJAB UNIVERSITY TOWARDS LEARNER AUTONOMY IN RELATION TO PERCEPTION ABOUT TEACHING AND LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

1.Liao Feng Jiao 2.Dr. Latika Sharma
1.M. Ed. Student 2.Dissertation Guide
Department of Education,
Panjab University, Chandigarh, India.

Abstract : In the context of the Indian System of Education, even in this 21st century, we see the laid back outlook of majority of Indian Students towards learning. Even when most of them enter the Higher Level of Education, they tend to follow the dependency approach of learning, their intention for learning is to pass the exam or getting good marks. We also see that there is lack in assessing their learning and managing their learning. In other words, majority of students follow the rote learning and copy paste model of learning, where there is little to no learning, just a short cut method to achieve the desired or expected result. Thus, learner autonomy is an essential and basic skill which needs to be developed simultaneously as a new learner enters the world of education. This essential skill is not inborn rather it comes with practice. Once this skill is developed, it helps the learner to become a lifelong learner. Descriptive study was used to analyse the relation between learner autonomy in relation to the teaching and learning process and also to find out the attitude of M. Ed. Students of Panjab University towards Learner Autonomy in relation to their perception about teaching and learning environment. From the data analyses it shows that there is a positive correlation between the two variables i.e. learner autonomy and teaching and learning environment.

IndexTerms - Learner Autonomy, Teaching and Learning environment, Lifelong Learner, Independent Learner.

I.INTRODUCTION

It has been seen that mostly in Indian system of Education, learners depend on the teachers for transmission of knowledge and to organise their agendas for learning. They also need notes for their answers rather than preparing it themselves. We have also seen how our Indian teachers write answers on the black/green boards and dictate notes for questions and answers in schools and in colleges as well. This has become a very convenient method in our Indian classroom setup. This practice is started from the elementary level and goes on till the higher level of education even in this 21st century. Though there are number of studies on the different types of learning and teaching; and how new techniques and methods can help learners to progress in learning but no matter which methodology one may use, we still see that there is a tendency for students being passive receivers of new information wherein they lack initiative to reason and to learn; lack of curiosity, lack of creativity in writing answers or any phrasing in their own own words, one of the reasons behind this could be that the basic skill required to learn, assess, reflect and manage their own learning progress has not been developed. In our Indian School System, more focus is given on the completion of syllabus, scores and percentages, ranks rather than developing the necessary skills to attain these high ranks and scores. We keep feeding the learner with the information assuming that it is sufficient for the learner to be independent which is quite the opposite. We provide one answer for a particular question which is applicable for every learner in the classrooms, thus making the correction works easier for the teacher. So when we ignore a small and basic skill required for learning, we see the negative outcomes like rote memorization, asking for notes from classmates, seniors and teachers, copy and paste information from the internet for assignments are some of the unhealthy practices adopted by majority of Indian learners to score better and clear the exam because this is how our Indian System of Education has projected the importance throughout many years. Most of these negative methods gets embedded within their habits, they prefer not to take up responsibilities and they don't grow as lifelong learners. According to Vasumathi Badrinathan (2015), in his research found out that majority of Indian students "are test takers, rather than test-participants." And according to Marginson and Sawir (2011, p. 69) in their cultural deficit study of postgraduate students from India studying in Australia found out that Indian Students "are seen to be formed by rote, reproductive, surface, teacher-entered and dependent approaches to learning which lack analytical and critical perspectives." Most of the learners are having a very laid back attitude towards learning. If the learners are not prepared to take initiative for their learning then it's definite that they will turn out to be poor learners which would eventually lead them in making poor choices in life. Therefore, with this view in mind, it is essential to find out how the students feel about learner autonomy in relation to the teaching and learning environment provided.

WHAT IS LEARNER AUTONOMY?

