

Design for How People Learn: Book Review

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Instructional Design Theory

Summary

Learning experiences are like journeys. The journey starts where the learner is now, and ends when the learner is successful (however that is defined). The end of the journey isn't just knowing more, it's doing more. (Dirksen, 2016, ch1) Dirksen shared the idea to create the learning materials to how the learner learns or using the Learner Centered design. The many aspects of doing so were documented to prove this theory. Design for How People Learn reported unique was to design materials for the learners. Imagine you are going on a trip and you plan to enjoy the actual travel and not just getting to the destination. The gap for instructional design is the travel part. The desired goal is the destination. What will the act of travel look like. Pretend that you can choose different cars with different types of paths per car. For example, one car is the knowledgeable path, the next path skills, motivation, habit, or environment. Possibly the trip is on a train where a variation of these types of cars are now box cars and you can mix the box cars to create even more unique travels with multiple types of paths of travel.

Just as the engineer sees one path, each traveler has their own path in their box car, a different view but they can all come together. At the end of the trip you want all of your passengers to have the same outcome, the same experience even though they were all in different box cars. Somehow you would have to understand what their experiences are before the end of the ride so you can shift and share before the last whistle blew. Sometimes the best trips are the most thought out and well planned to have fun and enjoy plus a mix of relaxation prior to getting to the selected destination. Just as lessons are most achievable when you know the most decisive end goal. During trips we want to remember everything. Some people take a million photos, some videotape and some write journals to remember while others collect keepsakes. Each person has their own way to remember best. As designers we have to know how people remember best and how our minds work to retain the information differently just as travelers like to save their memories.

The entire book shared that we have to get the attention of the learners. I imagine that If I took my family to a trip at a rock museum were all the rocks looked the same and the roads to get there looks similar, they would not only forget the museum and the ride, but would possibly sleep through the entire thing. I would have to find a way to get and keep their attention. In order to know how to keep their

attention, I would first need to know each person's preferences in order to keep their attention. If going to a rock museum were the only choice using the same boring roads, I would need to know what else I can do to keep them entertained and on task. Possibly we would stop off at a hotel to swim or a hiking trip to the river and do some exercise, so they don't drift away on their tablets playing games or on their cell phones texting. With education, you must do the same. Find strategies to keep their attention.

The most common type of learning experience focuses on teaching knowledge. Learn strategies to make this as effective as possible. (Dirksen, 2016, ch 6) This is the part of the trip that is mostly educational content, possibly a map with bullets on what is being learned. I'd like to add here to make it fun to practice and relevant. Learners require practice to develop the skills taught. The fun is important to motivate, or maybe the motivation is a grade, a raise in wage or whatever the ulterior goal is for the student other than learning the materials which could be rewarding all by itself. Now, back on our trip what if the rocks were not just rocks, but gold. They would find the trip more worthy to learn more about the rocks and they would want to hunt for more and more of these little nuggets. If the learners do not get excited about learning and doing more, they are not motivated by gold. As the learners practiced more, they would build habits. If they are not learning more with practice of skills or motivation, then the problem maybe they are needing to move to a different box car and focus more on habits. The same with education, if the students are not having problems with skill, motivation, then maybe it is their habits need changing. We would never try using formal instruction on a train with multiple box cars teaching about how to hunt for gold. Informal or Social Learning Encompasses pretty much any learning that happens outside a formal learning event such as a classroom or an elearning course. (Dirksen, 2016, ch1) I would never imagine teaching how to find gold in a classroom to my family. If I were forced to, I would probably take a virtual trip. It is better to fix the environment rather than the learner. (Dirksen, 2016, ch10)

Finally, the full pockets of treasures and smiles on your families' faces or lack thereof is all you would need to assess if you reached your goal. At the end of your classes you will also know if the knowledge, practices, skills, habits and motivation techniques by evaluating the learners.

Concrete Response

I have to confess; I had a very time with this book report until I was able to find a way to relate the book to a fictional story and make it fun and relative to me. I was not motivated by a point system grade or a discipline knowing I would not receive the grade I would hope for. I really liked the book and thought it was very well written, so It wasn't a boring book. Just the act of writing the report was not interesting. My habits were not out of place. I read the book weeks before the class started. I rented a hotel room away from everyone so I could study. I was simply bored of the thought to report about a book until I made it fun for me and relative.

