

09.2019

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Editorial

Kurt Ewald Lindley

The Captain of this ship

Choosing where to sail this vessel based only on the gift of people's words; their stories of learning are wind in our sails.

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Rebecca crafts the stories of those that choose to share them in this space. Everyone needs a good wordsmith to bring messages from the page into people's minds.

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Making readers look more intently at the stories being shared. Drawing meaning from your words through images, layout and style. Framing the learning with a desire for more.

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09.2019

ISSUE ONE

The
Learning Scientist

On 1 June 2019, the idea behind this magazine was born. Four short months later, we have become a reality.

Our desire was to create a magazine focused on sharing stories around the Science of Learning, told by practitioners and drawing upon research in Psychology, Neuroscience and Sociology. We set out to share conversations with the people understand the theories and apply them in their practice.

We are for anyone working in a learning and development capacity across Education, Corporate Learning or People Development and Performance Sport. Each issue, collated and created with you in mind, will include stories from these worlds, written by the people working in these places.

We look to share insights and principles in an easy to digest way, a practical read that adds value to your work. Ultimately, our desire is to become a trusted source for all things learning and people development.

This is very much a social enterprise in its nature, powered only by the investment of its community and the kindness of skilled practitioners. A massive 'thank you' must go to Liam Swift for setting us on our path with a design concept. Thank you, sir.

Our intention is to use the skills of this community to build an awesome product, which in itself will be a showcase for their work.

We are a digital magazine with gifted content, created by an invested

community.

The Learning Scientist Magazine is a platform for a community of interested and invested people, born from an interest in all things people development.

Please let us know your thoughts. Get in touch with us at thelearningscientistmag@gmail.com and shared your 'it could be even better, if' ideas.

If you would like to contribute or subscribe, enter your details here <https://www.learningscientistmag.com>

We are not funded in any way and no money has crossed hands to make this happen, just the investment of people's time; we are powered by our own drive to get stories out there, showcasing the thoughts, research and results of theories and practice with independent contributions from across the education, learning and development, and performance sport environments.

It's a place to show up and celebrate each element of the magazine, from its contributors to our editor and designer, all of whom have gifted their time to allow this magazine to exist beyond an idea on a page.

The opinions expressed in each story of the magazine are those of the respective authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of those at the learning scientist (editor, designer and production team). We accept no responsibility for the opinions expressed.

THE ENERGY COST OF BEING A LEARNER

Kurt Ewald Lindley

Kurt Lindley looks at the energy cost of learning and debated whether 'getting beyond your comfort zone' should come with a health warning.

How much is too much?

This story has been hanging in my head for a few weeks now, triggered by recent posts on social media regarding the view that:

"The best learning happens when you are out of your comfort zone"

To a degree this is true, but you cannot sit people in this space without acknowledging the 'energy cost' and the impact of this on the learner. It's not as easy as saying:

"To grow you must get beyond your comfort"

I'm sure we have all come across the concentric circles diagrams that illustrates this concept, the inner circle being comfort and the outer circles relating to things like fear, learning and growth (I sadly didn't have the copyright to put one here, hence the description, but you know the one). I agree in principle with this concept, but we must hang a health warning with this.

It has to be recognised that to be outside of your comfort zone for prolonged periods of time does have an energy cost and as with all energy costs scenarios, we need to make provision for energy replacement/replenishment. Therefore, learning events need to be designed in a way

that allows for this. I often describe this approach using the concept of a music album... Events need their own melody. As with the 12 or so songs on an album which mix pace, volume, sound etc, so should the day(s) you create for learners. You need the equivalent of high impact songs to draw people in and challenge them, as well as more slow tempoed ones that allow people to drift in their own thinking and reflection. Hitting us hard with one approach only will inevitably burn us out or we will become numb to the input. Simply dialling up and down on the volume could be enough to renegade learners, so build in your sound/noise breaks.

Here are some thoughts for learners (like me) and those that design and deliver learning.

Strategies for the Learner

1. Prime yourself - where possible, read what you can about the things you are to learn before the event. This will not only give you context, but also provide a base of information from which you can draw upon when your head is struggling with new information. It may just help you to build the full picture when you are presented with parts of the puzzle but feel something is missing for you.

2. Trust in the process - at times, events are designed to put you in a

situation of discomfort for a purpose. Either this has been seen as the best way for you to feel something or the order - whilst seemingly out of order - will eventually lead to a greater retention of learning. Trust it will come.

3. Calm your inner voice - there is no doubt that you will hear yourself talking internally at times, referencing that you don't get it or that you need more information, or simply seeking reassurance. Calm this inner voice by identifying what the primary challenge you are feeling actually is, then act on this.

4. Ask for clarity - this is at your power. Often, the person at the front of the room knows the path you will be taking and has a well thought-out methodology to lead you there, so it may be simply that you step forward and ask for clarity. It is ok to raise your hand and check something that isn't clear (often others in the room will benefit from this too).

5. Accept ambiguity - I'd say this is probably the hardest of all the strategies to do, but you may need to accept that there will be a level of ambiguity within what you are doing or learning for a period of time and that the light bulb will perhaps only appear when the event is concluding. However if it hasn't appeared by then, you must ask for help/guidance/advice.

Kurt Lindley - Owner of Be More Learning and Development South African born, Yorkshire bred lover of learning. Curious human and blogger of life stories, with the simple endeavour to unleash the potential within people. Self branded #LazyDyslexic is focused on developing people to deliver awesome performances.

Strategies for the Deliverer

1. Listen to questions - not just the words but the tone, intonation, pace etc. Hearing what is happening beyond people's words will help you get a measure of things like how much confidence it took to ask the question, how important the question is and how important the answer is. With this, you can respond more in tune with the personal needs of the learner, ultimately reducing anxiety and reassuring.

2. Watch the room - over time, pay attention to body language, volume of contribution, between individual's conversations, openness to sharing, etc. With this, you can build a sense of the 'types' of learner you have. However, don't stereotype but instead use this as information and check for accuracy through subtle interactions with learners during the course of a workshop.

