



Human Dymensions Quarterly Newsletter Culture, Learning and Risk

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

- Feature Article
- Post Graduate Studies News
- MiProfile Master Class March 2014
- No Brain, No Pain
- Hazard Perception Test
- Rethinking Prohibitions
- Book Competition
- Human Dymensions on YouTube
- Risk and Safety Toolbox Talks – Registration of Interest
- Supervisor Development Program
- Postscript – Book 3 – Real Risk, Human Discerning and Risk

Feature Article



What to Learn, How to Learn it and the Induction Fallacy

In today's world there is a flood of information. There is so much data. The main problem about data is understanding better what filters we use. We filter out so much stuff by what we value and don't value, which explains why some people feel overloaded because they aren't in tune with what they value. But there is another problem with data, there also seems precious little about on how to learn. The idea that humans are an empty sponge ready to absorb all things (the 'tabula rasa' of John Locke) doesn't fit what we know about bounded rationality. Bounded rationality was first put forward by Herbert Simon (1978). Bounded rationality is the idea that in decision-making, the rationality of individuals is limited by the information they have, the cognitive limitations of their minds, and the finite amount of time they have to make a decision. In other words humans are very limited to what they can absorb or retain.

In most cases, humans have to make decisions without all possible information available. Many of the decisions we make are made with some uncertainty, in order to live we must take risks and don't have guaranteed outcomes. When the human mind is 'flooded' with too much to contain the natural default is to shortcut, 'tick and flick' or take judgments based on heuristics or intuition. This is the current problem with the regulation of risk in society. Every time there is a new problem in risk and safety, the legislator develops another regulation as if humans have no limit, as if every decision made by humans is logical, rational and slow. The opposite is more often the reality. Kahneman's book Thinking Fast and Slow demonstrates this.

So what should we learn and how can we learn it? First we need to ensure that we don't confuse volume of data with knowledge. I know people who can recite the safety regulation and legislation backwards but know precious little about risk and safety. They can parrot back the words of safety but don't understand the 'spirit' of safety. For them safety is a reading comprehension test and a legal framework. Such people can police rules but fail to learn safety or understand risk. Similarly, I know people who know very little about the regulation of safety but know everything about the 'spirit' of safety, it is infused in how they live.

So what is learning? Knowledge is not learning unless it leads to a change in the meaning of experience. This is a problem when people confusing training with education, one can absorb information and regurgitate it but unless there is a change in meaning (and subsequently behavior), then little has been 'learned'. Whilst training has its focus on the absorption and regurgitation of data (sponge learning), education is about the creation of shared meaning. In meaningful learning, the learner is respected as a contributor to the learning experience. Learning involves ownership whereas training is about content. Unless there is a transformation of meaning and experience, knowledge remains as information to be repeated but not something to be lived. In this way learning is essentially ethical and communal. Unless learning is socially experienced, knowledge remains individualistically detached in heads and has little ethical impact. Compliance without learning is meaningless. Data without ownership is misguided.

IN OTHER NEWS

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I have been to countless industry inductions that masquerade as learning moments when in fact there is no intention of learning in any aspect of the induction. I find it strange that the first encounter with many organisations, the first moment of welcome is through an induction that is boring, poorly designed and alienating. Rather than put together a strategic learning process, the induction is seen as just an obligation. Even when some effort is made, it is strange how people with no expertise in education, curriculum, learning, pedagogy or instructional design put together an excessive collection of powerpoint slides on regulations and call it an induction. My son, who works in building and construction and sometimes has to do 2 or 3 of these a week, calls these 'sleeping bag' inductions. The idea that a certificate in training and assessment teaches about education and learning design is a nonsense.

In 'sleeping bag' inductions the inductee is treated as a sponge to be filled and bamboozled with such an excess of data that the only real lesson they learn is that risk and safety is boring and irrelevant. The real outcome of such inductions in the field is an attraction to 'tick and flick'.

Sleeping bag inductions create alienation and disassociation with meaningful learning in risk and safety. People walk out of the induction with a resemblance that they know risk and safety because they have successfully completed a reading comprehension exercise. The induction was 'done', there is the signature. In this way risk and safety become concepts to regurgitate not a reality to be lived. Risk and safety is captured in the mantra 'hear the rule, comply with the rule, police the rule and punish non-compliance', this is the focus of risk and safety induction cosmetics. It looks like risk and safety has been 'learned' when there has been no ownership, no ethical engagement and no creation of shared meaning.

