

Module 4: Understanding the competences and values

| Guidance material | 4.1.3 What is Independent Learning? |
|--|---|
| What is the purpose of this material? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is a brief introduction to the competences of independent learning |
| When to use this material? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> When introducing the competences to teachers to support them in implementing this competences in their class programme. |
| With whom to use this material? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers |
| Have you considered these materials first? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce teachers to the SCF through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.2 Structure of the SCF activity 1.4 Prior knowledge brainstorm activity 1.3 Definitions matching activity For further information on each of the competences, including student progressions, see 1.6 Close reading of ADEC SCF – Framework Requirements & Exemplifications. |
| How to use this material? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This resource can be used in a range of ways, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share with teachers and discuss it in staff meetings or departmental meetings. Encourage teachers to plan using the ideas in this resource. Discuss the ideas and then ask teachers to share their own ideas for teaching this competences. For more information on each competences read the <i>Framework Requirements & Exemplifications</i> section of the <i>Abu Dhabi Education Council Student Competences Framework (SCF) for Private Schools - Competences for Abu Dhabi's 21st Century Learners (2014)</i>. |
| What resources or equipment are needed? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Copies of the <i>Framework Requirements & Exemplifications</i> section of the <i>ADEC SCF for Private Schools (2014)</i>. |

4.1.3 What is Independent Learning?

Definition

An independent learner has the necessary skills and attributes to complete a task or activity, including knowing when and where to get help, without reliance on others.
(ADEC SCF for Private Schools Framework Requirements and Exemplification (2014) p.iii.16)

Background

This summary of research is provided as a background to this competences and further information can be found in the references below.

The justification for encouraging independent learning has its foundation in constructivism. Piaget's (1972) constructivist theory argues that humans build knowledge and meaning when links are made between the new learning and their previous experiences and ideas. Many modern teaching approaches and pedagogies are constructivist in nature. When a student learns and works independently of others they are actively making links between their previous experiences and learning and the new skill, concept or idea they are learning.

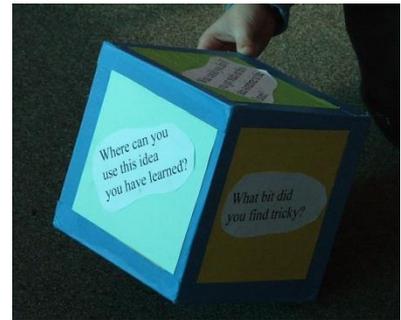
Independent learning is closely related to theories of self-regulation. Barry Zimmerman (1990), a researcher and writer in the area of self-regulation, describes three characteristics of a self-regulating learner.

A self-regulating learner:

1. monitors themselves,
2. evaluates their own performance and,
3. makes changes to their actions in the future.

There are many benefits for learning when students work independently (Zimmerman, 1990). Independent learning helps student to build an understanding of their own approaches to learning and how best to maximise their learning in the most efficient ways, students are more motivated and student engagement improves.

An independent learner knows how to manage their own learning and knows what to do when they face difficulties. However, for this to be authentic the teacher needs to take a back seat. A student cannot be independent if their teacher is taking the major role in their learning. Too much teacher help means students don't have the opportunity to think for themselves. The message they receive is that there will always be someone else there to do it for them.





Learning Progressions

“The term ‘learning progression’ refers to the purposeful sequencing of teaching and learning expectations across multiple developmental stages, ages, or grade levels. The term is most commonly used in reference to learning standards—concise, clearly articulated descriptions of what students should know and be able to do at a specific stage in their education. In terms of the student competence framework, a learning progression is a road or pathway that students travel as they progress toward mastery of the skills needed for career and post compulsory education.”

(ADEC SCF for Private Schools Framework Requirements and Exemplification (2014) p.iii.7)

The *ADEC SCF for Private Schools (2014)* provides learning progressions from kindergarten / Grade 1¹ through to the end of Grade 12. These progressions provide clear descriptors of what should be expected within that competences at each grade level, for example:

At the end of Grade 5 learners who are effective and independent are developing the ability to:

- use their acquired knowledge, understanding and skills to undertake a task or activity with minimal supervision
- use a range of resources and technologies to support their learning
- plan and set appropriate targets and timescales for their learning
- identify and review the strengths, weaknesses and outcomes of their learning and adapt their learning accordingly

At the end of Grade 4 learners who are effective and independent are developing the ability to:

- use their acquired knowledge, understanding and skills to undertake a task or activity with minimal support and supervision
- use resources and technologies to support their learning
- set appropriate targets and timescales for their learning
- identify and review the strengths, weaknesses and outcomes of their learning

(Grade 4 and 5 Learning progressions for Independent Learning in the *ADEC SCF for Private Schools (2014)*. p.iii.23-24)

While the performance indicators within these progressions do not change in essence, they do expand in breadth and depth. This expansion makes the progressions a useful tool for both teachers and students. Below are some tasks teachers can undertake to help them make best use of these learning progressions:

- Read the progressions carefully as this will help you further understand this competences and what skills and attitudes make up that competences.

¹ The *ADEC SCF for Private Schools (2014)* recognizes that not all schools are able to deliver all competences across all grades. *Table 5: A Road Map for the Delivery of the Competences across the Stages (p.iii.9)* provides schools with a ‘road-map’ to support them in making decisions on the delivery and development of the competences across the four stages of schooling.

المادة التوجيهية: 4.1.3 ما هو التعلم المستقل؟

الوحدة 4: فهم الكفاءات والقيم



- Before reading the descriptors for the grade you teach, read the descriptors for the grades below. These descriptors are the building blocks of what students have experienced in this competences before they reached this grade level. Ask students to share their experiences of these descriptors (e.g. “Tell me about a time you set targets for your learning?”) and use their answers to help you plan your starting point.
- While reading the descriptors for each grade level and identify the ‘step up’ students need to make to move through the progressions. For example, at the end of Grade 4 in independent learning students are developing the ability to “set appropriate targets and timescales for their learning”, while in grade 5 they “plan and set appropriate targets and timescales for their learning” (ADEC SCF for Private Schools (2014) p.iii.24). Therefore their step up is learning how to plan for these targets and timescales. Ask yourself what this might look like, for example a student might create an action plan (using a template provided by their teacher) that includes their targets and the timescales (e.g. deadlines) for these targets.
- Use the progressions when planning lessons to ensure your focus on a competences is based on the appropriate stage of the competences framework. The progressions are useful to refer to when giving specific feedback to students on their next steps in developing that competences.
- Support student to use the progressions to set goals and self/peer assess their own and others learning.

References

Abu Dhabi Education Council (2014) *Abu Dhabi Education Council Student Competences Framework (SCF) for Private Schools - Competences for Abu Dhabi's 21st Century Learners*. Pearson Education Limited

Piaget, J. (1972). *The psychology of the child*. New York: Basic Books.

Zimmerman, B.J. (1990). Self-regulated learning and academic achievement: An overview. *Educational Psychologist*, 25, 3-17