3. Have ample downtime - yes, I appreciate you have content to get through and people 'need to know this stuff', but you telling them and moving swiftly through things at a pace beyond their ability to acquire and internalise information is not going to help anyone. You may feel better for getting through things, but learners may feel lost. Have time for unstructured individual and paired reflection or simply time for people to talk to you when no one else is listening.

4. Don't think that because this worked before, it will work today - I know this is rule 101 but we must remind ourselves that every learner and with it learner group is different and within each group you will have outliers that see the world through a very different lens to you or 'the norm group'. If these outliers have been labelled as such in the past, they may well retreat and hide or conversely own the label as it is safer to be forward with it than to be re-labelled again.

In every session, start from ground zero with what you thought you knew.

5. Build bonds between learners - I advocate this in all situations. You are but one deliverer (or two if you are lucky). Trying to service the

individual needs beyond the course is going to be time intensive and you may not be able to respond to this situation. Therefore, make deliberate efforts to connect learners to each other, this way you increase the bonding of learners and with it the likelihood that they become a self-supporting cohort. There is great power in supporting peers through challenges, including hearing parallel challenges from others that relate to your world. Normalise the act of asking for guidance from those in the room.

Oh and if I'm checking my phone in your workshop, I may not be disengaging because I am choosing not to be attentive. In fact, I may be:

1. Checking the meaning of a word or term you have used that I don't understand and am afraid to ask about.

2. Deliberately disengaging for self-care reasons because I am cognitively drained and need to metaphorically step out before I step back in.

3. You may have triggered a memory that I feel I need to recall and revisit to better appreciate what's happening in front of me and the answer is somewhere on my phone.

One last thing, I promise. To conclude, here are my strategies for replenishing energy:

- Explore a new idea or new way of thinking
- Do something completely new and non-routine
- Connect with friends and family, sharing novel experiences
- Use one of your talents or strengths to help someone else

If you like these rambling lines, please feel free to touch base with me via @CoachDeveloper on Twitter or use good old email at kurt@bemorelnd.co.uk.

Happy learning people.

David Feeney – Lecturer of Education and post 16 teacher trainer. Interested in utilising technology to support teaching and learning and improving mental well being in education. Dedicated to preparing people for a life in one of the most rewarding professions. Occasional golf player and mountain bike rider.



I have been working as a teacher trainer in an FE college for over 5 years now. In this time, I have had to manage the expectations of trainee teachers in regards to what they expect our sector to be like to work in.

Many gain their opinions from asking others what working in the FE & Skills sector is like for them, but herein lies a big problem with teacher training and critical thinking in general.

How can you possibly decide on what career you would like to undertake by only asking others what they think of working in the sector? Everyone is different and what someone else might hate about the job, for example too much student contact (can you believe some teachers think this?), might be the sole reason someone else chooses that career and continues to enjoy it.

This leads to a trust issue overall. In one of the first sessions I have with my trainee teachers, I ask a very simple question which is often answered quickly and confidently by all my learners.

“Why should you trust anything that I say?”

- Answers include:
- We trust the college hired the right person for this job.
 - I trust you as you are well qualified
 - I trust you as you have been doing this job for 5 years

- And my favourite,
- I trust you because I’m paying for a service and some laws dictate what I should expect from my tuition fee.

Of course, confidence soon turns to bewilderment when I inform students all of the above answers are incorrect. And here is why. First of all, a fundamental aspect of studying at a postgraduate level is the development of critical thinking

and analysis. Which brings me onto the second aspect here, which is ensuring trainees make their own minds up on whether they can trust anything I say and they shouldn’t be relying on only others opinions to form their own opinion.

The once confident learners suddenly go the other way now and say they won’t ever trust anything I say and this is the result that I want. I want learners to make a judgement on me and develop a working relationship before deciding if they can trust what I say. I mean when you think about it, why on earth would you trust everything a person you have just met tells you? Isn’t this the basis of most scams?

A great example is some feedback on a teaching observation. I might say “Have you considered using some digital quiz app here instead of paper as this will make it easier to assess and track learning progress in real-time and not after the session”.

Now, I use this in teaching and say how do you know whether you should follow this advice or not, how do you know if I’m some sort of guru of teaching or not. Simple – you have to put my statement to the test. Only in following the advice and reflecting on the change can you then begin to develop a sense of trust in my advice. If you use the advice and it works, then you begin to trust what you have been told in regards to advice, although this can again cause an issue. You can experience the danger of falling in the trust trap. Does this now mean you will instantly trust every piece of advice I may ever give you, without question? Well, you shouldn’t. I’m only human after all and what I think will work with your learners is exactly that, it is just what I think. What if you think differently or don’t agree with using a digital quiz app? In that case, then great, question it, don’t rely on my opinion. As before, we are all different and it might not work for you, you might

have something better and that’s great, because I want to know about it.

You can see some trainees starting to turn now in an inquisitive mode. I ask them questions to challenge their original beliefs.

How do you know the college has hired the right person, have you checked their hiring record?

I have told you I’m well qualified but how do you know I hold all the qualifications I have told you I have, have you seen the certificates?

How can you say that me doing this job for five years automatically ensures I’m doing a good job, have you seen my appraisals? Are you aware of my success and retention rates?

What do you know about consumer law and the office for students?

Here I go in for the kill and ask them why I’m doing this. While normally the first answer is something like “I really don’t know as my head is mashed and I don’t understand if I’m meant to trust you or question you?” In the end many realise this is simply a lesson on how to think for yourselves, without turning into a conspiracy hermit who lives in the forest in a cabin and doesn’t have a phone in case the government can track them.

My job as a teacher trainer is to teach my students/trainee teachers to think for themselves. This isn’t a method for being lazy and making learners do everything, sometimes you just need to show learners where to look but not tell them what to see.

