

Learning to Learn by Doing

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There are many ways in which people learn. People may learn by observation. By observing the world around them, they can see certain patterns and make more sense of the world and of their daily lives. People also learn through action. One remembers better by putting what they learn into practice. One can also learn through imitation, and one remembers better through repetition, whether it is auditory, visual, or repetition through action.

People learn best depending on what type of learner they are, and everyone may be different. There are three types of learners: auditory, visual, and kinetic. Auditory learners learn best by hearing information. Visual learners learn best by seeing information through pictures or graphs. Kinetic learners learn best by using their hands and actually doing activities to help them understand the information better.

Learning doesn't necessarily have to take place in the classroom. People grew up learning from their parents and from their activities at home. School is just one part of their socialization. One can learn individually or in groups. One learns best if they can apply it to their everyday lives, and use that information on a daily basis.

Learning also involves reflection and reassessment. One can learn by making mistakes. One can learn through experience. By reevaluating the situation and oneself, one can be better prepared in the future if they are encountered with the same situation.

People teach others in many different ways. There are those who give positive reinforcements, or rewards, when they want someone to learn/do (or not do) something. This process creates a desire for the reward, and thus the person learning mechanically does so for the purpose of getting the reward and not for the learning experience itself. There are those who give negative reinforcements, or punishments, when they want someone to learn/do (or not do) something. This process creates a fear of the punishment, and thus one learns/does something not for the sake of learning, but rather because of the fear. In classroom settings, grades can be either a positive or negative reinforcement, depending on what grade the student earns.

Some people teach through advice. Some people teach by lecturing someone, some may teach by asking questions. Some people teach by showing them something. Some people teach by having the student/learner do something and by getting experience themselves. During our time at UCLA in the past three or four years, certain concepts of teaching and learning upheld the traditional status quo of academia. The majority of classes are still taught using a top-down method with professors and teaching assistants as the "all-knowing" guides to our education. This is oftentimes a problematic method of teaching because professors may teach according to their own research and views, as well as ignoring several relevant subjects to the students. Although discussions sections are designed in theory to promote thought and debate, it is usually a time where the teaching assistant simply reiterates the lectures by the professors. Taking notes during lectures

also supports the conventional teaching style of professors, along with the repetitive auditory and visual learning styles. Yet, this type of teaching and learning is not the most valuable in several situations.

However, different experiences inside and outside the classroom have also changed the way we perceive learning and teaching. Certain discussion sections and classes in the seminar format help to facilitate a more interactive and effective learning style. Receiving the perspectives and opinions of others is very important to the ongoing learning process. We have discovered that many times the best way to learn something is to teach it to someone else. This can be seen in working in groups effectively to do class projects, or in study groups. Yet, at such a large and prestigious university, teamwork is sometimes hindered by competition. For example, from our past classes, Asian American Studies professors often strive to challenge the past, bring in new perspectives, and promote the relations of classmates.

Besides learning by memorization and repetition, we have also been exposed to the successful learning style of experience, through our work in on-campus student organizations. As a large, public university, UCLA has enormous diversity and several resources that allow the proliferation of student groups according to one's interests and/or ethnicity. This hands-on work approach has allowed us to learn leadership skills, communication skills, how to be strategic, and work with others by first hand experience. Learning from other peers that we can connect to and readily interact with is refreshing and inspiring, compared to the traditional distant learning from the single view of a professor.

In the next three to four years, there are many ways that our assumptions about learning and teaching can change. We will be entering the work force and essentially, "the real world." We are no longer in classrooms. Thus, most all the things we will learn will be from experience or in education that we seek out on our own. For the past 16 years of our lives, the path we should take had been pretty much pre-determined for us. In the next stages of our lives, we can assume that the things we learn are going to be much different because we will no longer be with professors with set curriculums about what to teach us, we will not be using scantrons and bluebooks in order to be tested on what we know. It's generally accepted that we never truly stop learning, but in the case of life after college, the things we learn will be directly relevant to our lives because the general education will mostly be over and we will only be involving ourselves with either things we're interested in or things that we need to know for our occupations.

When we think back about our education for the past 16 years, we don't think of learning by doing, we think about learning by reading and listening. This will surely change in the next stages of our lives. We will be going from students living in a bubble from the responsibilities of the real world because our parents are there to essentially help us along the way to taking our first steps to becoming independent, self-sustaining adults. Our path is no longer set. The next three to four years are the most unique time in our lives because we make the transition into our own niche in life. We will essentially be trying to gain grounding about our chosen fields. We think that "life" will change our assumptions

about learning and teaching because now that our time will begin to be increasingly more important, we need to learn and teach things to people at a much more urgent pace, essentially weeding out frivolous details. We have less time to learn things in the future because we are no longer going to be full-time students with learning as our only priority; we will have our plates full with making ends meet. The environment outside of school is primed for showing us new ways to teach and learn because the teacher to student relationship will be less defined and in many ways, we will be teach ourselves how to live.