I remember taking my family on vacations that were educational and boring as ever. Once I began to make them less about me and more about their interests, then they were fun. Why oh why did I think a fun trip to the art museum in Ann Arbor would be fun to them. Every time I tried, they wanted to us by throwing a fit to get negative attention and distract us from our goal. Once we tried taking the children to the Hands On Art and Science Museum, wow, they had no issues. They weren't arguing that they were hungry. We were able to talk about colors, art, and many different educational subjects. It all depended on keeping them motivated, a place to practice their skills, change their habits and then teaching them the knowledge was simple.

Reflection

The book is missing suggestions or studies for a huge problem in my profession that I would have liked to see added... what if the student simply does not want to take the class and no amount of motivation, skills, habits, practice or ANYTHING will stop them from the self-destruction of not completing a course. Some people seem to sabotage themselves. Discipline of taking children away from parents who do not take classes for parenting, divorce parents who do not take co-parenting courses does not even work. The parents think they can continue to not take the classes. If they do show up to the class, they fight the entire curriculum. How do you teach the unteachable? How the content is taught does not matter at this point. If the class was written for a novice or too experienced a level I could understand, but we don't even get to that point. If that was the case, good scaffolding acts like training wheels; it allows learners to accomplish the difficult task in a safely supported way. Ideally, it doesn't reduce learners to

bystanders but gives them the support they need to complete tasks they wouldn't otherwise be able to do. (Dirksen, 2016, ch10)

Once you tell the parent that we can approve a grant, then they don't have a car. Okay, we can do it online, well I don't have internet. It can be taught over the phone (as you are on the phone with them) I just need to talk to my attorney again. If your learners are having to force themselves to pay attention, there is a limit to how long they are going to be able to exert the control necessary to do so. (Dirksen, 2016, ch10) These parents are not forcing themselves. It's more that they refuse to learn how to be an acceptable parent or co-parent. They simply refuse. The amount of abuse that happens to the children is not even enough. The amount of possible future problems that will hurt the growth of the children does not stop them. How can an educator get through to those who cannot see the value? It is as if these people are okay doing what they know is wrong. "So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin." James 4:17 ESV

Action

After reading Design For How People Learn, I am going to work on the scaffolding process mentioned in my reflection. I have had many parents say they knew something that I was teaching and it bored them. Even though these parents knew the material they continued to act negatively to the other parent, so I really didn't care if they knew the material at all. I could have however used the scaffolding method to present the material in a different manner. My plan is to change the wording and ask what material they know in the self-assessment process as well as ask the judge to determine which lessons are needed from the evidence shown in the courtroom.

Examples of ways to scaffold:

- Reduce the complexity of the environment. Let's say you want to use an elearning simulation to teach someone about the controls in a plane cockpit, but it's too overwhelming for a novice learner. To scaffold their learning experience, you could fade out all but a few of the key controls for the first few scenarios, and then gradually add controls back in as the learner becomes more proficient and competent.
- Use walkthroughs. Have the learner go through the whole process with a simplified case. For example, if you want to teach students about the scientific research process, have them work through a very simple research problem with step-by-step guidance and pretty

obvious results, and then move on to more complex cases. Another example: I once created a fairly complicated environment for salespeople to learn a specific sales process by selling technical products to several virtual customers. Their very first scenario was a short and slightly silly example where they sold snowsuits in Hawaii, which gave them the opportunity to learn the interface and the sales process without worrying about the technical content right away. • Provide supports. If possible, embed easily accessed references in the experience. For example, have samples, definitions, or help documentation right at hand so the learners can have the support they need while in the midst of trying to accomplish the task.

(Dirksen, 2016, ch10)

With this year's classes, approximately 7 families, I will make the process of the classroom more understood and less complex. Use walkthroughs so the parents can work on pretend situations or role plays prior to asking them to perfect their own situations and link the content to video supports for the materials instead of having the videos another assignment allowing the parents to chose to watch if they need it instead of it being a have to. I will go back and compare to the outcomes for last year and identify what steps worked and which did not.

“And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.”

Galatians 6:9 ESV

References

Dirksen, J. (2016). Design for how people learn (Second edition.). San Francisco: New Riders.