

Restorative Learning: A Theory, An Application, and A Powerful Effect

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Abstract

Many adult learners' early school experiences leave them with learning insecurities that inhibit them from taking advantage of workforce and other educational training opportunities. This paper documents the inception, refinement and application of a theory of restorative learning that reestablishes an individual's self-efficacy and motivation to strive to learn. The Interactive Learning Model (1994), a metacognitive based theory of restorative learning, addresses how individuals process the world and self-regulate to become successful learners. Its first years of testing (1994-2010), found the theory viable and its process-driven implementation, (the Let Me Learn Process®) equally effective in helping adults understand themselves as learners and leverage their new empowerment to achieve sustainable career goals. From 1994 to the present the research on this form of restorative learning has operated as a continuous chain of studies spanning the EU, US, Australia, and India documenting its use with over 100,000 previously under-served adults. This paper presents the effects of bringing restorative learning into adult learners' educational, work, and life contexts through the use of a web-based app. Participants in this session will experience how this model of restorative learning contributes to transformational change in adult learners and increases their ability to adapt to new cultural, social, training, and workplace learning environments.

Introduction

Learning begins with our first breath. By the time we enter formal schooling, we are experienced learners. We are not, however, experienced students. The result of the disconnect between an individual's way of learning and the teacher's expectations, leaves the learner with a damaged sense of self which is carried into adulthood and inhibits his/her willingness to return to formal schooling or professional training for fear that once again he/she will experience the same diminution of their personhood as experienced during their earlier years of schooling.

This paper reports how individuals using the Interactive Learning Theory (ILT) can regain their lost sense of value as learners. It traces a 25-year history of restorative learning, including the development of an instrument (Learning Connection Inventory, (LCI)), and describes the process whereby individuals restore their loss of identity as learners. Finally, it relates a series of applications in which this process has been successfully used to empower learners to persist in achieving greater success in the classroom and beyond.

A theory of restorative learning

The ILT focuses on a learner's patterned mental processes. It posits that a learner's patterned learning processes "talk" within the learner's mind (driven by metacognition) as one completes learning tasks. Each patterned mental process is made up of three strands: The cognitive strand of mental acuity, memory, range of experiences, and ability to work with abstractions or concreteness; the conative strand of learned skill, pace, autonomy, use of personal "tools" and degree of engaged energy; and the affective strand of feelings, values, and sense of self. The strands communicate with each other mulling over the task, connecting with prior tasks, attending to the task in a timely manner, rehearsing the performance of the task, and ultimately completing the processing of the task.

Fig. 1. A Summary of Interactive Learning Processes adapted from *A Guide to Implementing the Let Me Learn Process* (Johnston, 2001); *Taking Charge* (2014).[2]

	How I think	How I do things	How I feel	What I might say
Sequential Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ I organize information ▪ I analyze data ▪ I break tasks down into steps 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ I make lists ▪ I organize ▪ I plan first, <i>then</i> act 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ I thrive on consistency and dependability ▪ I need things to be tidy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Could I see an example? ▪ I double-check my work ▪ Could we review those directions?
Precise Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ I research information. ▪ I ask <i>lots</i> of questions. ▪ I want to know 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ I challenge statements ▪ I doubt ▪ I prove I am right 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ I thrive on knowledge ▪ I feel good when I am correct 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ I need more information ▪ Let me look up the answer ▪ Did you know?
Technical Reasoning Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ I seek relevance. ▪ Keep it brief ▪ I only want as much information as I need 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ I get my hands on ▪ I tinker ▪ I solve problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ I enjoy knowing how things work ▪ I need concreteness ▪ I don't share my knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ I can do it myself ▪ Let me show you ▪ How will I ever use this in the real world?
Confluent Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ I read between the lines ▪ I think outside the box ▪ I brainstorm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ I take risks ▪ I am not afraid to fail ▪ I talk about things – a lot 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ I enjoy energy ▪ I feel comfortable with failure ▪ I embrace new ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ I say no to lock step tradition. ▪ The rules don't apply to me ▪ I have an idea.....

Those conducting ITL studies with adult learners found that individuals can learn to explain in real time the mental activities occurring within them as they complete learning tasks providing a window on the mind that allows teachers, peers, and mentors to form a supportive relationship whereby they can guide an individual's learning to a successful completion. Case studies of these individuals documented a renewed positive sense of self as a learner as a result of using this approach.