Now learners can see that asking someone if they enjoy working at a college is not the sole manner of establishing whether that is a great place to work. One learner even goes to critical thinking Utopia and asks “Well after all this, why should we believe what someone tells us about working at a college?”

What I hope most people take from this, whatever role they work in, is that while someone may offer up a great idea, a way to move forward or an opinion, it is not particularly prudent to simply accept this as pure fact and base any decisions made purely on this. Have a conversation about it, ask questions, listen to others and contribute as best as you can. Only when you have fully and critically explored a concept or idea can you move forward with it maximising its chance of success.

David Feeney on **Critical Thinking:**

Why should you trust anything I say?





Lucy Wake is a Leadership Development Consultant and Coach, who partners with clients in designing and implementing bespoke solutions involving leadership development, coaching facilitation and training. She loves creating those light bulb moments that lead people to feeling more confident and capable in their roles. Here she shares an approach to discussing diversity.



The Trusted Ten: Why it's good to look at who is influencing us in life

I love spending time with my friends. It's what holds me together when I'm having tough times and where I can share joy when life is going well. The belly-laughs we experience are good for the soul and I feel blessed to have the most fantastic circle of girlfriends who have similar lives to me and truly understand me. I know the ones I can confide in and the ones who might let something slip out when the group are a few Proseccos in.

One friend and I have often talked about 'our personal board of directors'. She's not in my closest set of friends, the ones I share weekends away with and have coffee with at least once a week. But she has a prime seat on my board of directors. We've worked together before and she gets me. I know she'll offer me an alternative view and challenge my thinking. Kick my ass when it's needed. She also champions me, supports me and has the utmost faith in me. She is hugely influential and valued. It strikes me that, in lots of ways (age aside), we are very similar.

I was working with a team of talented managers recently and I wanted them to think about the people they have around them, linking to unconscious bias and diversity. A challenge was how to get them thinking about the topic without attempting to cover up their biases because they felt it

would be the right thing to do. So, without introduction to the session, I gave them a sheet of paper I'd prepared and asked them to jot down their 'trusted ten'; the people in their lives who they would turn to, who would have their backs. The paper was folded and secured with a paper-clip, so that all they could see was the column where the names would be written.

When each had got their list, I asked them to remove the paper-clip and unfold the paper, so that they could see the further columns marked on the page. The columns were headed:

- Gender
- Nationality
- Age
- Ethnicity
- Education
- Religion
- Professional background
- Sexual orientation
- Disability

I then asked them to reflect on their trusted ten. It was up to them how they used the form. They could tick boxes, use a scoring mechanism or just look at it and ponder. After a few minutes we had an interesting discussion. Here are some of the questions I asked:

- How did you choose your ten?
- How much are your trusted ten like you/different to you?
- Do those who are more like you have a greater/lesser/similar importance to others?
- What do you think has led to

you having diversity/lack of diversity in your group?

- What would be the benefits of having greater diversity in your group?
- Does it matter if you haven't got a diverse group?

It was a great way to introduce a discussion around unconscious bias (and specifically here affinity bias) and diversity. While most of the group had listed people mostly like themselves, one had a real cross-section of people. It was interesting to compare how they'd got to who they'd chosen. The person with the most diverse group had grown up in an area of high ethnic diversity. Had this conditioned them more for seeking out differences in others we wondered. For some members of the group, it was quite a shock to discover how limited their individual world was.

When Robert Caldini refers to 'liking' in his six principles for persuasion, he describes how we like people who are similar to us and are more easily persuaded by people we like. In his book 'Empathy. Why it matters and how to get it', Roman Krznaric talks about the likelihood that we will find it easier to empathise with people who are similar to us. When the television appeal is aired showing emaciated children in an impoverished country, we are likely to feel moved. But when the local news reports of a young child

tragically killed in an awful accident in our hometown, the emotion we feel is usually greater. We are drawn to and relate more easily to people who are similar to us. We tend to have greater positive regard, cooperation and empathy to 'in-group members' compared with 'out-group members'. This can unconsciously extend to who makes up our trusted ten. Or maybe we consciously seek out people who are like us? Does it matter if we do? And if so, at what cost?

I shared the principle of the personal board of directors with my group of managers and asked them whether it would be the same group as their trusted ten. I.e. who are the people who guide and influence you most in life? Members of this board are not always elected by yourself. When I reflected on this with my friend, I identified that someone had infiltrated my board, and was taking an influential position that was not healthy. I was listening to

them even though they didn't have my best interests at heart. Once identified, they soon got sacked. All metaphorically of course. No P45s were issued. I just started listening to the people who were wiser and interesting, some with different views to mine but happy to have the debate. I then asked my group of managers to consider the diversity within their teams. These are some of the questions I asked:

- What are the benefits/challenges of having diversity within teams?
- How much does it matter if a team isn't diverse? What could they do about it?
- Is it about seeking diversity in the areas I've listed, or is it better to focus on other differences such as Belbin's team roles, De Bono's thinking styles or varying strengths?
- Is diversity more important for some teams/roles than others, e.g. in public service where the team would be better

if it reflected its customers/community?

The trusted ten is a great activity to start all this thinking and discussion. Outcomes for learners include:

- Greater awareness of the existence of unconscious bias and in particular how affinity bias influences us
- Increased self-awareness of who are their influencers in life/work (directly or indirectly)
- Consideration of where there is a potential absence of different viewpoints or approaches
- Identification of ways to broaden the scope of diversity among the people around them

It also offers a great opportunity to move into other areas such as different types of bias, how and where they affect decision making, self-improvement, and team development, to name a few. I'd love to hear how others have used the trusted ten activity.

Trusted 10	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Education	Sexual orientation	Disability	Other

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If you would like to advertise here give us a shout – our reach is growing.

Contemplation – Here's a question we would like to pose....

“Technical debt” is a concept in software development that reflects the implied cost of additional rework (“debt interest”) caused by constraints, bureaucracy or other inadequacies.

