

SELF-LEARNING: SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING – AN ENDURING TOOL FOR ACHIEVING SUCCESS

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Abstract

The main objective of this paper is to have a deeper understanding of the significance of self-directed learning. Self-directed learning is not only a set of skills that can be taught, learned and acquired. It is basically a philosophy which needs to be imbibed. It is a learning which learners carry out on their own. The concept needs to be percolated amongst the learners and calls for role reversal of teacher and student. It calls for changing the role of teacher and learner in the classroom and revolutionize traditional teaching methods. The learners are given autonomy wherein they take decisions to carry out tasks and activities on their own. This diligence and resourcefulness helps them benefit on a large scale and directs them towards lifelong learning. New developments in the 21st century education such as online learning, availability of internet on mobile devices, shift in the teaching – learning strategies have put pressure and expectations on the learners to be more initiated and motivated towards their own learning. The main aspects that have been taken into account in this research paper are factors influencing self-directed learning, teaching- asessment strategies, role of educators in supporting self-directed learning.

Key words: Self-directed learning, life-long learning, Assessment, Educators.

INTRODUCTION

Learning is a part of our daily life. It's driven by an innate curiosity humans have, to understand life around then. Education is an equalizer, a transformational formula to help achieve dreams and prepare for an aspirational future. However a gap is existing between learning as a process and education as a system. It manifests in poor learning levels in children, non-motivation in the educators, unemployable state of the coming generation, growing socio-economic problems and unjust society. Therefore, comes the concept of 'selflearning' wherein the impetus lies with the individual charting out their own learning journey. Self-learning as a process builds skills like self-awareness, critical thinking, communication,

collaboration as the 21st century skills. It helps foster a new community of learners which helps defy the socially conditioned hierarchies.

Self-learning concept isn't new. Terms analogous with self-learning encompass selfdirected learning, self-designed learning, self-regulated learning, self-designed learning, selfregulated learning, lifelong learning. In SDL, its the learner who defines the learning task; in self learning, it may also be a teacher. Its basically a broader concept of the learner's freedom and control in deciding their learning activities. It basically starts with the lowest level of incidental self-directed learning to the highest level of self-directed learning.

Self-directed learning is important in today's world. People in developing countries too have unlimited access to vast amount of information which definitely paves way for societal change and gives challenges to educational institutions to prepare students for the latest skilled workforce. So the demands extend beyond skill knowledge to include problem solving, excellent communication skills, collaboration, applying knowledge to real life situations and managing and supporting constant change. To survive in today's world to plan develop adapt and change is the key component of survival in today's digital, interactive and global society.

Although self-direction came in the mid-1800s but for the past 50 years it has becomes the buzz-word. Self-directed learning is the process of learning wherein there is an autonomy, choice and self-actualization and locus of control are the learners. Learners are viewed as independent, decisive, responsible, good natured with deep related desire for selfactualization and also having unique and unlimited potential for growth.

Self-directed learning is quite purposeful. Since the learners initiate learning to find solution to the real-life problems or self-goals. The learner takes responsibility for laying out the learning objectives, managing tasks, controlling measures and resources for achieving the self-goals and meet the ever increasing demands.

Self-directed learning is also developmental since the learners solve the problems achieve the set goals, develop knowledge and skill, change, adapt thereby realizing their potential. The learners development is brought about as he sets out in the environment, interacts with the different domains and experiences and interprets events in accordance with his potential and perspective.

SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING

Malcolm Knowles (1975) gave the most popular definition which is widely acknowledged and accepted.

"Self-directed learning is a process in which individuals take initiative, with or without the help of others, in diagnosing their own learning needs, formulating goals, identifying human and material resources for learning, choosing and implementing appropriate learning strategies and evaluating learning outcomes". Educational psychologists view SDL as a complex process having many facets to it.

DIMENSIONS OF SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING

Self-Regulation

It's the ability to direct and control one's own thoughts, actions, behaviours and emotions during a learning task. It involves four phases (a) defining goals (b) monitoring and regulating learning progress (c) making adjustments to reach the set goals (d) pondering over the problem to generate new knowledge. Self-regulation basically involves self-evaluation which represents self-efficacy, emotional stability and focus of control.

