LEARNER ENGAGEMENT AND INSTRUCTIONAL OUTCOMES

Charles Dye, PhD

In December 2019 Charles Dye of **InSync Training**, a company specializing in instructional use of the virtual classroom environment for workplace training, completed his PhD research on the learner engagement construct.

"Engagement" is a popular word in L&D, typically used with vague definition and rationale for its importance. Dye sought to establish better definition of the idea of learner engagement, explore the relationship of learner to learning environment, and identify dimensions and characteristics of engagement. Among the findings particularly relevant to our readership were isolation of three dimensions of learner engagement: affective, cognitive, and situational. Moreover, data consistently supported the idea that learner engagement was not fixed throughout a learning experience, but rather changed—often quite quickly, both as a consequence of the learner and the environment. There's also interesting conversation around the definition of "outcome" and whether that is some summative final examination at course end, or in the broader application of new learning. This report culminates in some findings regarding mandatory v. voluntary learning experiences, and tips for facilitators working in the virtual classroom environment.

Because engagement is a hot topic in L&D often used in conversations involving design and development, I asked Dr. Dye to recap his work and offer suggestions for how it might inform our practice. With Dye's permission I took a stab at making it a bit more accessible to those not used to reading the academic writing style required for projects like dissertations. For those interested in a deeper dive into specifics of his work as well as the full list of his resources, the complete dissertation is available online.

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