Alzubi, Singh, Pandian, A. (2017) & Yasmin, Sohail, M. (2018) cited Learner Autonomy as per Holec (1981, p.3) "is the ability to take charge of one's own directed learning by determining the objectives; defining the contents and progressions; selecting methods and techniques to be used; monitoring the procedure of acquisition properly speaking (rhythm, time, place, etc.); evaluating what has been acquired." Joshi, K. (2012) cited Dickinson's definition (1987, p.11) "mode of learning; one in which the individual is responsible for all the decisions connected with his/her learning and undertakes the implementation of decisions." In simple words, Learner Autonomy is figuring the Whys, the Whats and managing the Whens and the Hows of and in the learning process.

II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

In our country we mostly see the habit of dependency and lack of autonomy in educational practices. From generations we have been following the same trend of being dependent on others; not taking initiative for our learning. There might be few out of the lot who takes the responsibility for their learning but the mass still follows the same pattern of receiving information and not participating to find the information to learn. Like the old saying, "old habits die hard" similarly the changes will take time but surely it is possible as there has been many researches and studies being taken up. Below are few of the literatures that is the foundation to my research.

Cotterall, S. (2008) in her study states the following:

"teachers need to accept the heterogeneity of their learners. Learners reflect a range of motivations, cultures, beliefs, learning strategies, styles and goals. They are of different ages, level of aptitude, genders and personalities. They respond differently to different methods and tasks."

Basically, teachers need to be well aware of the differences that every learner comes with and should be well prepared to address these differences. Yasmin, Sohail, A. (2018) mentions the need of:

"supportive learning environment quite crucial to learner's autonomy."

They conducted a qualitative research where English teachers in Pakistani universities were interviewed, where few teachers were familiar with the concept of Learner Autonomy and few were not aware of it. In their study, few teachers' perceptions of Learner Autonomy came up as learner's ability to learn, to few others as the exercise of freedom & motivation to learn in the learning environment and also the equal sharing responsibility between both the learner and the teacher and to some the power to make choices for their learning.

Reinders (2010) states:

"... materials frequently lack the necessary support structures, such as clear instructions or even answer keys, and do not explicitly encourage students to reflect on the learning process.... Even where materials have been selected carefully and are provided as part of a more comprehensive and structured approach to developing autonomy, the results may be disappointing."

The focus of the research is where the teacher and the educational support have a bigger responsibility in raising students to develop the basic skill required to be an autonomous learner. He pens down some of the specialist approaches to creating autonomy in the classrooms as well as general approaches where teachers can encourage autonomy in the classroom. The researcher adds the need of self reflection at the end of learner's learning which enables the learners to fill the previous learning with the future ones. Similarly, Koban-Koç, D., & Koç, S. E. (2016) focus was to figure out what strategies learners use in order to learn English Language through online mode of study in government universities in Turkey of first year college students. They also suggested the need where school administration also have an important role in guiding and training teachers to help learners develop the skill of autonomy which helps them to be autonomous eventually. Likewise Creswell, A. (2000) has suggested autonomy can be facilitated through active dialogues between teachers and students. This practice should be encouraged and practiced in the classroom. However, in our system of Education, majority of Indian students don't ask, questions when in doubt; don't give their opinions out of fear because such dialogues have not been practiced from time memorial. Their fears and doubts are one of the stumbling blocks in their path to learning. Such hinderances are again not going to help them to become autonomous, not just in learning but also in other areas of their lives. As Fazey & Fazey (2001) writers claim the notion of the perceptions of learners as the main portion for the need to learn, these internal perception towards learning can help make and fail in their path of learning. Chan, V., Spratt, M & Humphreys, G. (2002) investigated the students in Hong Kong's Polytechnic University to find out their readiness towards learner autonomy, the research found that students perceived teachers as the main source of knowledge and they preferred that teachers should take responsibility for their learning.

Yildirim, R. (2013) states their finding:

"... Item 11 shows that before student-teachers' experience with the portfolio process they appointed "main" (31.5%) and "complete" (63.2%) responsibility to their teachers while giving "some" (52.6%) responsibility to themselves in evaluating their learning. Following their experience with the portfolio process, they gave "main" (42.1%) and "complete" (21.1%) responsibility to themselves and "some" (73.5%) responsibility to their teachers."

