Chapter 2

Authentic Learner Profiling Based on Human Drives and Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivations

ABSTRACT

An "authentic" learner is one who is true to their core identity through their expressions and actions in the world. What informs this authenticity includes various sources, from both nature (biology) and nurture (socio-cultural factors, social experiences, and personality), and others. An important part of learner effort in a learning context comes from an individual's own (1) internal drives and (2) intrinsic and extrinsic motivations, as expressed in a particular context. Ideally, people express their authentic (learning) selves fully (within reasonable constraints). This work summarizes some of the research literature on human drives and motivations and analyzes how these may be understood per learner and what these may mean for the design of teaching and learning.

INTRODUCTION

Aristotle (384 – 322 BCE): "The cultivation of the intellect is man's highest good and purest happiness."

In learner-centered design, the learning experiences and related contents are informed by the learner: their growth and developmental needs, their intrinsic motivations, their extrinsic motivations, their views of the world, their self-identity, and their unique aspects, among other factors. The learner is seen in the context of a humanistic framework where their well-being and needs come to the fore. Their expression of their "true core self" is important. How teachers view and understand their respective learners as whole persons may affect how they teach, interact, intercommunicate, and support / not support the learners. An "authentic" learner is one who is true to his / her internal self, as the individual or "ego" perceives it.

This work explores the profiling of an authentic learner (in a generally universal sense), based on the research literature, to better understand what this might suggest for learning design. Some initial implications on pedagogical designs are shared.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In this context, the teaching and learning is understood as temporal and fleeting, while the learner is persistent and long-term. Ideally, the fleeting and impermanent designed learning experience should not negatively shut down learning for the learner, who is developing a sense of his / her true or authentic self. The learning experience should not conflict with the learners' sense of personal well-being but align with it. What is meant by human well-being?

One researcher defined six factors for psychological well-being in adult life, including "self-acceptance, purpose in life, environmental mastery, positive relationships, autonomy, (and) personal growth" (Ryff, Aug. 1995, p. 100). A follow-on research study found that needs vary based on age differences and time-of-life (Ryff & Keyes, 1995). Their provision conclusion: "there is more to being well than feeling happy and satisfied with life" (Ryff & Keyes, 1995, p. 725).

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