Motivation

Is basically the inherent force within oneself to engage in a task joyfully. Learners have growth mindset, have intrinsic motivation which leads them to carry out their tasks in a well organised manner thereby leading to the achievement of the defined goals. Rewards and incentives hereby play very important role in motivating learners to be more persistent with their learning and then helping them to solve problems in real-life situations.

Personal Responsibility

Its basically willingness intrinsically showed by learners to take the responsibility of their decisions and therefore actions. They act and guide under the values and ethics and move with great integrity which benefits not only oneself but also local environment and the society.

Autonomy

It is the ability to be able to select from the open choices and be in control of one's learning by continuous reflection and assessment. The autonomous learners do not act in isolation but in accordance with the social dynamics and the environment in which they are staying in. Autonomy happens when learners learn to work independently, corroborate with others to define goals, plan learning, devise new strategies, select the resources and monitor and evaluate progress as they move on.

Review of the Related Literature:

1) Title: Self Directed Learning: A longstanding tool for uncertain tunes by Roberson

By: Roberson Jr., D.N., Zach, S., Choresh, N., & Rosenthal, I. (2021)

This study reveals that education had to change due to the implications for COVID-19 the unknown dynamic about the virus resulted in a variety of programs from school closings to more independent education. In many situations traditional classes were closed and people had to become more independent and self-directed. The purpose of the study was to examine more about the concept named self-directed learning. This took place by examining two different research projects on SDL. The wide gap between the two research programs indicated flexibility of self-directed learning to assist with gaps due to closing of many aspects of the educational systems.

2) Title: Self-Learning Techniques to contribute to the learning of the English language students.

By: Venecia Tejada Reyes Lic Industrial Psychology UASD (2019).

This study reveals that learning technologies or study strategies are different perspectives applied to learning or general. Apparently they are critical to the success of students in school. There are varieties of learning techniques which can focus on the process of organizing, taking and retaining new information or passing exam.

The conceptions that sustain the learning techniques to contribute to the students learning of a foreign language are based on the active and creative appropriation of a new knowledge through a constant self-improvement of their autonomy and self-determination, in close connection with the ability to analysis in the teaching – learning of the English language to facilitate the resolution of problems, based on their needs and interests. It is important to work with knowledge that is formation and development of practical and intellectual skills of great responsibility in the task of education and in their learning to achieve an active and creative appropriation of new knowledge to favor their self- perfecting; in order to apply them in solving problems to transform reality. The objective of this research is to offer a theoretical and methodological foundation of self-learning techniques to contribute to the learning of the English language of the students of the Elpedio Brito Cueto High School in order to contribute to the learning in the students of the primary level and secondary.

3) Title: An Investigation of Self-Directed Learning Skills of Undergraduate Students.By: Ilkay Askin Tekkol and Melek Demirel (2018)

The arms of this study were to reveal university students self-directed learning skills and determine whether these skills vary leased on university type, gender, field of study, year of study, academic success, type of university entrance score, income level, and the desire to pursue a graduate degree. Also, this study explored the relationship between university students self-directed learning skills and their lifelong learning tendencies. The study group of the survey compressed 2,600 first and fourth year students from same departments of Hacettepe and Baskent Universities. The results revealed that university students self-directed scores were above the median score of the scale. Self-directed learning scores were found not to vary leased on university, year of study, income level. However, gender field of study, university entrance score type, academic success and the desire to pursue a graduate degree made a significant difference on university students self-directed learning skills and lifelong learning tendencies. In summary, it can be said that undergraduate students have self-directed learning skills and these skills are related to lifelong learning.

4) Title: Self-Directed Learning Theory to Practice: A Footsetp towards the Path of being a life-long learner.

By: Kailash Charokar, M.S., and Piya Dullo (2022)

The study reveals that the traditional education strategy is insufficient to meet the demands of dynamically changing medical science and the fast-growing medical field. So emphasis on acquisition of a set of competencies for self-directed learning (SDL) through an explicit approach and dedicated teaching hours is given. This gives opportunity to develop skills for developing lifelong learners. Self-directed learning cuts across all domains of learning and has a significant potential in shaping transformational learning experiences. The concepts of SDL are based on adult learning principles and experiential learning fostering skills for lifelong learning. In view of the paradigm changes in the new curriculum, it is imperative to understand the basic concepts and the method for effective practice of SDL in the new curriculum. Faculty development for SDL, ensuring the availability of resources, harnessing the power of information technology and integrating cognitive and affective assessment strategies enhance the effectiveness of SDL. The article discusses the basic concept of SDL, implementation strategies and evaluation of self-directed learning.