The study conducted at a Turkish secondary school studied the impact of a 14 weeks course on ELT 3rd grade students and the teachers, showed how teachers' behaviour hindered in the development of learner autonomy because teachers themselves have been conditioned with the same system of education and thus were not able to change their habits of teaching. We see how this course had brought in awareness in both students and teachers to be alert in the use and necessity of strategies to enable autonomy skills in their learning process. The need to understand the concept of learner autonomy and different strategies to foster it, is of utmost importance as Larvor, B. & Lippitt, J. (2009, p.103) states:

"Many do not realise that 'independent study' means intellectual autonomy rather than physical isolation. They have to learn for themselves (as it is rarely explained) that a group of students can work autonomously (in the sense that they devise their own question and do their own research), and conversely you can work alone on a pre structured (and therefore tutor-dependent) task."

Crome, K., Farrar, R. and O'Connor, P. (2009, pp.119-120) states the problems of autonomous learning in the Higher Education:

"Lectures, and thus the lecturer, fulfil an obvious function in such a model: they provide the student with minimal introductory information, then send them away to exercise those skills that are the mark of the autonomous learner. Seminars are no less an important aspect of higher education on such a view, but the role of the seminar tutor becomes merely to provoke debate by asking students, 'why do you think that?' On the other hand, where autonomous learning is understood to be an acquired habit or disposition, it follows that it is instilled through practice and exemplification—giving the students a model to copy, showing them how to break down and analyse an argument, how to structure an essay, and seeking to inspire them as a role model. On this view, autonomous learning is a habit that is inculcated."

Therefore, one of the principal aims of the university education is to promote autonomy among learners. Through autonomy of learning once can develop the necessary skills so that they are well equipped for work in that will be a part of their profession.

III.HYPOTHESES

- H1.** There exists no significant correlation between learning autonomy and teaching and learning environment of M. Ed. students of Panjab University
- H2.** There exists no significant difference in the attitude of male and female M. Ed. students of Panjab University towards learner autonomy
- H3.** There exists no significant difference in the perception of male and female M. Ed. students of Panjab University about teaching and learning environment
- H4.** There exists no significant difference in the attitude of M. Ed. students whose age is between 22 to 26 years and 27 to 34 years towards learner autonomy
- H5.** There exists no significant difference in the perception of M. Ed. students whose age is between 22 to 26 years and 27 to 34 years about teaching and learning environment
- H6.** There exists no significant difference in the attitude of M.Ed. students of Panjab University with no work experience and with work experience towards learner autonomy
- H7.** There exists no significant difference in the perception of M.Ed. students of Panjab University with no work experience and with work experience about teaching and learning environment

IV.METHODOLOGY

The study has been done with the help of descriptive survey method. Stratified Sample was used for a sample of 150 students. The researcher used two self prepared questionnaires based on the ideas of researches Zhang and Li (2004) and Lamb and Reinders (2008), content analysis was used for the same.

V.ANALYSIS OF DATA & INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

The data collected from the M.Ed. students of Panjab University, Chandigarh have been tabulated for the purpose of analysis, interpretation and to test the stated hypotheses. Descriptive statistics was used to calculate in order to find the nature of the distribution of scores on variables of learner autonomy and teaching and learning environment.

TABLE 4.1: VALUE OF MEAN, MEDIAN, STANDARD DEVIATION, SKEWNESS & KURTOSIS

AREA	N	MEAN (M)	SD (σ)	MEDIAN (Md)	SKEWNESS (Sk)	KURTOSIS (Ku)
Learner Autonomy	150	68.8	09.45	69	-0.68	0.73
Teaching & Learning Environment	150	75.41	10.99	75	-0.16	-0.71

DISCUSSIONS BASED ON DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

Learner Autonomy

With reference to the table 4.1, the values given for mean is 68.8 and of median is 69 respectively which can be considered approximately equal. The value of the skewness is -0.68. The value of kurtosis is 0.73. The value is greater than 0.263 for normal distribution. So it is slightly platykurtic. The results show that the distribution for this variable is approximately normal.

