



Learning Needs & Resources Assessment (LNRA)

ASK **OBSERVE** STUDY

Observation. In this month’s *Tips & Tools* we will focus on the “Observe” dimension in the teaching preparation phase of the *Learning Needs and Resources Assessment* (LNRA). For those that aren’t familiar with the LNRA, it is a tool that Dialogue Educators use in their preparation to design or to teach an existing learning event. It can be done by attending to three actions: Ask, Observe and Study.

Observe what?

1. OBSERVE: The culture, context, and circumstances of participants. OBSERVE where the information (knowledge) and skills you will be teaching will be used, and, how the attitudes you hope to influence are currently manifested. OBSERVE what appears to support change in that environment and what seem to be the barriers to change?
2. OBSERVE the people who will be coming to your course at their work.
3. OBSERVE people similar to those who will be coming to your course.
4. OBSERVE their clients.
5. Ask yourself: Where else can I OBSERVE? That is, where might I gather information by observing that will help me create learning tasks that are as real and respectful as possible?

Before looking at the usefulness of observation in two real designing and teaching examples, let’s examine some strengths and limits of observation.

Upcoming Events

Learning to Listen, Learning to Teach

An Introduction to Dialogue Education™

June 7-10, 2011 ~ Raleigh, NC
with Karen Ridout
(karen@globalearning.com)

[register now](#)

November 1-4, 2011 ~ Toronto, ON
with Jeanette Romkema
(jeanette@globalearning.com)

Early Bird deadline: September 6

[register now](#)

Advanced Learning Design

June 13-15, 2011 ~ Raleigh, NC
with Karen Ridout
(karen@globalearning.com)

Early Bird deadline: April 18

[register now](#)

November 16-18, 2011 ~ Montpelier, VT
with Peter Perkins
(peterp@globalearning.com)

Early Bird deadline: October 5

[register now](#)



June 9 – August 4, 2011

Be notified when registration opens

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Why observe?

1. When observing real people in real situations, we may observe their skills, implied attitudes and knowledge application. We can then create tasks or emphasize aspects of learning tasks that take advantage of this information (relevance).
2. When observing people in their actual working or living conditions, and see indicators of the relationships amongst staff, supervisors, and clients, and/or family members, we gain greater insight into how, when and where the content we are teaching is needed. We are then able to relay and evoke specific situations or circumstances in which content is useful (immediacy).

How to Prepare?

1. Whenever we know we are being observed it can change the way we behave. So as observers we might want to check our findings with others.
2. Any new person in a group changes the group. You, as observer, are the new person! Conveying a sincere appreciation for the people and your desire to create meaningful learning experiences, will not diminish this change, but can increase appreciation for your presence.
3. Observer bias can influence what we look for. Knowing and exploring our own assumptions ahead of time will help us minimize these affects.
4. Perceptual and memory limitations can also play a role. Decide ahead of time how you will document your observation.

Although it was written for observational field research, the following link has a number of pointers worth scanning for a Dialogue Educator as well.

<http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/tutorial/Brown/lauratp.htm>

Without doubt, observation takes time and planning, yet the value to our teaching and to the learning is significant! Here are two real situations where the names have been changed to protect the innocent... *(Just kidding! ☺ To be respectful to our clients, of course!)*

Two examples

1. In a large-scale nutrition education program, all Global Learning Partners teachers were required to visit local sites of this program to OBSERVE. Thus, the teacher had firsthand experience of the circumstances of the program, including site, staffing, clientele, and other details.



Each teacher was able to approach the work with a sincere appreciation for the sometimes chaotic teaching conditions; the level of dedication to clients; the quality and quantity of materials currently being used, and much more.

2. In a redesign of a five-class series for people interested in improving their financial circumstances, the Global Learning Partners consultant observed numerous classes so that she had a good sense of strengths, styles and growth opportunities of different trainers. And her direct observation of the learners provided insights about the diversity of people and their strengths, needs and life situations.

Using this information, she is able to offer more meaningful ideas, appreciate where others may have different views, and through careful questioning, help either leadership or other staff see the situation from different points of view.

Observation is invaluable preparation for creating safe, relevant and engaging learning events!

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Global Learning Partners acknowledges and thanks [Darlene Goetzman](#) for the concept and compilation of this issue of *Dialogue Education™ Tips & Tools*. [Contact Darlene](#) or any of our [Global Learning Partners team](#) about coaching and consulting services, or to bring Dialogue Education™ directly to your company or organization.