Learning is best when conducted through relationships, the myths of online learning effectiveness is simply not supported by the evidence. Similarly online inductions may be an easy data dump but don't add much value to the learning process. So how is it best to learn? I will give three suggestions but there are many more (further see the work of Neville, Claxton, Robinson or Barry & King)

1. Learning through communities of practice is most powerful and provide a climate and environment in which to learn through sharing and mutual support. The engagement with people who inspire and motivate learning is critical. We may not remember the data from school but we always remember the teacher who we most respected and who facilitated learning.
2. Experiential learning is critical, people must see and feel what is to be learned and the context in which it is to be learned. Simulations are good as are walkarounds and 'show and tell'. It is also important that participants be able to express what they bring to the learning moment and be allowed to engage and respond as much as possible. Learning by 'absorption' is highly ineffectual whereas learning through 'extraction' is powerful.
3. Learning through reading, follow up coaching, mentoring and practice is essential. Unless there is a true sense of shared meaning then the application of knowledge lacks key moments of reflection, feedback and the creation of understanding. When relationships step beyond the simple transference of knowledge to inspiration for living, then we have learned something.

So, there you have it. If you need support in creating a great induction or if you want an critical evaluation of your current induction, please email or call Rob for more information. Mb: 0424547115
rob@humandymensions.com

Post Graduate Studies News



The latest cohort commences the Post Grad program Unit 1 intensive (Introduction to the Social Psychology of Risk) on 16-20 September at ACU Canberra. If you wish to join this September group please email me urgently and I will see if I can fit you in. rob@humandymensions.com

We now have two cohorts of students progressing through the program with a third scheduled for 10-14 March 2014. Places are limited for the March intensive unit. If you wish to register for this and secure your place then please email admin@humandymensions.com.

MiProfile Master Class March 2014

A number of people have asked to be accredited in the Human Dimensions MiProfile Survey. Accordingly, the MiProfile Master Class is scheduled for 3-7 March.

The week long unit will be accredited at Post Graduate level and entitle participants to deliver the MiProfile Survey in their organisations. The unit will cover the MiProfile methodology, competing cultural values framework, technical aspects of delivery, social psychological targets in reporting, the data mining framework and underlying principles.

If you wish to register for this please contact Rob at rob@humandimensions.com to secure your place.



No Brain, No Pain



The latest issue (Sept) of Scientific American Mind has a fascinating report on the psychology of pain management, a must for anyone involved in pain management or rehabilitation.

Research shows that when we encounter or observe the pain of others that it stimulates mirror receptors in our own neurological system creating its own stressors in our body. Even playing computer generated games that involve pain trigger mirror receptors and increase stress.

The implications of this for counselors, risk and safety managers is interesting and explains why some find the job of risk and safety manager highly stressful.

Hazard Perception Test

Interested in your own hazard perception ability? How good a driver are you? Try this https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nlx_u9IQFVM.

Rethinking Prohibitions

Research by Sheikh and Janoff-Bulman (Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 2013, Vol. 105, No. 2, 301-315) demonstrates that strong external controls based on attribution, undermine moral internalization.

The study found that proscriptive orientation (prohibitions) were less successful than positive obligations (prescriptive orientation). The study showed that harsh external controls undermine the ability to resist temptation.

Book Competition





The first 4 people who can tell me what is in this stereogram above will receive a complimentary copy of my second book For the Love of Zero, Human Fallibility and Risk.

Email your solution, name and postal address to admin@humandymensions.com

Human Dymensions on YouTube

You may have seen some of the Human Dymensions clips on Vimeo <http://vimeo.com/humandymensions>

Now you can access the videos via Youtube
<https://www.youtube.com/user/HumanDymensionsAus/videos>

The latest upload is the Risk and Safety Maturity Matrix Description

Risk and Safety Toolbox Talks – Registration of Interest

Dr Long writes monthly toolbox talks for organisations on a range of risk and safety topics. A number of people have requested Human Dymensions set up a resource section on the website where people could purchase toolbox talks on a topic of interest. Due to limitations of PCs and multimedia, the toolbox talks are only developed for Macintosh.



The idea is that people could purchase a file which would include a keynote, notes (presentation guide), clips and attachments. At this stage Rob is determining whether such a service is feasible. If this interests you please let Rob know by email rob@humandymensions.com

Supervisor Development Program



The Human Dymensions Supervisor Development Program is now being managed by Gabrielle Carlton. If you are interested in finding out more about the program please email gabrielle@humandymensions.com

Gabrielle also manages the Human Dymensions PROACT (Psychological Risk Observation and Culture Conversations Training) program. PROACT is a 3 unit program comprising Safety Conversations, Advanced Hazard Identification and Your Talk Matters. PROACT also includes two onsite coaching sessions to embed PROACT skills. If interested contact Gabrielle.

Postscript – Book 3 – Real Risk, Human Discerning and Risk

By the time of the next quarterly newsletter Dr Long's third book Real Risk, Human Discernment and Risk will have been released. Look out for the launch date in early November and check the website for announcements.

The fourth book is already in process, a field guide in the social psychology of risk to enable the teaching of concepts in the first 3 books. The field guide will include lesson/module guides and masters for training and coaching purposes.

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