

Learning takes a big role in my life. As a result of an ever faster changing society I need to adapt faster and faster to changes. In different roles my learning takes different forms which, when taken together make who I am. The three major roles that have shaped how I extend my learning are: me as a learner, me as a teacher and me as a leader. In this essay I will examine what contributed to the extension of my learning in these three roles and how this can keep me learning new things in the future.

As a learner I have to learn *how to learn* to be able to adapt to these changes. This requires me to identify my own preferences about learning. To me, this involves immersing yourself continuously in new experiences and nurturing the experiences you value. Pushing yourself into the uncomfortable makes you learn new things as you find yourself frequently in the zone of proximal development as identified by Vygotsky. For me, this included doing an internship in a foreign country even though no internship was required in the Master program I am enrolled in, taking up voluntary work while I was there and looking for interesting courses of other majors that can complement my current major. Besides the experience of living in a foreign country, my internship taught me valuable research and writing skills that were not covered in my academic program (eg doing hands on work like doing interviews and create interesting write-ups of them). These skills proved to be extremely valuable in writing my thesis. Taking up voluntary work in another country allowed me to immerse myself into the local culture which would not have opened if I did not become friends with the locals. Taking a psychology course besides my educational program allowed me to connect the ideas of the different subject areas (eg the connection between appreciative inquiry and the empathy-altruism hypothesis by Batson, Early & Salvarani (1997)).

As a teacher in formal education I have to learn *how to help others find their own preferred learning methods*. When I just started out as a teacher in formal education my lessons mirrored my own learning preferences (traditional lectures). It was only when my mentor told me to try something new that I did so. Doing so resulted in the realization my learning preferences are not necessarily similar to those of my students. This was the start for me to begin experimenting with different ways of teaching (eg I a project in which students had to create their own miniature bridge in order to learn about material properties). More recent I try not to limit myself to my subject area (physics) but to extend this to other subjects as well (I am currently involved in the development of a mobile app for an art class on augmented reality) to increase the number of tools I can use in my own classes.

As a youth leader in scouting for youngsters aged 15 to 17 I have to learn them to *expand their comfort zone* which allows them to explore the world for themselves. This is usually done by doing challenging outdoor activities (eg crossing a 5 meter gap by building a bridge over it). However, it sometimes requires me to expand my own comfort zone as well. Last year, we went bungee jumping during our annual camp. Some youngsters were somewhat scared (which is fine) and I offered to go first even though I had not tried this before. When I had to jump a fear came over me and it took several moments

before I found the courage to jump. After the jump, I decided to talk with the youngsters that were still undecided about jumping and share the fact I was scared before I jumped but, once in the air, I really enjoyed it. When the youngsters realized they were not the only ones that were scared they decided to give it a try. Afterwards they told me that, although they were scared before, they were really proud of themselves for trying. This made me proud as it learned me it is sometimes good to admit you are scared of something but pushing yourself just a little further can give you an experience you are unlikely to forget anytime soon (in a positive sense).

Looking at these three roles, extending my learning involves the following: immersion in new experiences, realizing there are ways to do things other than your preferred method and expanding my comfort zone. These activities reminded me about a quote by Steve Jobs: "*Stay hungry, stay foolish*". To me this means I should keep continuing the activities I am doing, although they should be a little different each time I do them. So when I reflect on them, what I used think I knew and what I know now will keep on changing.

Batson, C., Early, S., & Salvarani, G. (1997). Perspective talking: Imagining how another feels versus imagining how you would feel. *Personality and social psychology bulletin* , 23, 751-758.