An instrument

The Learning Connections Inventory (LCI), the instrument used to capture each individual's interactive learning processes, was initially tested with 9,000 adults in the US, UK, IT, CNA, and MT [1]. Additional studies over a four-year period tested the instrument with 5000 secondary students in the US, Australia, and Great Britain. Seven tests of validity and reliability were conducted on the LCI instrument [3].

An application

Whether working with early leavers, adults seeking diploma completion, displaced workers, the unemployed or under-employed, military veterans, or those seeking a new career path, the method for implementing the process begins with completing the Learning Connections Inventory (LCI). Originally conducted using paper and pencil instruments, the LCI is now embedded within a web-based technology, "The Personal Learning Coach (PLC)."

Using the PLC, individuals complete the LCI, receive validated results, and begin their journey towards restorative learning. This includes receiving information about their specific combination of learning processes, a comparison between their learning processes and the learning task, and specific strategies to help the learner adapt his/her learning processes to the task. These strategies allow adult learners to work autonomously to complete math, reading, writing, study, and work tasks at home, at work, or in a classroom. The PLC also guides individuals on how to match their learning processes to potential career paths.

A powerful effect

The restorative learning approach has been used as an intervention with displaced workers under the auspices of an EU Grundtvig Project with work sites in Slovenia, Italy, England, Netherlands, Czech

Republic, and Malta [4]. It has also been tested with employees in a toy manufacturing plant in Malta and with a Fortune 500 international chemical corporation manufacturing plant designated to close. In the latter case, the plant's personnel were required to learn lab protocols, institute highly precise quality control processes, and revise documentations methods that had lagged behind corporate standards. 75% of the individuals in the pilot self-identified themselves as non-learners or training resistant prior to the implementation of the pilot. Within two years of using the ILT restorative process, the chemical plant's operations stabilized and it was re-designated as a financially productive plant [5].

The use of the LCI within the restorative learning process has played a central role within four EU co-funded projects (SPICES, e-SPICES, BRIDGE-IT, and RADAR) each focused on adults-in-mobility, i.e. migrants and adults-in-contact-with-mobility. Data from each project indicate that the use of the LCI assisted instructors and participants in gaining enhanced intercultural communication. [6].

Fig. 2. From SPICES Guidelines, p.168 (Klein 2007; cf. also Klein 2016).

Formal Greetings

ACTIVITY 4

Categories	Description
General or specific training objective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The participants learn to distinguish different types of formal greetings within culturally different ways of introducing oneself. Introduce paraverbal characteristics.
Procedures	Identify different types of body language that can be observed
Training methods	Plenary work
Time input	45-60 minutes
Notes - instructor awareness:	<p>Discussion about how one greets in the context country and in the participants' country of origin; the different types of greetings within different situations and/or different contexts are considered; cultural differences in interactions in the country of context and in the participants' country of origin; audio/video-recordings from the media may be put together by the trainer.</p> <p>The trainer needs to make sure to involve everyone. Those who lead with technical reasoning might find it difficult to participate in discussions and they might give the impression that they are not interested. On the contrary those with high score in confluence if not directed well might derail the discussion. Those who have three or all four patterns in the use first level might need a firm discussion leader not to take over the discussion.</p>

Apart from using the LCI with participants, the project leaders used the LML restorative process to construct the train-the-trainers' Guidelines. For each learning activity instructions were developed on how to deal with the task. A 2020 project [7] applied for will incorporate the use of the PLC and thereby add ways in which project participants can expand their access to the LML restorative learning opportunities.

Conclusion

Learning lies at the heart of our sense of self as individuals. As a result, early school experiences that result in feeling misunderstood and under-valued, remain with us into adulthood. The Interactive Learning Theory (ILT), the LCI, and the LML Process® were developed twenty-five years ago to address this need [8]. Now embedded within the web-based app, these continue to function as a tool that launches the restorative learning process. As a result of this person-specific process, individuals learn to self-regulate their feelings and learning behaviors. The future for restorative learning is in its infancy. Looking forward we should consider using data accumulated through the PLC to increase our understanding of the mental processes used in learning and thereby have a more complete basis for understanding and identifying the potential of all learners.

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