Higher Education Learning Framework Matrix

An evidence-informed model for university learning

The Higher Education Learning Framework (HELF) is a research project of the Science of Learning Research Centre (SLRC), a Special Research Initiative of the Australian Research Council.

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HIGHER EDUCATION LEARNING FRAMEWORK (HELF) PROJECT

BACKGROUND

This project aimed to develop an evidence-informed model for university learning in the form of a Higher Education Learning Framework. This was achieved through a synthesis of existing frameworks, literature, and research on the topic along with a set of national and international expert interviews offering the latest thinking on university learning. This framework has been developed through a Science of Learning lens that threads together the often-disparate thinking in education, neuroscience, and psychology to offer a convergent framework on effective learning in higher education that can broadly guide the higher education sector.

The HELF Matrix is a 1-page overview outlining the Teacher, Student, and Assessment implications of the of the HELF Principles.

Seven HELF Principles have been proposed:

1. ‘A university education provides a learning experience that broadens students knowing and being for life beyond the classroom’
2. ‘Learning occurs in context, and context can be used to enhance the learning experience’
3. ‘Emotions play a role in how and why students learn’
4. ‘Leverage the social dynamics of learning to enhance the learning experience’
5. ‘Challenge and difficulty can be beneficial for students’ learning process’
6. ‘When students employ effective methods of thinking, and understand how they learn, they can improve the way they learn’
7. ‘Learning is built on prior knowledge and engages students in deep and meaningful thinking and feeling’

NOTES

• The principles are not prescriptive but merely suggestive, depending on the appropriate learning/teaching conditions. For instance, a high-quality learning experience does not require all the principles to be addressed.

• The order of presentation of the principles is not intended to be sequential or hierarchical.

• As to be expected, all the principles have some degree of inter-relatedness due to the inherent nature of learning itself.
HELFWORKINGGROUP

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A university education provides a learning experience that broadens students’ knowledge and being for life beyond the classroom.

**IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHERS**

- Consider students’ future career paths and their time at university as an integrated experience, predicting your teaching towards their values and their learning experiences not as ends in themselves.
- Explore with students how understanding a course or degree program can influence their self-identity, and encourage students to be open to exploring how it impacts upon their professional lives and career trajectory.
- Discuss with students how the broader contexts of community and society influence students and how they can influence community and society.
- Explore with students how their learning experience can be influenced by their beliefs, perceptions, social interactions, and behaviors inside and outside of the classroom.

- Avoid making lectures as one absolute course of knowledge, but rather argumentations as facilitators of social interactions and debates. This can be a way to develop your epistemological awareness that discipline knowledge.
- Focus on understanding the nature of the goals you set yourself around learning and thinking.
- Review the nature of the goals you set yourself around learning and thinking, and seek to explore what value-oriented goals can offer you as opposed to only performance-oriented goals.
- Appraise how you think you can influence the viability of your activities, and seek to explore strategies for emotional self-regulation and resilience.
- Encourage students to develop a mindset that embraces both success and failure, and cultivate a culture of shared values and beliefs.

**IMPLICATIONS FOR ASSESSMENT**

- Explore ways assessment can be contextualized so that it reflects more authentic and real-world applications.
- Provide various types of assessments for students to respond to.
- Explore multiple choice questions that have the potential for being contextualized in a similar way.
- When considering the type of assessment item to employ in a course, consider the objectives of the assessment.
- There can be exam systems of educational anxiety.
- Utilizing informal assessment can be very beneficial for student learning. This is even more true when that allows for individual assessment.
- Consider continuity between student experiences and contextualized assessment item.
- Explore ways assessment can be contextualized so that it reflects more authentic and real-world applications.

- Explore with students both their learning and assessment together. This means that authentic and contextualized assessments feed as both authentic and contextualized feedback.

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