

## Mediated Learning

### DIFFERENTIATING DIRECT LEARNING EXPERIENCE FROM MEDIATED LEARNING EXPERIENCE

To start with, let us observe Allan and his mother; afterward, we shall join William and his family.

Allan walks around the big hall of the science museum. He runs from one exhibit to another, presses, moves, touches, pulls, looks, and runs again. His mother has long since stopped running after him. She hears his loud cries and is happy to see her son occupied with the world that unfolds before him and enthused by it. Once or twice she attempts to explain to Allan what is happening in front of him—how the ring was drawn to the magnet, for example—but he is far more interested in creating events rather than in understanding them.

If we draw nearer to Allan and observe his activity, we shall very soon notice that his interaction with the exhibits is confined to sensory-physical activity only, whereas his thinking functions, necessary for comprehending the exhibits, are practically not involved. Even though he appears busy, apparently (also cognitively), and very interested, if we were to draw near to him we would understand that his attention focuses on some exhibit only for a moment, when he presses its operating button, and before he even sees the results of pressing the button he moves on to another activity.

Allan activates the operating mechanism of an exhibit that demonstrates the interaction between two water containers. One can see that he doesn't understand that the rising of the surface of the water in one of the containers and not in the other results from the operating action that he produced. While he is still running here and there feverishly, Allan learns very little about the connection between his action and its outcome. Therefore, every action of his is as if he is doing it for the first time. He is behaving as if every moving object is there in order to be touched, pushed, and kicked, but not beyond that.

Allan experienced, apparently, what is generally termed “direct learning experience.” Experience there most certainly was, but did learning also occur? It would seem not.

Allan’s mother hoped, just as many parents and educators hope, that her son’s direct interaction with the exhibits in the museum would cause him to learn operating principles and characteristics of the phenomena exposed to him. But it appears that looking and operating are not sufficient for learning. To understand what affected the waterline in the vessel, the ability to compare two consecutive situations is required, like the situation of the waterline in the vessel before the operation of the lever and the resulting change in the waterline. However, if Allan does not notice what happened he will be unable to learn about the relationship between the action and its results, and certainly not in that specific experience. Possibly, he will never know how to reproduce the event by repetition of the same action.

As we have said, Allan’s mother is not alone in believing in the power of learning from direct experience. We should remind you that there exist three basic conceptions regarding the way in which the interaction with the environment leads to the development of thinking, to the development of the intelligence, and to the advancement of human beings.

(Beyond Smarter: Mediated Learning and the Capacity for Change by Reuven Feuerstein, Refael S. Feuerstein, and Louis H. Falik, New York and London: Teachers College Press, Columbia University, Kindle, 2010, Page 25 & 26 of 156; Text Modified)