

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ‘HOW PEOPLE LEARN’ (HPL) FRAMEWORK VIA THE STAR (SOFTWARE TECHNOLOGY FOR ACTION AND REFLECTION) LEGACY CYCLE OF LEARNING: A CASE STUDY OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS AT INSTITUTE OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE, UNIVERSITY OF SINDH, JAMSHORO, PAKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

The study intends to bring about reforms in syllabus design by aiming to influence students’ learning on a more interactive and student centered level. In this regard, the ‘How People Learn’ (HPL) Framework of learning has been found quite effective in terms of generating productive learning outcomes. The HPL Framework based on the principles of ‘learner centeredness’, ‘knowledge centeredness’, ‘assessment centeredness’ and ‘community centeredness,’ emphasizes learners’ high learning achievements. Since many instructors find it difficult to balance all four of the HPL lenses, therefore, knowledge centered learning environment was designed through STAR (Software Technology for Action and Reflection) Legacy Cycle. This framework was applied via the STAR Legacy Cycle on 20 students of undergraduate level at Institute of English Language and Literature, University of Sindh. The objective of this study was to discover the effectiveness of HPL framework within the STAR Legacy Cycle to facilitate and maximize learning. In addition, it aimed at providing learners with rich and interesting content, problem -solving situation, challenging tasks, innovation in pedagogical practices, etc. The researchers used open-ended questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and four observations to see the outcomes of the study. Some challenge -based lessons were planned and implemented in the class following HPL Framework. Based on the findings, it was observed that the study proved to be helpful in terms of adding value in promoting students’ innovative skills.

Keywords: Innovative Skills, Designing and Implementing, Challenge-Based Learning, Effectiveness, Learning Outcomes.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of conducting this research study is as to know how far effective are the principles of STAR Legacy Cycle for

designing effective and challenge-based learning experiences. The researchers came to know about this by conducting a study in the context of Institute of English Language and Literature, University of Sindh, Jamshoro, Pakistan (IELL, UoS) at undergraduate levels. The study furthermore touches the very main area of language learning that is syllabus design. In our context, the syllabi are not designed keeping learners' aims and goals in mind. This way, the syllabi don't prove to be helpful or fruitful at all at the end of course even.

The study is based on How People Learn (HPL) framework within STAR Legacy Learning Cycle that describes the interaction between four central dimensions of any effective learning environment. The STAR Legacy Learning Cycle can organize a sequence of learning activities together based on the principles of the HPL framework. The activities help to take difficulties a challenge, overcome them by devising some solutions, develop students' decision-making power, to develop their will to do something unique, to generate knowledge in multiple ways, to enable learners to solve their initial challenge, to come up with the permanent solutions to their problems, to generalize their problems and face them with a bold stand.

