

Review of “In Defense of Cheating”

critique by Aaron Beach

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1 Intro

Nice paper I guess, not really that interesting though. Don Norman is an interesting guy, but a little too stuck in his head I feel. I have been at many talks by him and sat in on his classes when he was teaching at my undergrad and I feel the following: That Don Norman is unorthodox, but not necessarily creative enough to make up for this. Why would he need to make up for being original? Through refusing to build upon precedent one chooses to redesign a new system. Early in the design phase a system may lack the detail to be practical. This is the state of much of Don Norman. He is researcher, maybe a researcher into how to teach, or how design, or even how to do research. But he is not necessarily a great teacher himself. And it is this shortcoming that shines through in this paper.

I am asking myself if it is right to speak so confident and openly against a man who has accomplished so much... Well, I am in the mood to speak out and that is what I have been asked to do - so I will be quite open.

2 Summary

Don Norman points to a few issues that he sees as the primary contributors to cheating in the classroom. The general implication being that each of these aspects foster cheating and do not promote a healthy (or open?) learning environment, in which cheating would naturally tend towards extinction.

3 My Feeling

My general feeling is that many of the issues he brings up are not necessarily brand new, neither are they completely ignored. Group cooperation is part of much education and different types of grading are experimented with often, if not in secondary education, definitely at the university level. This type of oversight is not acceptable in most research communities and I don't see why it should be acceptable in inter-field research either.

4 as for my PhD

? Ehhhh... I don't really know. I guess when I am teaching classes I should spend time thinking and reading about how cheating might be discouraged through synergistic (novel) teaching methods.

5 cheating and collaboration

The idea of defining a clear boundary is not my nature and I think having a clear definition might actually foster more negative (cheating) type energy in the class. Now, it may be necessary (in all fairness) and in order to be official to define cheating clearly. However, in the nature of this article and my natural tendency

I would want to leave that boundary very fuzzy, given that I feel most “definitions” of cheating are both artificial and arbitrary.

6 other article

“What Do Schoolteachers and Sumo Wrestlers Have in Common?” - Steven D Levitt.
Great article about incentives in the real world, and how people evaluate their options.

If you like the article you should read *Freakonomics* by Steven Levitt or any of his many papers on applying economics style study of incentives in the real world.

7 finding the article

I tend to read lots of books, and I really like real-world economics (not really theoretical stuff too much). In fact I conducted a statistical study across data from the Tennessee STAR experiment, which is one of the few Randomized experiments that’s been carried out in education. This led to more reading in studies of incentives in our education system.

8 Format of this paper sucks

because I had to answer all these strange questions in a paper... not really what I wanted to focus on... anywho

9 Final Thought

Of course we need to rethink education, we should always be rethinking education. In fact, many teachers do rethink their education and teaching methods all the time. As far as Don Norman goes, he needs to do some rethinking of his thinking on education, and pay more attention to what the community at large is talking about. His points are valid, his solutions are interesting, however the implications and general theme emphasize his ignorance. This paper emphasizes that Don Norman would rather express his own opinion, immature as it be, rather than seek out others’ opinions. This is not unnatural, in fact I do it all the time, however it is *unscientific*.