See – https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Technical_debt

What ‘debts’ are you accumulating in your Learning and Development practice, and how are you addressing them?

Our question proposer – Nick Ribeiro find him on twitter @Mrminiki



Art of Conversation

Ali Carruthers-Illingworth



Ali Carruthers-Illingworth – Director and Founder of Purple Pebble People. A Yorkshire ‘lass’ who is passionate about people and what makes them tick. This curiosity has lead her to work not only regionally but also globally with a beautiful blend of cultures and leaders. In her experience when people are thriving and being at their best the culture benefits and business profits.

Ali Carruthers-Illingworth at Purple Pebble People explores building meaningful, courageous and curious conversations – beyond the screen.

Just over a year ago, I wrote a blog based around the question “Is the art of conversation dead?”. The interaction with the blog was confirmation that we were not alone in our thoughts; people were struggling with how to approach conversations and how to interact when networking or meeting people for the first time. They were feeling the sadness of ‘screens’ meaning more than actual face-to-face conversation. I felt inspired to take the blog to another level. The Art of Conversation programme was born.

“Maybe you need to get out of your ‘business cave’ and sharpen up your communication skills”

The programme takes you through six steps that are designed to give you a tool-kit for your approach to meaningful, courageous and curious conversations.

The intentions set for the groups are:

- To build our current practice of having authentic, brave and insightful conversations
- To create a WOW in those we get to meet, network with and socialise with!
- To provide an enjoyable respite from the crazy day-to-day world, where we can have conversations with ease

The steps to get the conversations started are:

1. Self-Awareness ~ getting to know your own emotions, values and beliefs. Becoming confident with who you are and learning to notice your ‘self’.
2. Listen ~ following on from step 1, this builds in how we notice our focus, how we listen to understand and how we notice non-verbal communication.
3. Be Curious ~ once we have learnt how to improve listening, we then introduce how we ask questions to learn more, how we show others we are authentically interested and how we can be inspired by difference. Think Win-Win ~ allows us to approach
4. Conversations in a collaborative way, looking for mutual benefits and exploring the notion of abundant mindsets.
5. Be Authentic ~ connects all of the previous steps together in a way that allows us to be willing to see and acknowledge a deeper understanding of who we ‘are’ in our conversations, and how we connect to our inner guide.
6. Show Courage ~ finally we pull it all together and talk about how we can find the courage to start the conversation and approach someone new. How we can find our way to speak our truth without taking away from another. Whilst we are following the topics, we are also sharing, talking, networking...doing business even...we are learning through our conversations in that moment.

Participants leave feeling inspired to try something new or different over the following week. They come to the next session ready to report back.

“I think we often take conversation for granted and therefore do not think about it enough. The sessions have made me put more thought into it and into having better conversations”

Our format is simple – The Natter Group meets up for three hours every Friday morning for five weeks.

We start each session with a ‘spot of breakfast’ – usually tea and toast, crumpets, croissants – the excitement around what this week’s breakfast table contains is always a starting point for conversations. Isn’t it always the way that food connects our brains and hearts together?

“...the breakfasts were the cherry on top of the cake”

We then catch up on how we have practiced and how we have tried, failed, succeeded and beyond over the last week. We then tuck into the topics of that week’s step. A

bit of content and theory is shared and then the conversation starts....its quite magical!

The group becomes a support, a mentor, a guide and even a mirror to each other.

As the groups currently run with small numbers, the trust in the room is built quickly; I love seeing it happen!

Once the participant has completed the Art of Conversation programme, they are invited to join the “Art of Conversation Collective”, a monthly NetLearning group that brings together past participants. We relearn, review, reconnect and talk through how our conversations are improving...and have some afternoon tiffin! As I have said, food is always on the table to get the conversation started.

“You have changed my life”

One thing that we notice from our participants is that the skills learnt during the programme are not just applied in a business context. Often people talk about how it is impacting on their relationships at home, with their families and friends. Being able to express themselves from a deeper level and listen better to their family.

I think that you don’t have to consider your abilities at conversation devoid or weak to attend the programme. This NetLearning approach provides time away from the normal routine to think about self and give you time to learn whilst networking. The Art of Conversation provides a social, friendly approach to meeting new people in business. There are no elevator pitch moments, or presentations. Everyone arrives as an equal. What we do notice is that through getting to know another person on a deeper level, you will instinctively want to consider how you can support them in business and beyond.

“If anyone is considering signing up to the programme, I would definitely say go for it! You will be so glad you did”

Now, back to my blog. I am still driven and inspired by the thought that we can reach out through conversation, that we can inspire one another, that we can be courageous and confident to be ourselves, that we can be a bit more human by looking someone in the eyes and reacting to them in more meaningful ways. That face-to-face will always be more impactful than a text.

Why not step away from your screen and have a great conversation...

Get in touch to have a friendly ‘chat’ on ali@purplepebblepeople.co.uk

Other references include the worthwhile-watch https://www.ted.com/talks/celeste_headlee_10_ways_to_have_a_better_conversation where Celeste Headlee creates a fun and engaging TED talk on conversations.

Jay Roper discusses spotting the silent swan from the loud urban learning myth.

The prevalence of urban learning myths across our industry is concerning, especially in the context of sports coaching, coach education and development.

Regardless of the sector in which such myths are employed, it is important that learning designers, coaches, mentors and developers have the facts available to make informed decisions when selecting the approach they take towards helping people learn and develop, in whatever sector or environment they operate.

A study by Bailey et al (2018) suggested that 41.6% of sports coaches agreed with statements suggested by pseudoscientific and neuromyth ideas, inferring that their awareness of such things would in turn inform their practice. According to Bailey (2019) ‘coaching has a problem; that problem is an unhealthy tolerance of bad ideas!’.

Experience would suggest that the ‘problem’ seems to be significantly more widespread, with learning designers and policy-makers across the sports industry making use of pseudoscience and neuromyths to inform coach education and development provision. This despite overwhelming evidence that many of these ideas are no more scientifically proven than Nessie the Loch Ness Monster.

