Other aspects identified as important in the process of self-directed learning include (Brockett & Hiemstra, 1991; Candy, 1991; Patterson et al., 2002; Young & Baker, 2004):

- Working collaboratively with peers and colleagues (e.g., assistance in goal construction, sharing ideas and feedback)
- Appropriate assessment measures (e.g., assessment by peers or instructors) and adequate self-assessment
- Opportunity to appraise organization/agency at the completion of the work experience
- Continuous reflection
- Critical thinking

Challenges of the Self-directed Learning Approach

Despite the well-documented potential for self-directed learning (Hewitt-Taylor, 2001; Lunyk-Child et al., 2001), this approach comes with challenges for students, work-integrated learning coordinators and instructors. Examples identified in the extant literature include:

- Students’ potential anxieties or unwillingness to embrace a self-directed approach due to a perceived lack of structure (Burnard, 1991; Miflin et al., 2000; Lunyk-Child et al., 2001)
- Relevant integration of technology (Fischer & Scharff, 2010)
- Timing of introduction to self-directed learning (e.g., adapting to this approach in first year vs. fourth year; O’Shea, 2002)
- Feasibility and implementation in particular fields of study or technical skills-based programmes (e.g., nursing, medicine; O’Shea, 2002)

Reflection Questions for Students: Self-directed Learning

Self-management

- What do you intend to learn from your structured work experience?
- How do you plan to achieve these learning outcomes?
- What resources and measures of support do you have available to you?
- What support and assistance are provided to you by your workplace supervisor?
- What are the norms and standards for professional practice within the work organization?
- What expectations do you have for yourself in the workplace?

Self-monitoring

- How will you measure the success of your practice in the workplace?
- How will you receive feedback on your ongoing performance in the workplace?
- What feedback have you received?
- In what ways are you succeeding in the workplace?
- In what areas do you feel challenged?

Motivation

- What topics/material covered in previous courses may relate to your practice in the workplace?
- What skills and abilities do you bring with you to your structured work experience?
- What personal interests do you have that apply to your work experience?
- What are the benefits of completing your professional placement?
- How successful do you expect to be?
- What actions can you take to enhance the collaboration between yourself and your workplace supervisor in directing your learning in the workplace?

- Ability to provide the student with appropriate learning support and guidance related to his or her specific learning goals and plans (Fischer & Scharff, 2010)

Furthermore, it is important to recognize that some tasks and goals may benefit from more structured, teacher-led learning environments instead of self-directed approaches (Gawad et al., 2014; Rosser et al., 2007; Zeng, Woodhouse & Brunt, 2010). For instance, findings from a study conducted by Abbas (2015) demonstrated that among a group of medical students, learners with supervised training made improvements to particular surgical skills (i.e., peg transfer times) faster than did students who engaged in a self-directed approach to learning the task.