Teaching and Learning Environment

With reference to the table 4.1, the values given for mean is 75.41 and of median is 75 respectively which can be considered approximately equal. The value of the skewness is -0.16. The value of kurtosis is -0.71. The value is greater than 0.263 for normal distribution. So it is slightly platykurtic. The results show that the distribution for this variable is approximately normal.

4.2 COEFFICIENT OF CORRELATION

This section deals with the product moment coefficients of correlation between learner autonomy and teaching and learning environment. This analysis is done to study the relationship of learner autonomy with teaching and learning environment. Results are shown in Table 4.2

TABLE 4.2: COEFFICIENT OF CORRELATION BETWEEN LEARNER AUTONOMY AND TEACHING AND LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

	TEACHING AND LEARNING ENVIRONMENT	LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE	N	Df
LEARNER AUTONOMY	0.416**	0.01	150	148

Note: *significant at 0.05 level ($r = 0.197$) **significant at 0.01 level ($r = 0.256$)

TESTING OF HYPOTHESIS ON THE BASIS OF TABLE 4.2

H1. (Hypothesis 1) “There exists no significant correlation between learner autonomy and teaching & learning environment of M. Ed. students of Panjab University.”

Coefficient of correlation (r) between Learner Autonomy and Teaching & Learning Environment is 0.416. The value of coefficient is significant at 0.01 and 0.05 levels of significance (two-tailed test) because the degree of freedom for 148, the table value is 0.256 and 0.197 respectively. The obtained value is greater than the table values. So the comparison between the calculated and the tabulated values shows that there exists significant correlation between learner autonomy and teaching and learning environment. Therefore, **our first hypothesis (H1) is rejected.**

Hence the null Hypothesis (H_0) viz: “There exists no significant correlation between learner autonomy and teaching and learning environment of M. Ed. students of Panjab University” is rejected. There is a positive correlation between the two variables which means that as the value of one variable increases, the value of the other variable increases; as one decreases the other decreases. In other words, if one group has a favourable attitude towards learner autonomy then a positive attitude would exist towards teaching and learning environment.

4.3 INDEPENDENT SAMPLE TEST (t- TEST)

TABLE 4.3: COMPARISON OF MEAN SCORES OF ATTITUDE TOWARDS LEARNER AUTONOMY BETWEEN MALE AND FEMALES

Group	N	Mean (M)	SD	t-value	Level of Significance
Males	30	68.33	8.83	0.742	Not Significant
Females	120	68.94	9.63		

Testing of Hypothesis on the bases of table 4.3

H2. (Hypothesis 2) “There exists no significant difference in the attitude of male and female M. Ed. students of Panjab University towards learner autonomy.”

The table 4.3 represents Mean, Standard Deviation and t-value of the attitude of male and female students towards learner autonomy. The mean score of males is 68.33 and of females is 68.94. The standard deviation of males is 8.83 and of females is 9.63. The calculated t-value between the two mean scores is 0.742 which is lower than the table value of 1.98 at 0.05 level of significance and 2.61 at 0.01 level of significance against 148 degree of freedom (df). Hence the hypothesis (H2) namely, “There exists no significant difference in the attitude of male and female M. Ed. students of Panjab University towards learner autonomy” is accepted.

TABLE 4.4: COMPARISON OF MEAN SCORES OF PERCEPTION ABOUT TEACHING AND LEARNING ENVIRONMENT BETWEEN MALE AND FEMALES

Group	N	Mean (M)	SD	t-value	Level of Significance
Males	30	74.6	12.75	0.689	Not Significant
Females	120	75.62	10.56		

Testing of Hypothesis on the bases of table 4.4

H3. (Hypothesis 3) “There exists no significant difference in the perception of male and female M. Ed. students of Panjab University about teaching and learning environment.”

The table 4.4 represents Mean, Standard Deviation and t-value of the attitude of male and female students towards perception about teaching and learning environment. The mean score of males is 74.6 and of females is 75.62. The standard deviation of males is 12.75 and of females is 10.56. The calculated t-value between the two mean scores is 0.689 which is less than the table value of 1.98 at 0.05 level of significance and 2.61 at 0.01 level of significance against 148 degree of freedom (df). Hence the hypothesis (H3) namely, “There exists no significant difference in the perception of male and female M. Ed. students of Panjab University about teaching and learning environment” is accepted.