5) Title: Self-regulated learning, self-determination theory and teacher candidates' development of competency – based teaching practices.

By: Charlotte Ann Brenner (2022)

This study talks about how self-regulated promoting practices foster students' development of metacognition, motivation and strategic action. These underlying learning competencies improve students' academic, social, emotional and career outcomes. Although beneficial, the development of self-regulated promoting practices is challenging, particularly for teacher candidates. This article describes self regulated learning practices and how motivational support for teacher candidates development of these practices. The article concludes with suggestions for future research.

 Title: Learning strategies in self directed language learning using mobile Technology in Higher Education.

By: Yuzhi Lai, Nadira Saab & Wilfried Admiraal (2022)

This study reveals that language learners in higher education increasingly use out of class selfdirected learning facilitated by mobile technology. In order to make informed educational decisions, this study sets out to provide an overview of empirical research into learning strategies that self-directed learners use with the support of mobile technology in language learning. Twenty studies were selected and systematically analysed, revealing the cognitive, metacognitive, social and affective strategies that self-directed learners used in their language learning processes. Low-cognitive strategies appeared to be more commonly reported than high-cognitive strategies. The use of metacognitive strategies was more closely associated with the forethought phase and performance phase than with the self-reflection phase, yet only a few articles reported all three metacognitive phases. Three kinds of social strategies were examined, and only one affective strategy was reported. Finally, implications of these findings and directions for future research are provided for self-directed learners, practitioners and researchers to facilitate self-directed learning and future work.

Objectives of the study:

- To critically study self-directed learning.
- To find out if there exists any significance of self-directed learning in the present scenario.
- To study the role of educators in self-directed learning.

SOME MYTHS ABOUT SDL

SDL is self-learning under the guidance of teacher:

SDL is self-learning under the supervision of a teacher. However what is of essence here is the understanding that SDL is not synonymous with self-learning. What is different in SDL is the locus of control wherein the whole onus shifts from the teacher to the learner. In *Copyright@2023 Scholarly Research Journal for Humanity Science & English Language*

SDL, its the learner who is in control and takes initiative and direction to control the events around them. However on the other hand there are certain learners who believe in destiny, fate for controlling the events in their lives.

Here in SDL, teachers should purposely move the locus of control from teacher as a model figure to the joint platform of learning for both the teachers and learners. Finally the direction shifts from joint learning wherein learners are being supported by the teachers to independent control of learning to the learners and gradually the application of knowledge by the learners in real life situations.

The teacher has no role to play in SDL:

One of the key features of SDL is that self-directed learners undergo learning with or without the help of teachers. Its basically the learners choice as and when he requires support from his teachers, peer group or others and whether he designs to ask for it. However whenever learner seeks help, the teacher should be there to facilitate support. So, here the teacher is the facilitator of knowledge rather than the dispenser. However it is here ensured that the learner should not get waylaid from the path of learning.

SDL is an important teaching strategy:

SDL is one of major key components of Adult learning. However its to be perceived as a set of skills which is to be inculcated by students and require special training as for other skill imbibition. So, SDL is basically an approach to learning in which the autonomous learning is followed; promoted; despite the varieties of teaching plans which we use. Herein what is of great importance is that the inculcation of SDL should not be restricted to a few sessions but given grave importance in view of the current time demanding incorporation of life skills/21st century skills.

SDL means learning alone:

The fruitful social interactions between peers and others is key to having a path to proper learning. Herein, the collaboration of ideas and cross sharing helps pave way to proper understanding and develop significant meanings of the control in accordance with their own perceptive. Teachers have to find ways and means wherein learners are given full liberty to explore different contexts in group like situations.

Teaching and Assessment Strategies

Readiness is basically corroboration of with motivation and ability. Readiness for SDL includes self-discipline, autonomous behaviors, good communication skills, openness to feedback and ability to self-reflect. However, what is important here is to note that learners *Copyright@2023 Scholarly Research Journal for Humanity Science & English Language*

are at different levels of readiness according to the tasks given and motivation levels Gerald Grow [10] proposed the SSDL model which indicates that continue – teaching.