Having worked in corporate learning design and development previously, and with 15+ years of applied learning and experience across the sports industry, I worry how urban learning myths continue to cloud the judgement of those in positions of influence and in turn play a part in shaping the future of our industry.

In this context the ‘bad ideas’ regard urban learning myths that inform learning design and development choices, including; learning styles, Myer-Briggs Type Inventory (MBTI), Neurolinguistic Programming (NLP), the Learning Pyramid, 70:20:10 and the rise of ‘digital natives’. Perhaps the stickiest one of all being learning styles with research suggesting 80-95% of people across the USA believing they exist (Nancekivell, 2019), with 53% of teachers in higher education endorsing the concept too (NeuroLogica Blog, 2019).



In July 2019 I designed and facilitated a session at a conference held at Loughborough University. The aim was to help raise awareness of such myths in the hope that, through those who engaged, we could further spread the word about such myths.

Recognising that formal learning is only one means of sharing these messages, this article serves as another channel. This is certainly not to suggest that formal education is an inappropriate vehicle for facilitating learning around such messages however.

In fact, there is more scientifically stable research to suggest that we take c. 30% of our learning in life from formal education than there is to suggest we only take 10% from formal education, when reading the research underpinning the 70:20:10 Learning and Development Framework; not to say I believe either argument is particularly strong, I might add. Even more remarkable is that the researchers who conducted the study that ultimately founded 70:20:10, have stated they never

intended their research to be interpreted in this way. Yet, we now find ourselves in a situation whereby major corporate organisations across the globe rigidly align their learning design to this mythical Framework. Like anything, it is the context in which we accept and embrace such things with common sense, professional judgement and practical flexibility (De Bruyckere et al, 2015).

Similarly with the numbers associated with Learning Pyramids. The researcher's findings were not only taken out of context but are no longer even available to view. The attributed owner of the model, the National Training Laboratories (NTL) in Bethal Maine – USA, state they believe the findings are accurate but no longer have – nor can they find – the original research that supports the numbers (De Bruyckere et al, 2015). Personal and professional experience suggests people perhaps learn more from putting ideas and concepts into practice and/or discussing with peers to help them make sense of content, than they do from being sat in a lecture theatre or reading a book. Generally speaking, these suggestions are congruent with what the Learning Pyramid suggests. When considering

the perfectly rounded percentages that accompany such statements represented by the Learning Pyramid however, knowing of the sheer lack/existence of research to substantiate such claims, I worry how such nonsense is being used to inform learning design and development practice.

I believe learning is somewhat fashionable in today's society and for some time I have wondered if this is why such ideas get quickly embraced by practitioners. Each month I see a new learning buzzword or catchphrase on social media, right beside the latest trainers or technology advertisement. Similarly, it would be easy to get caught up and buy them without too much thought about the consequences. I firmly believe we should first look at ourselves and take responsibility as practitioners for being diligent when adopting such ideas and making use of them in our own environment. There is nothing wrong with people or organisations coining ideas, phrases or terms, but there becomes an issue if the foundations that ground them are shallow and we have not dug deep enough to check they are stable from which to build scaffolding upon them for learners.

In a world where many people want the most amount of information in the least amount of time, it is easy to read a social media post or listen to a short VLOG without checking the origins of the argument or information being presented.

As a concrete example, I recently learned that chewing gum helps young people perform better academically. Craig Johnston of the Baylor College of Medicine found evidence to suggest chewing gum helps reduce stress and improve concentration, helping people focus on learning and improving academic achievement. Having read around the topic further, I discovered the research was commissioned by William Wrigley JR (De Bruyckere et al, 2015).

Such findings could easily be taken out of context if the full story is not unearthed and understood.

As an advocate of evidence-informed practice, I feel it important to move on from the urban learning myths that hamstring some in their practice. Therefore, it was felt important to highlight some principles that

might help learning designers and more importantly, the learners we interact with as a by-product.

Heuristics commonly used in general education include; spaced learning, interleaving, retrieval practice, elaboration, concrete examples and dual coding. Granted the terminology used here is different to that in sports coaching and coach education and development, but it is useful to think about how such methods could be applied in context for the benefit of learners.

I often wonder how we might be better off investing our time and energy in the people who facilitate learning as opposed to developing swanky Power Point decks or fancy booklets that attune to different learning styles... not that they exist, of course. As explained by Nancekivell (2019), there is no evidence to suggest that learning styles exist. In fact, teaching (or coaching) to attune to different learning styles might actually be detrimental for learning to take place. As mentioned by Cushion (2019), it would seem that a significant proportion of sports National Governing Bodies still include such myths in their coach education and development provision; hopefully this article helps raise awareness further to help inform future learning design decisions.

Having people in place who can support learners as individuals would be a helpful starting point. It is my view that we as learning designers, developers and facilitators must strive to help people help themselves, to unleash their inner creative genius; not being confined by glass walls suggested by tools like MBTI.

I once attended a formal coach education programme whereby we spent a significant proportion of time talking about this particular tool. The tempo of the programme dropped drastically and you could hear, feel and see the confusion and disbelief in the room amongst learners. We continued to plough on through the content of the workshop however because none of us challenged it.

I told myself I would never make that mistake again. Having checked the origins of the research that underpins MBTI soon after this event, it became apparent our gut feeling on the tool was accurate.