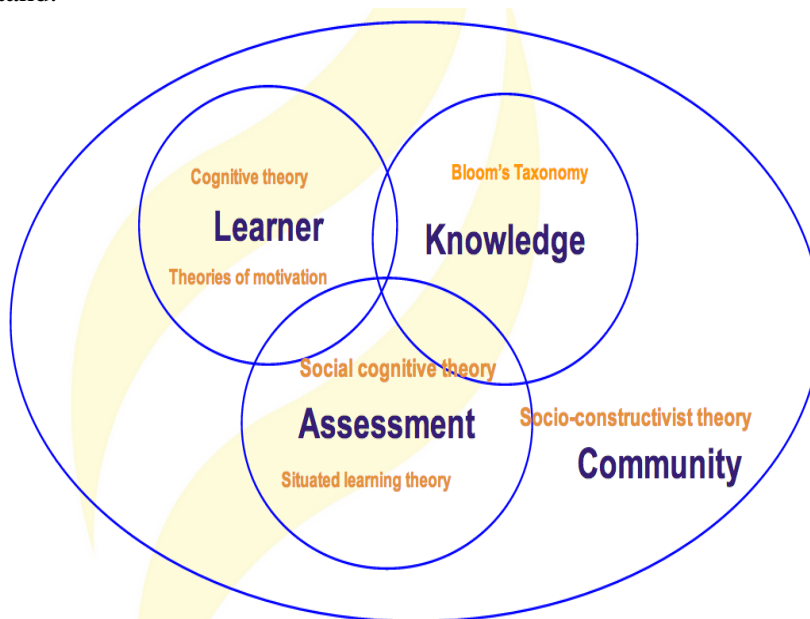


FIGURE-1: HPL FRAMEWORK OF LEARNING

SOURCE: <https://www.google.com.pk/search?q=HPL+framework+of+learning>

“Theoretical frameworks provide a powerful lens through which to make sense of everyday experiences and observations. They provide a way to organize and explain that which might otherwise appear justified or without reason. By providing this framework for understanding, such theories also then provide a framework for developing and implementing strategies to direct and manage our experiences” (Woodard and Hincliffe 2002 cited in Triven Kuchi *et.al.*, 2003:2). The implementation of HPL theoretical frameworks and STAR Legacy Learning Cycle brings about the critical thinking of learners. These frameworks help in making the syllabus activity-based and goal-oriented.

The researchers believe that syllabus also plays a vital role in providing authentic material and attracting learners’ attention toward their studies. J.M. Slattery and J.F. Carlson (2005:159) witness that a strong syllabus facilitates teaching and learning. It communicates the overall pattern of the course so a course does not feel like disjointed assignments and activities, but instead an organized and meaningful journey. It seems as if it were a complete piece of picture. This sort syllabus leads the learners toward the fulfillment of their academic needs. Another advantage of this syllabus will be that students would be able to gain whatever the syllabus will be designed for. Littlefield (1999a cited in Slattery, J.M., & Carlson, J.F.) suggested that a syllabus serves seven purposes. It sets the tone for a course, motivates students to set lofty but achievable goals, serves as a planning tool for faculty, structures students' work over the course of the semester, helps faculty plan and meet course goals in a timely manner, serves as a contract between faculty and students about what students can expect from faculty and vice versa, and is a portfolio artifact for tenure, promotion, or job applications. Slattery, J.M. & Carlson, J.F. (2005:160) believe that a strong syllabus is relatively detailed. Detailed syllabi educate students about course and university resources and reduce student anxieties. Once students are relaxed, they show enthusiasm to go ahead and participate in the given activities keenly. Thus a detailed syllabus motivates students to carry on their tempo till the end of their course.

The syllabus aims at developing students’ critical thinking which in turn helps them to be confident enough. With regard to this, ‘The How People Learn’ (HPL) is the model which talks of such sort of syllabus that may fulfill students’ all language learning needs. The

focus of this study has been on The STAR (Software Technology for Action and Reflection) Legacy Learning Cycle.



FIGURE-1.2: STAR LEGACY CYCLE

SOURCE:<http://www.google.com.pk/search?=STAR+Legacy+learning+cycle>

The researchers think that the effective syllabi are such type of syllabi that provide learning –based contents and consider learning as a challenge. As Schwartz *et.al.*, (1999 cited in Brophy, 2011:2) are of the opinion that learning with understanding occurs when learners are challenged to act on what they know and to refine their understanding through sustained inquiry with the concepts. This pedagogical philosophy is fundamental to how people learn using an instructional framework called STAR Legacy Learning Cycle. Brophy (2011) further adds that the STAR (Software Technology for Action and Reflection) Learning Cycle is similar to common models of problem solving and inquiry used by professional engineers, scientists and educators.

HOW PEOPLE LEARN (HPL) FRAMEWORK OF LEARNING WITHIN SOFTWARE TECHNOLOGY FOR ACTION AND REFLECTION (STAR) LEGACY LEARNING CYCLE

Lisa Beard, *et.al.*, (2010:54) are of the opinion that Legacy Cycle is a teaching framework based on research from Bransford,

Brown, and Cocking's How People Learn. They further add that this six-step cycle begins with the challenge question, which immediately prompts students to solve a problem. Students generate ideas; listen to multiple perspectives from people in a related career field; gain knowledge through a research and revise process; test their mettle as they complete formative assignments; and go public to share their results in a community environment of peers, parents, or community.