Fig 1: Levels of self-directed learners according to SSDL model [10]

Strategies can motivate or decelerate the progress in SDL of learners by giving them feedback post assessment. This is the staged self-directed learning model.

Problems can arise when the teaching strategy is not in accordance with the SDL learner's stage. Teachers hereby are required to balance their teaching methods in accordance with the stage of learners self-direction.

Herein the teaching strategy not only requires deliverance of exorbitant amount of content but also motivation and adaptation in teaching strategies to allow the SDL learners to reach high levels of autonomy. So the methodology here required is flexibility for learners to help achieve their full potential.

Promotion of SDL through certain strategies:

The ways and means required to percolate self-directedness in the learners under SDL are given below:

Identifying pre-existing opportunities in the curriculum: It entails exposing learners to problem solving learning, doing group projects, flipped classroom models, community visits. These all projects try to sharpen the skill of the learners under SDL and the learners are subtly forced to learn on their own in the community contexts too.

Define the learning objectives:

The teachers here clearly define the objectives to be achieved by the students; give them assessment strategies and proper dates of submission of assignments. The individuals

are given lot of flexibility to go for their own learning methods and allow them to be creative and expressive.

The student identify the gaps in their learning:

When students have extra detailed knowledge and concept building they learn to identify the gaps in their learning when working in groups and with peers. The students learn communicative skills, cooperative skills and analytical skills under SDL.

Locus of learning gradually shifting to students:

The concept allow students to observe, start learning under guidance of the teacher and gradually shift from being passive learners to independent learners. Here the major point to take notice of; is that the learners start learning at an increased pace.

Gradually allowing learners to become autonomous:

The learners progress from simple to complex stage under the guidance of the teacher. However as the progressive stage unfolds; the students learn to collect their own resources and do their assignments through proper understanding. The learners move progressively from instructive teaching to scaffold learning. Here the learners are given variety of assignments in which the work given is equally complicated but they are designed to fulfill all the learning outcomes.

Design Collaborative Tasks:

Learning as we all know cannot occur in solitude. So the course should be so designed which allows interaction amongst the peer group. The teachers here try to keep the learners with different levels of aptitude in one group. Here the group research projects improves the efficiency of learners and the teacher here behaves a guide. Under the facilitation of the teacher the learners explore, and this helps to percolate high levels of learning in them.

Reciprocal teaching is also stressed upon here under SDL. It involves two way dialogue whenever enquiry, self-monitoring, unmediated feedback, discussions and critiquing skills are highly promoted.

Giving learners liberty to learn at their own pace:

Here the teachers learn to give up on authority and give the locus of control to the learners. The students learn to develop their own learning outcomes, reflect on what they have learnt, find and pool their resources and work on their tasks autonomously.

Problem-based learning (PBL):

PBL was modeled on the curriculum at Mc Master University, Hamilton and Limburg University, Maastricht. The curriculum was based on Knowle's (1975) theories of self-*Copyright@2023 Scholarly Research Journal for Humanity Science & English Language* learning. Here the teacher pushes the learner to the extreme, to help them construct new knowledge based on the new situations/problems they encounter. PBL process really helps in developing SDL skills. The learning strategies focus on pragmatism, meaningful learning, cognitive psychology and social constructivism. The students work in a group of 6 -9 with 1 teacher. Other strategies here include seminars, resources sessions, lectures and studies involving different resources.

Flipped Classrooms:

This means role reversal of the learner and the guide/mentor. Here the students are asked to go through the given topics before the class and search for their own material respectively related to the topic. Technology is properly used in these sessions and videos and online presentation are also included to trigger SDL. The classroom is used to engage the learners fruitfully, have collaborative discussions and clear doubts. Thereafter some home tasks are assigned to them in order to use their knowledge in a productive manner.

Use technology for promoting SDL:

Technology helps provide a very interactive, engaging platform to increase the benefits of learning by ensuring proper use of technology, record keeping and reclamation is made quite easier. Strategies assessing the learner's growth and progress are documented properly; without being overtly focused on the final examination marks.

