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Mrs. Jamie Cyphers
Graduate Student
University of Tennessee - Knoxville
1234 University Boulevard
Knoxville, TN 37996

Dear Mrs. Cyphers:

While I found your request rather odd, you stated your case eloquently while expressing a genuine interest in my life's work. As it happens, I have a bit of spare time and I would be happy to review the Food Safety Transport Training site for Harvest Support Network, Inc. Please understand, while I am known as "one of the key figures of the so called 'cognitive revolution'" (Smith, 2002), my views have shifted in recent years, and I firmly believe that the culture we live in determines the how and why of learning. But my earliest views on cognitivism are neither here nor there, my dear, since in your letter you expressly asked me to review the site in relation to my constructivist theories.

Before I provide my feedback on the training site, I would like to briefly review some of the basic assumptions of constructivism that have helped me in guiding curriculum and instructional design. First and foremost, learning is an active process. Learners construct knowledge and meaning, from both personal and group experiences, through a process of active inquiry and interaction (Larson, 2014). Learning happens "when information can be directly and practically applied to solving a problem or filling an identified gap"(Larson 2014). As I wrote in *The Culture of Education*, "education tends to work well when learning is first, participatory, provocative, communal, and collaborative; and second, when learning is a process of constructing meaning rather than receiving" (as cited in Takaya, 2013, p. 43). These tenets helped in the continued development of my Discovery Learning Model, which consists of five general principles: 1.) Problem solving, 2.) Learner management, 3.) Integrating and connecting, 4.) Information analysis and interpretation, and 5.) Failure and feedback (Pappas, 2014). As you requested in your letter, I will use these principles to evaluate the effectiveness of the Food Safety Transport Training site.

As I perused the site, I noticed several things in regards to site aesthetics. The site was well structured, organized, easy to navigate, and clearly labeled. While this may not concern some, I am of the firm opinion that content should be structured! The font and color scheme were consistent which can help cut down distractions. As, I assumed, the trainees are volunteers and are already motivated to help, I felt the addition of the YouTube clip on the homepage only served to increase their motivation. My apologies, however, as I am getting sidetracked. Back to the Discovery Model! The training and testing scenarios provided students with problem solving opportunities, however limited (principle 1). The trainees are able to work independently and at their own pace (principle 2). As the trainees must be legal to drive, this gives me a point of reference with age; I feel it's safe to assume that the trainees have some basic knowledge of good hygiene. Trainees then bring their prior knowledge to combine with the new knowledge outlined in the reference material and must connect both to potential solutions to testing scenarios (principle 3). The testing module requires trainees analyze the problem and determine the answer based on both prior and new knowledge (principle 4). In both the training and testing modules, trainees are provided with feedback if they fail to answer the questions correctly (principle 5).

In essence, I do feel like the Food Safety Transport Training site is off to a good start. I can see a combination of approaches used in the instructional design – instructivist, constructivist, and even connectivist -, but I think there's room for improvement. While I am sure there were both time and money constraints, I think there are a few questions the design team should be asking: What can we do to make the instructional activities more meaningful? How can we

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determine and utilize the trainees' prior knowledge? What tools do we have at our disposal that would allow for more social interaction? How can we develop training that allows for hands-on experience before trainees are allowed to transport food? At any rate, those are just a few thoughts from an old guy with a few years experience under his belt. I hope I have been of some use for you.

Sincerely,

Jerome Bruner
Research Professor of Psychology
Senior Research Fellow in Law

Reference:

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