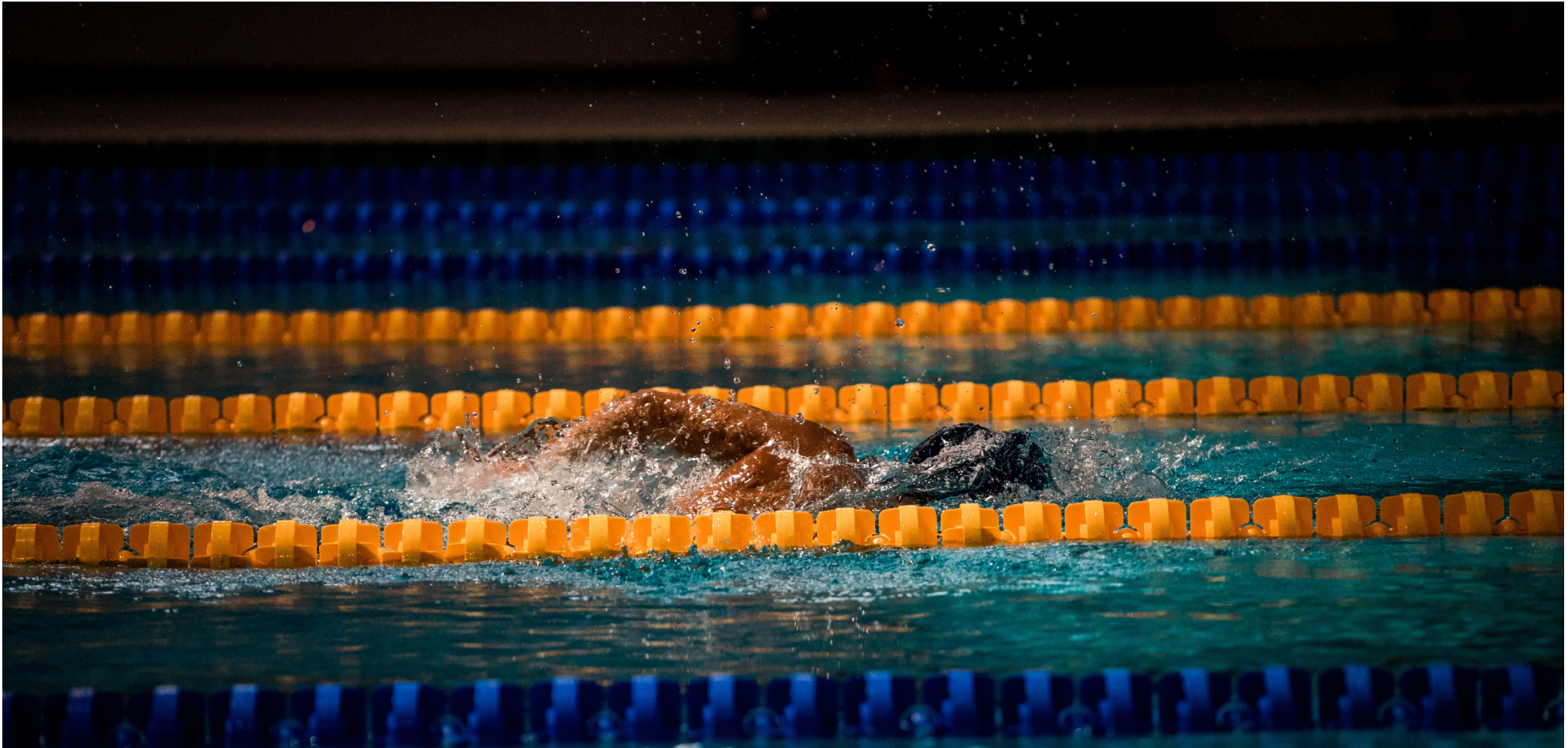
Sometime after, whilst attending another formal learning event, I was told by a facilitator that I must write down all my notes using a pen and paper because it was the ‘best’ way for me to learn. I proceeded to draw pictures on my tablet using a stylus having reminded myself that it was I who was doing the learning and therefore I would help myself learn in the best way I saw fit. Subsequently, I took a lot from this particular course and my leather-bound notebook remained largely empty. Some of my peers however chose to almost fill it. Each to their own.

Once more, investing in people who are better able to help join the dots between the learners and the learning; supporting them as individuals, may possibly prove more useful than some of the other methods mentioned above.

Branding and a sense of value for money is still an important consideration for designers and learners alike.

I remember receiving my UEFA A Licence binder wrapped in dark blue leather with The FA logo embossed in silver on the front. It made me feel excited about the journey ahead and proud of the journey I had been on to get to this point. It also gave me a sense of connection to something prestigious. It proved useful as a content library and book shelf for storing evidence along the way. Some of my peers decided to access content and house their evidence using The FA’s online learning tool. The important point here is that we were provided choice by the organisation and facilitators.

Since completing my UEFA A Licence some years ago I began an executive coaching and mentoring course. The ‘virtual learning lounge’ (which was nothing more than a list of hyper-links to various blogs, articles and published papers) asked me to read a series of book chapters as a means of learning about different tools to help me as a coach and mentor for the future.



My heart sank when one of the first chapters I was directed towards had pages of content delightedly telling me about all the benefits of NLP and VARK (Visual, Auditory, Reading/Writing and Kinaesthetic learning styles). After quickly crossing out the pages with my trusted well known brand of black permanent marker, I emailed the educational institute providing the course to offer them some feedback.

It seemed I had at least learned one thing useful from my MBTI experience; I had learned to challenge when presented with duff content and information.

The ability to challenge was somewhat only possible because I was an experienced learner with a reasonable understanding of the content in front of me. Equally, I was able to navigate the online learning platform and make use of the content made available as I saw fit because of this.

I also had the support of a mentor who was exceptionally good at building rapport and a relationship with me to help me make sense of the relevant content; two critical ingredients for effective and efficient learning in my humble opinion.

There would seem to be a misconception around the term ‘digital learning’ and what this means across the industry, with individuals and organisations believing this simply to be realised through the development and implementation of glitzy Learner Management Systems (LMS) – a form of Virtual Learning Environments (VLE).