IMPLEMENTING HPL FRAMEWORK WITHIN STAR LEGACY LEARNING CYCLE

The researchers implemented the HPL Framework via STAR Legacy Learning Cycle in undergraduate class at Institute of English Language and Literature, University of Sindh, Jamshoro to see the effectiveness of the frameworks. In this regard, they designed their own model following both HPL Framework and STAR Legacy Learning Cycle. The number of lessons was four and all these lessons were planned keeping in mind the essentials of the model.

Each lesson carried different aims and objectives. All the lessons comprised of principles of learner centeredness', 'knowledge centeredness', 'assessment centeredness' and 'community centeredness'.

Lesson one was all about a *challenge* in which the learners were put into some challenging tasks.

LESSON ONE

The lesson started with a very interesting and inspiring handout. It was given to students who were asked to go through it for ten minutes. The handout titled 'the fountain of inspiration'. All the students read it with great interest and then came up with their opinion regarding the topic. During ten minutes' reading time, the learners were being monitored by their teacher. After they were done with the reading, they were asked to give their interpretation of the story they went through.

The task had a number of challenges within. I started asking them about those challenges and also asked them for the ways to handle those challenges and problems. The students share their comments with great confidence. Regarding this, I asked them different questions like 'Had you been in this sort of situation, how would you have come out of it. They came up with their different

opinions. In same task, the learners *generated ideas* about how they might solve the challenge.

Thus the lesson one ended which aimed at putting the learners into a challenging situation and devising plan to come out of it. The participation was very active from learners' side.

LESSON TWO

The second lesson was on '*Multiple perspectives*' which aimed at identifying learners' potential factors. In this lesson, the students were given a very interesting activity. The students were asked to distribute themselves into two groups. The task assigned to them was to tell the future career of a poor –born student at the age of twenty years and they were also supposed to tell about the possible challenges and problems coming his way ahead. And how should he face them all?

They were given ten minutes' time for discussion. They were found to willingly participate in discussion. After the group discussion, their participation was invited. Most of them showed their eagerness to come forward and share their views regarding the assigned task. Two from each group represented their group with their talk and they came up with multiple perspectives on the task. Thus the second lesson came to an end.

LESSON THREE

Third lesson was on '*Research and Revise*' in which the students were given more learning activities so as to help them gain new knowledge and skills. The third lesson specially aimed at generating questions to learn more about how to better solve the initial challenge. The students were asked to distribute themselves into three groups and make discussions on a communicative task that was 'What problems did you face in your life and how did you tackle them? The problems could be any: social, psychological, academic and economic. The students were given ten minutes' time for discussion.

After they were done with the discussions, they were asked to come forward to present their problems along with the solutions. They shared a number of problems faced by learners at the very initial phase of their life. One thing observed in the students was that they were very relaxed, happy, confident enough and ready to talk about those issues. The lesson ended with this.

LESSON FOUR

The fourth and last lesson was designed to *test students' mettle*. In this lesson, all the students were supposed to ask questions from one another. Students came forward to answer the questions one by one. The purpose of question answer session was to revise their thinking and test their understanding of the challenges and difficulties on one's way to success. The students came up with productive responses. They were provided with a number of learning opportunities. All the lessons led the students to satisfactory progress which resulted in desired learning objectives. Eventually, the students brought their experiences and the things they learnt from them. They learnt a great deal. They related these challenges to their real life challenges. Thus they could learn practical lessons and could find out solutions to them as well.