TABLE 4.5: COMPARISON OF MEAN SCORES OF ATTITUDE TOWARDS LEARNER AUTONOMY BETWEEN STUDENTS OF AGE GROUP OF 22 TO 26 YEARS AND 27 TO 34 YEARS

Age Group	N	Mean (M)	SD	t-value	Level of Significance
22 to 26 years	114	68.52	9.07	0.524	Not Significant
27 to 34 years	36	69.78	10.63		

Testing of Hypothesis on the basis of table 4.5

H4. (Hypothesis 4) “There exists no significant difference in the attitude of M. Ed. students whose age is between 22 to 26 years and 27 to 34 years towards learner autonomy.”

The table 4.5 represents Mean, Standard Deviation and t-value of the attitude of male and female students towards perception about teaching and learning environment. The mean score of 22 to 26 years of age group is 68.52 and of 27 to 34 years of age group is

69.78. The standard deviation of 22 to 26 years of age group is 9.07 and of 27 to 34 years of age group is 10.63. The calculated t-value between the two mean scores is 0.524 which is less than the table value of 1.98 at 0.05 level of significance and 2.61 at 0.01 level of significance against 148 degree of freedom (df). Hence the hypothesis (H4) namely, "There exists no significant difference in the attitude of M. Ed. students whose age is between 22 to 26 years and 27 to 34 years towards learner autonomy" is accepted.

TABLE 4.6: COMPARISON OF MEAN SCORES OF PERCEPTION ABOUT TEACHING AND LEARNING ENVIRONMENT BETWEEN STUDENTS OF AGE GROUP OF 22 TO 26 YEARS AND 27 TO 34 YEARS

Age Group	N	Mean (M)	SD	t-value	Level of Significance
22 to 26 years	114	74.92	10.76	0.354	Not Significant
27 to 34 years	36	76.97	11.70		

Testing of Hypothesis on the basis of table 4.6

H5. (Hypothesis 5) "There exists no significant difference in the perception of M. Ed. students whose age is between 22 to 26 years and 27 to 34 years about teaching and learning environment."

The table 4.6 represents Mean, Standard Deviation and t-value of the attitude of male and female students towards perception about teaching and learning environment. The mean score of 22 to 26 years of age group is 74.92 and of 27 to 34 years of age group is 76.97. The standard deviation of 22 to 26 years of age group is 10.76 and of 27 to 34 years of age group is 11.70. The calculated t-value between the two mean scores is 0.354 which is less than the table value of 1.98 at 0.05 level of significance and 2.61 at 0.01 level of significance against 148 degree of freedom (df). Hence the hypothesis (H5) namely, "There exists no significant difference in the perception of M. Ed. students whose age is between 22 to 26 years and 27 to 34 years about teaching and learning environment" is accepted.

TABLE 4.7: COMPARISON OF MEAN SCORES OF ATTITUDE TOWARDS LEARNER AUTONOMY BETWEEN STUDENTS WITH AND WITHOUT WORK EXPERIENCE

Group	N	Mean (M)	SD	t-value	Level of Significance
Without Work Experience	136	68.49	9.31	0.237	Not Significant
With Work Experience	14	72.07	10.48		

Testing of Hypothesis on the basis of table 4.7

H6. (Hypothesis 6) "There exists no significant difference in the attitude of M.Ed. students of Panjab University with no work experience and with work experience towards learner autonomy."

The table 4.7 represents Mean, Standard Deviation and t-value of the attitude of male and female students towards perception about teaching and learning environment. The mean score of students without work experience is 68.49 and with work experience is 72.07. The standard deviation of students without work experience is 9.31 and with work experience is 10.48. The calculated t-value between the two mean scores is 0.237 which is less than the table value of 1.98 at 0.05 level of significance and 2.61 at 0.01 level of significance against 148 degree of freedom (df). Hence the hypothesis (H6) namely, "There exists no significant difference in the attitude of M.Ed. students of Panjab University with no work experience and with work experience towards learner autonomy" is accepted.