VLE have proven problematic in implementing for the benefit of learners. There are myths associated with shifting learning provision in the coach education and development domain to become more digital too, including; because it is what the learner in a modern world wants/needs; because organisations believe they must be perceived to be more digital in the modern

era; and, because it will reduce human resource needs and therefore provide the organisation financial savings (Henderson et al, 2015)

Before making any assumptions regarding the benefits of digital learning it is vitally important that a thorough needs analysis and user testing process be conducted, informing the pedagogical approach taken. After all, there is no such thing as digital natives and digital immigrants. Yet another myth which is not supported by research (Flavin, 2006).

As everyone sees the world differently based on past and present experiences, it is my view that it is not only fundamentally flawed to suggest there are pre-determined ‘short-cuts’ to help people learn, such as the urban learning myths mentioned above, but as in some cases people are paying significant amounts of money and using up great amounts of time and energy to learn about these things. For me, this is both morally and ethically wrong.

Perhaps we should focus on building time into programmes for head space and sense-making in context, with concrete examples presented to help people connect with, and make sense of, the content presented.

Scaffolding learning around individuals based on their wants and needs could also be a good way of helpful people to achieve their flow state whereby tasks are not too hard so that they become anxious, nor are they too easy meaning they become bored.

Providing meaningful and specific feedback in an appropriate manner would likely be a powerful way to help nudge people towards their personal learning goals.

Finally, just listening and first seeking to understand before being understood as designers, developers and facilitators might help us in our quest to support the learners we have the great privilege of helping.

I feel it is our duty as professionals within the industry to spread the word about these things in the hope that the conspiracy theories can be quashed, and locals can all settle at night knowing the recent sightings of Nessie all the way from Hong Kong were likely nothing more than the silhouette of a swan drifting gracefully out of Urquhart Bay.

There is no doubt that our time and energy is better spent working with facts than fiction.

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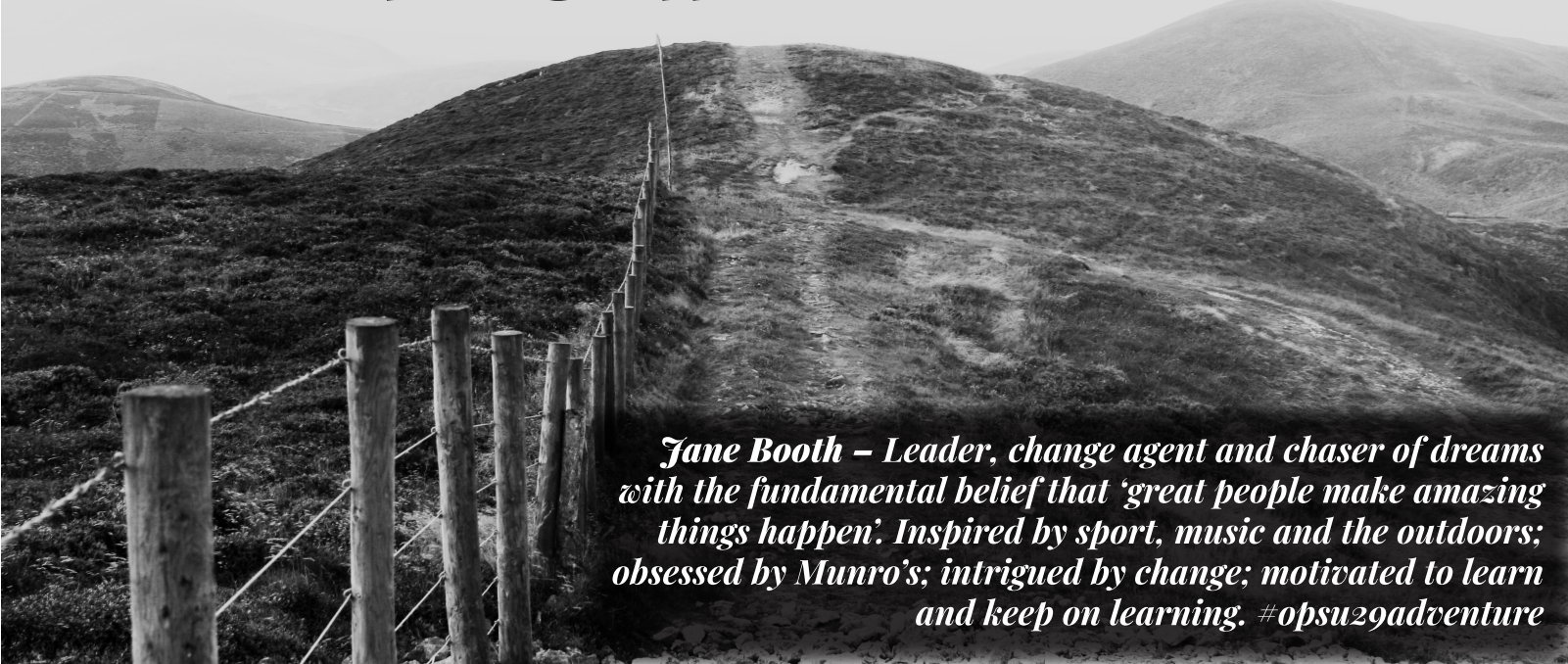
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Me, My Space and I: The art of crafting effective boundaries



I am running late and whirling through the supermarket at what feels like 100mph. I grab the essentials and sprint for the checkout.

I join a queue and pretend to wait patiently for my turn. I deliberately keep my distance from the woman directly in front of me as I don’t want her to feel pressured, even though I am in a desperate hurry.

That’s when I feel a presence at my back and deduce that someone has joined the queue behind me. An arm snakes silently past and swiftly grabs a ‘next customer’ spacer, whilst a cold basket corner digs me sharply in the kidneys as the owner of the arm smiles apologetically. I am immediately on edge and feel my hackles rise. My body stiffens and I aim my elbows outwards in a vain attempt to take up as much physical space as humanly possible.