Encouragement of Reflective Practice:

This encourages learners to reflect on their process of learning wherein they try to connect and bridge the gap between the old knowledge and the new one. This also promotes high order thinking, problem solving, autonomy and responsibility for their own learning. Student learning portfolios are developed which maintain the whole record and assess the work done by each and every student as part of their learning process.

Provide Honest and Specific Feedback:

Learners tend to overestimate or under estimate themselves. SDL helps to provide a safe and non-threatening environment to the learners wherein they learn to progress easily and assess their flaws and strengths themselves too. An honest and straight forward appraisal helps them to understand the reason behind their successes and failures. It also helps to improve their efficiency.

ROLE OF EDUCATORS IN SUPPORTING SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING:

Its of the prime function of educators in 21st century to promote awareness and direct the students for self-directed learning. They are trained and motivated to understand their role *Copyright@2023 Scholarly Research Journal for Humanity Science & English Language* and responsibilities and develop their cognitive, intellectual skills. Here the students are given proper knowledge and information and are slowly trained to be decisive and autonomous. Under SDL; the teachers also play a pivotal role to apply different teaching strategies and promote SDL. Here the learners are practiced continuously for assessment methods to see the benefits, limitations and consequently bring about improvements in them.

Here the onus comes on the educators to bring about maximum participation of learners to foster their confidence and speech skills. The learners are thoroughly motivated to attend seminars, conferences, workshops and their participation is encouraged wholly by allowing them to give presentations and speeches. Its because of the self-directed learning that the students are able to generate proper understanding of the concepts and it augments awareness through which they become skillful and demonstrate proper understanding of the subject.

In educational institutions, scaffold learning is greatly promoted wherein the teachers firstly show the learners to solve the problem themselves. This helps to hone their creative skills and thereafter the learners are encouraged to solve the problems themselves on their own. This way the learners are encouraged to do all the procedure themselves on their own.

The learning also involves proper decision making and the learners are promoted to enhance their decision making by giving them freedom to express their view points and suggestions to the educators. They are also allowed to be freely communicative in terms of evaluation methods. The learners are allowed to go for their specific areas of interest so that learning becomes meaningful and lifelong.

Educators are needed to guide the learners with greater opportunities to improve their personal and financial gains. Apart from employment opportunities they are motivated to get enrolled on part time basis to hone and sharpen their skills necessary to survive and adapt in the 21st century.

The learners are further directed to put their time energy and resources into meaningful tasks which improves their self-efficacy. They are also provided proper rights and opportunities to work in collaboration with their peer group and educators.

The educators are required to design the teaching learning strategies in a way that involves questioning, clarifying, predicting and summarizing. The learners are able to set these strategies and learn to use them on their own for self-learning. Self-directed learners is therefore a big step to usher the learners towards lifelong learning that involves achievement of meaningful learning experiences.

CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTATION

Whenever a change is introduced in any system; resistance is always encountered. The challenges that will be traced during SDL implementation will be primarily with the learners. Primarily the learners shows readiness resistance, communication barriers, cognitive and mental barriers, lack of focus towards learning, inadequate skills to manage with the heavy workload and time management techniques.

The greatest problem encountered as far as implementation of SDL goes is basically in Asian countries. They have long since depended on traditional methods of teaching and need lot of supporting system in the initial years of SDL practice. The teachers need to be more focused and pragmatic. The learners need to be highly motivated and skillful for percolating SDL in themselves.

Faculty training is an absolute must to suppress their myths of losing control while adopting SDL approach. Secondly the huge challenge comes from students side who are so used to direct teaching that they register lot of resistance in moving on the path of SDL. This is perhaps one of the greatest flaw in our education system which needs to be corrected as learners are gradually empowered to become autonomous learners.

Here its imperative to note that the teachers have to be trained to use a mix of teachinglearning strategies whereby the learners are gradually pushed towards SDL. As long as the guides grant flexibility to the learners, the learners take ample time, opportunities and freedom to explore and learn at their own time and pace. This kind of framework is intricately built into the educational system wherein the learners get a chance to explore and progress in different ways possible.