OUTCOMES OF HPL FRAMEWORK VIA STAR LEGACY LEARNING CYCLE

The model designed on the patterns of HPL Framework via STAR Legacy Learning Cycle was implemented in the class and the participants of undergraduate levels. The model contained the contents on the principles of 'learner centeredness', 'knowledge centeredness', 'assessment centeredness' and 'community centeredness'. It furthermore, focused STAR Legacy Learning Cycle which is all about 'challenge', 'generate ideas', 'multiple perspectives', 'research and revise', test their mettle, and 'go public'. For lessons were planned and implemented in the classroom by the researchers. Keeping in mind the interest, level, culture, etc. the lessons were planned accordingly.

The lesson one was all about a challenge in which the learners were put in challenging situations. Text provided to them was interesting and encouraging. They got inspiration to face any challenge and their determination to get success still rose. They seemed to be very sound in terms of learning new experiences and relating them to their own ones. This way, they put their whole efforts in reading the text with full interest, energy and concentration. After this, students came forward to talk about challenging situations and the ways they faced them in their lives. They did it one by one. There was more active and energetic participation than those of usual classes. In day one, they just were just assigned the tasks to discuss about the challenging situations and were asked to generate ideas to

overcome them in the initial stages of one's lives. This task gave them opportunity not only to generate ideas but also to develop their critical thinking.

While in lesson two, the students were given a task in which they were supposed to compare and contrast the social and economic conditions of a poor and a rich student and where would both stand after twenty years in terms of their academic career. They were also asked to make a detailed a discussion regarding the possible issues faced by both of them. They talked of their minds and shared their discussions in front of their classmates and the researches one by one. They said the rich don't have economic barriers on their way to success; rather it could be lack of guidance and moral support which ruin their career and consequently they fall victim to bad company and thus they witness very rare success. Whereas, the poor, they said, face abject poverty and various miserable barriers that don't allow them to breathe peacefully. They meant to say, it is very hard for the poor to come across all those social, economic and academic barriers. Yet the poor do that to a very satisfactory level. They presented multiple perspectives of both the poor and the rich in terms of challenges and opportunities.

Lesson three was on *research and revise* in which the students reflected on their childhood challenges. Here they thoroughly talked about difficulties and challenges they faced. They also came up with a very brief account of the way they overcame all those difficulties. This task gave them sufficient space to research themselves in detail. This way, boosted their confidence because the tasks were very relating to their background.

Lesson four was designed to *test students' mettle*. In this, the researchers asked students to come one by one and face the audience by answering their questions. This way, they could revise the whole discussion of all these four lessons that were planned on the patterns of HPL Framework via STAR Legacy Learning Cycle. The task of asking question from one another was given to the students. They did it well. They answered one another's questions very confidently. What we felt is that their confidence level was higher that it was before. This way, they revised their thinking from the very beginning of challenging task till the end. They got great instructional guidance from the researchers and seemed to be very determined and motivating to make progress in their studies. More importantly, they got real life lessons from the designed lessons of the researchers

which activity-based that minimized teacher talk and encouraged student talk. The opportunities provided to them proved to be very productive. All the students showed great progress by actively participating in all these lessons. The designed lessons on the patterns of HPL and STAR frameworks led them to desired learning objectives.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, it is concluded that the study proved to be very effective. The study got very interesting and relevant material for discussion. They got great encouragement from the researchers which boosted their confidence and they showed their willingness in upcoming classroom presentations. The activities in the lessons designed on the patterns of HPL Framework via STAR Legacy Learning Cycle proved helpful in developing their critical thinking. Above all, all the students loved to share their life experiences and problems and challenges they faced in their childhood.

The findings suggest that syllabi must be designed in a way so that learners may enjoy and learn. Outdated syllabi must be replaced by such syllabi that are learner – based and goal – oriented ones. As Slattery and J.F. Carlson (2005:163) believe that syllabi should be easy to navigate and they have seen syllabi for interesting courses that were ineffective because of weak organization. Syllabi must contain strong organization and should enable students to reach the desired learning objectives at the end of the course. There is still a great need to conduct research studies so as to create and design such syllabi that may meet learners' all learning needs.

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