Yet, I say nothing. I act slowly and deliberately as I attempt to make the basket owner understand that they are just too close for comfort. My head is screaming ‘YOU’RE TOO CLOSE...BACK OFF!’, yet I still say nothing. I simply carry on unloading my shopping, feeling angrier and more annoyed by the second. My personal space has been completely invaded and my physical boundaries have been well and truly crossed. I leave the shop in a state of anxiousness

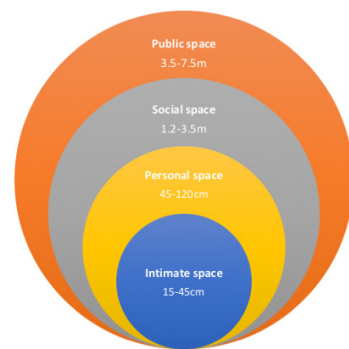
and more wound up than when I arrived. It is still late, I am still running late, and I am now tense and primed with adrenaline. I feel stressed and continue my journey with a head full of rage, all targeted towards the unknown arm snaking, basket bashing, space invader.

Sound familiar?

The Cambridge Dictionary defines a boundary as ‘a real or imagined line that marks the edge or limit of something’ and when it comes to our personal physical space, we all have a fairly clear idea of where our own boundaries lie. The notion of physical territory has been an intriguing subject of study across the animal kingdom throughout the centuries, with the term ‘proxemics’ introduced in the 1960s by the anthropologist Edward Hall (1966, p.1) to describe the ‘interrelated observations and theories of man’s use of space as a specialised elaboration of culture’. In the course of his work examining interpersonal distances, Hall (1966, p.113–129) identified four zones concentric zones that described the varying degrees of intimacy he witnessed when observing human relationships:

Hall (1963) noted that the acceptable boundaries for each spatial zone differed according to factors such as culture, nationality and gender, but recognised that regardless of inevitable difference, individuals shared the same annoyance and

discomfort experienced when someone else consciously or unconsciously strays into an unacceptable level of personal space. For example, Hall (1963, p.1004) asked:



“Why is it, for example, that an American who is approached too closely by a foreigner will feel annoyed? Why is it that the discomfort often fails to pass when he gets to know the culture better, in spite of conscious striving to suppress these feelings? Why do these interferences commonly last a lifetime, and why do people take this sort of interference so personally?”

It was not too difficult to see that this theory could explain my reaction to the invasion of my space at the supermarket checkout! Although it did also lead me

to question why, if we know these zones and boundaries exist, do we remain reluctant to verbalise them and be clear about them, particularly when others transgress over our acceptable boundary lines? My exploration around the physical spaces then opened up my questioning and thinking around how this can equally apply for our less obvious psychological boundaries.

The term ‘boundary’ has been considered a key concept in the field of counselling and psychotherapy since the 1990s (Smith et al, 2012). Yet, despite frequent reference to the term within these fields, there does not appear to be one singularly agreed definition (Blundell, 2017, p.13). Despite this lack of clarity as regards a definition, there are, however, numerous ‘boundary models’ (for example Hartmann, 1997; Ashforth et al, 2000; Hartmann, 2011; Carey, 2016) that can be applied to counselling practice. In my trawl of the literature it was evident that different authors view boundaries from different theoretical standpoints, which, given that we all have unique perspectives on the world, is arguably not surprising. The upside of this variance and lack of consistency was a striking sense that I could freely explore this subject and evolve my own reflections on this complex and intriguing area.

As I conversed with friends, mentees, peers and other connections during this period, I found that the broad topic of boundaries kept recurring at various levels. N.B. I did acknowledge the possibility of ‘confirmation bias’ being at play somewhere here. I am, however, convinced that there is a growing need for us all to develop more effective ways of creating and maintaining our own psychological (and perhaps physical) boundaries in order to sustain healthier, more nourishing relationships. Reflections such as those below, from individuals with whom I have worked, served to reinforce my growing theory that there is much to be gained from becoming better at defining, understanding and communicating our own personal boundaries.

‘I really care about my athletes and tell them they can call me anytime, whenever they need.’
‘I work from home and never feel like I switch off. I just don’t know where to draw the line.’
‘I don’t feel like I can ever say ‘no’ to my mum.’
‘I feel like my colleagues are taking advantage of me as they just assume I will always stay late if needed because I don’t have children’

As I delved deeper, it appeared that the feelings triggered by someone invading your personal physical space applied equally to times when your psychological space is compromised. What intrigued me, however, was that whereas physical spaces are largely obvious and understood (albeit often not talked about), psychological spaces exist only in our minds and often on an unconscious level. Frequently, the first time we notice that a hidden boundary has been crossed are when we experience feelings of discomfort, frustration, stress or tension; just like when a physical boundary has been broken.

Going back to Hall’s early work on proxemics, I overlaid his concepts onto boundary theories from the wider fields of psychology, counselling and psychotherapy in my quest to explore my growing curiosity. There was something compelling about linking these two areas of work, and the more I explored, the more intrigued I became. The whole area of boundaries felt like an ambiguous and complex concept with a vast range of theoretical perspectives, and yet my research led me towards a relatively simple conclusion.

With the ancient Greek aphorism of ‘know thyself’ ringing in my ears, my overwhelming sense was that in order to identify and maintain our own boundaries, we first have to work out what it is that lies within our psychological space and why these things matter. After all, if we don’t know where we begin (physically, psychologically and metaphorically), how can we possibly know how to protect our ‘space’ and avoid unwanted encroachment into our territory?

Motivated by my learning and ongoing curiosity, I have been driven to further explore the concepts and issues raised in this article. I realise how little we, or at least I, give ourselves/myself time and space to contemplate the important things in life and what it is we really value. I have also been thinking deeply about the connections between values (the stuff that matters), behaviours and boundaries. As a result, I am now evolving my thinking and shaping my work to support myself, and others, consider how we can better communicate our own boundaries with those around us as we strive to sustain positive and effective relationships in all aspects of our life.

If any of this article has sparked your curiosity, get in touch to chat over a coffee or two! Great people make amazing things happen.

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09.2019

ISSUE ONE

The Learning Scientist