TABLE 4.8: COMPARISON OF MEAN SCORES OF PERCEPTION ABOUT TEACHING AND LEARNING ENVIRONMENT BETWEEN STUDENTS WITH AND WITHOUT WORK EXPERIENCE

Group	N	Mean (M)	SD	t-value	Level of Significance
Without Work Experience	136	74.85	10.52	0.138	Not Significant
With Work Experience	14	80.93	14.11		

Testing of Hypothesis on the basis of table 4.8

H7. (Hypothesis 7) "There exists no significant difference in the perception of M.Ed. students of Panjab University with no work experience and with work experience about teaching and learning environment."

The table 4.8 represents Mean, Standard Deviation and t-value of the attitude of male and female students towards perception about teaching and learning environment. The mean score of students without work experience is 74.85 and with work experience is 80.93. The standard deviation of students without work experience is 10.52 and with work experience is 14.11. The calculated t-

value between the two mean scores is 0.138 which is less than the table value of 1.98 at 0.05 level of significance and 2.61 at 0.01 level of significance against 148 degree of freedom (df). Hence the hypothesis (H7) namely, “There exists no significant difference in the perception of M.Ed. students of Panjab University with no work experience and with work experience about teaching and learning environment” is accepted.

V. RESULTS

1. There exists a significant correlation between learner autonomy and teaching and learning environment of M. Ed. students of Panjab University. There is a positive correlation between the two variables which means that as the value of one variable increases, the value of the other variable increases; as one decreases the other decreases. In other words, if one group has a favourable attitude towards learner autonomy then a positive attitude would exist towards teaching and learning environment.
2. There exists no significant difference in the attitude of male and female M. Ed. students of Panjab University towards learner autonomy which means there is no difference between the means of the two groups given. In other words, both the groups are alike and there is no difference in their attitude towards learner autonomy.
3. There exists no significant difference in the perception of male and female M. Ed. students of Panjab University about teaching and learning environment which means there is no difference between the means of the two groups given. In other words, both the groups are alike and there is no difference in their perception about teaching and learning environment.
4. There exists no significant difference in the attitude of M. Ed. students whose age is between 22 to 26 years and 27 to 34 years towards learner autonomy which means there is no difference between the means of the two groups given. In other words, both the groups are alike and there is no difference in their attitude towards learner autonomy.
5. There exists no significant difference in the perception of M. Ed. students whose age is between 22 to 26 years and 27 to 34 years about teaching and learning environment which means there is no difference between the means of the two groups given. In other words, both the groups are alike and there is no difference in their perception about teaching and learning environment.
6. There exists no significant difference in the attitude of M.Ed. students of Panjab University with no work experience and with work experience towards learner autonomy which means there is no difference between the means of the two groups given. In other words, both the groups are alike and there is no difference in their attitude towards learner autonomy.
7. There exists no significant difference in the perception of M.Ed. students of Panjab University with no work experience and with work experience about teaching and learning environment which means there is no difference between the means of the two groups given. In other words, both the groups are alike and there is no difference in their perception about teaching and learning environment.

VI. EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

In terms of educational implications, some of the suggestions might be useful for developing learner autonomy and providing effective teaching and learning environment.

- Allowing reasonable access to quality learning tools, technologies, and resources
- Educational institutes should provide an appropriate environment for learning that will encourage the students to take up their learning.
- Teachers should take more responsibility to encourage students to work more autonomously, guide them how to plan their learning, and give them more opportunities for their work.
- Teachers should think carefully about what they are offering, not only in terms of academics but also in terms of autonomy skills which helps the learner to be autonomous.
- To look beyond: Looking beyond syllabus completion, looking beyond grades and scores, looking beyond rote memorization. Everyone from Parents, Teachers, School Administrators, Students should look beyond such rat race competition which has no benefits at the end. However, as a society we should strive to inculcate basic and necessary skills such as autonomy in order for young generations to become lifelong learners with a sense of direction and purpose.
- Assess and test new ideas and methods, evaluate the effectiveness of different programs, modules and methods. Use of rubrics helps in reflecting and evaluating oneself.

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