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.
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Learning in a multitude of contexts is one of the key characteristics of this new learning framework. It provides opportunities for students to engage with knowledge and ideas in both formal and informal learning contexts, as well as in their own personal and cultural environments. This approach recognizes the diverse ways in which individuals construct and make sense of their learning experiences.

The framework emphasizes the importance of fostering self-regulated learning, where students are encouraged to take an active role in their own learning process. This involves developing a sense of autonomy and independence in learning, which enables students to take responsibility for their own learning and to become more effective life-long learners. The framework also highlights the importance of understanding the learning process and its various components, such as motivation, strategies, and metacognition.

Another key aspect of the framework is the integration of feedback and assessment practices. The framework recommends providing students with timely, constructive feedback that is specific, relevant, and action-oriented. It also advocates for the use of self-assessment and peer assessment as tools for promoting reflection and self-regulation.

In summary, the higher education learning framework proposed here is designed to support students in becoming more effective and engaged learners. It recognizes the importance of context and experience in shaping learning outcomes, and provides a flexible and adaptable approach to education that can be tailored to the needs of individual learners.