Promotion of SDL will not be successful if only a few teachers venture into it and propose it. The whole effort of the institutional unit needs to be there in order to make it happen. Here in our cases, the students might not have been exposed to SDL in their early years so the transition needs to be subtle and gradual. The students have to be nudged gradually in a phased manner towards SDL. Overall its the educational system as a whole which will determine the efficacy of SDL in it whether embraced positively or not by the students.

NEED AND SIGNIFICANCE OF SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING

As we move towards 21st century; self-directed learning has become an essential foundation for the 21st century learners. Its an important skill, a prerequisite required for 21st century educational world. It basically calls for motivation, autonomy of the learners while *Copyright@2023 Scholarly Research Journal for Humanity Science & English Language*

they are engaged in the process of effective learning. The SDL process helps to keep them engaged, allows them to explore and find solutions to their problems skillfully as this helps them in life long learning.

In an era of ever expanding knowledge and information technology its basically an era of knowledge explosion. Therefore the educators cannot be solely dependent on the classroom learing. Self-directed learning helps learners to gather knowledge skillfully where they have access to extra information and use it in real life situations. This is also indicative of the learners life long learning in a way.

When the individuals are properly motivated to generate awareness and develop their skills in order of the focussed areas. As they get enrolled in educational centres or training entres they obtain knowledge under the guidance of the educators. The educators firstly asks them to get a concept of the area/subject they aim to get skilled at Secondly, they are asked to observe their peers when implementing the tasks. Thirdly they are asked to undergo note making especially under production and manufacturing. Fourthly they are asked to practice the projects given either autonomously or under guidance. Fifthy, they are required to constantly be under practice. Sixthly, proper evaluation and assessment strategies are devised to identify the flaws and thus bring into focus areas of improvements. This is how learners manage to achieve the learning outcomes.

Thus, self-directed learning does help individuals to become more motivated, tenacious, resilient, goal-oriented. In educational systems various strategies. are utilised to achieve the goals and learning outcomes. For example in research projects the supervisors guide the learners for starting, chapter writing, structure formatting; different types of activities, seminars for implementation of research projects. The educators here simple facilitate and guide the work of the researchers. So here also self-directed learning is put into practice which helps to develop their self-efficacy and self-reliance.

EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

The studies according to the researches done indicate that self-learning definately helps to promote self-efficacy and growth. Its has been suggested that SDL programs be included into educational programs which are appropriate today according to skills required in today's world. Proper tools should be inculcated in the teaching learning strategies. The home assignments should be designed in a way which promote learners self-reliance, autonomy and motivation in learning and achieving success. Its impeded on the educators to encourage and help percolate the skills of self-directed learning across the life span and *Copyright@2023 Scholarly Research Journal for Humanity Science & English Language*

especially that strata of population which have given up on learning. The educators and learners need to be focused for computer and information skills especially required for 21st century. Teachers and learning activities in IT classrooms should focus on ways for promoting self-directed learning amongst learners. The educators should be able to motivate the learners for improving their self-directed learning capacities which has especially gained lot of momentum in the 21st century classrooms.

The curricular has to be redesigned according to the demands of the current century (21st century) that must promote the self directed learning among the students and enable them to move on the road to achievement and success. The concept of self-directed learning is definitely prevailing now if not in clarity but in shadows and helping the learners to be on the road to life- long learning.

CONCLUSION

Last years, especially COVID-19, the pandemic taught each one of us a different aspect of life skill one of them being self-directed learning. Literature around has shown that SDL has a defined role to play in developing students as "Lifelong Learners".

It is basically a philosophy incorporating set of skills that can be taught, learned and acquired. The SDL approach will guide the learners to transform gradually and holistically by developing self-evaluation skills via reflective writing, learning critical-thinking strategies. Further it will also help them to have communication skills, collaborative approach, leadership skills team-building capacity, time-management skills, working with peers and group in a comfortable manner.

SDL is basically a habit of practice wherein the success of the implementation lies in educating the teachers by giving them keen overview of the program and helping the learners to define their learning objective on their own and sharpen their skills. This further helps them in gaining mastery over their subjects and concept building.

So overall the educational environment needs to be reshaped to allow flexibility in the methodology to achieve SDL goals. The factors like readiness of learners, availability of resources are some of the significant components which will influence the success of SDL on a large scale. The pursuit of SDL will definitely lead to a continuum of professional developments in one's career path.

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