

Subject Matter Immersion: A Method to Reach Deep Learning

Principles Associated with SMI

Subject Matter Immersion (SMI) Defined: The idea is to fully immerse and envelop students in a subject or discipline, where they take responsibility for what they learn, how they will learn, how they will demonstrate mastery of the subject, and even how they will earn a final grade in the course.

Learning Environment/Situation: Aligning with our 4I framework, students are placed in real and relevant immersive situations and environments, requiring them to problem-solve, create, design, and make decisions regarding the course of their learning.

1. Subject Matter Immersion is a method to reach Deep Learning—to *know, do, and become*---based on principles of learning theory, pedagogy, and a Spirit-Centered learning environment.
2. SMI is associated with *doing* and *demonstrating* knowledge. Listening to lectures, taking multiple-choice tests, and reading articles—these are not the results of SMI. SMI is built on principles of giving students experiences, requiring immediate application of knowledge by demonstrating learned concepts and content.
3. SMI focuses on students taking responsibility and ownership for their learning and choices. Learner-centered teaching principles and practices (Weimer, 2016) are a means to an end. Having a base knowledge of tested learner-centered methods is a key ingredient of SMI.
4. Immersive experiences can last 20 minutes, 6 days, one module, or an entire semester. Learning environments where students are placed out of their comfort zone results in learner agility--the ability to move from situation to situation where students demonstrate resilience and grit, along with confidence and mastery of the subject matter.
5. Teachers must stand ready to support students who are uncomfortable as they transition to this type of learning climate from a traditional climate. Heightened communication and interaction from teacher-to-student and student-to-student deepens through ministering and mentoring.
6. Formative and rapid feedback through assessment is essential for students to recognize how they're growing, learning, and changing, or where improvement is needed. SMI will often expose strengths and weaknesses in student behavior and performance, thus helping them to become self-reliant, self-regulated, and lifelong learners.
7. Learning and *learning how to learn* is an emphasized component of SMI. Frequent *critical reflection* offers learners a chance to construct meaning of their learning as they evaluate their behavior, preparedness, and capabilities. Critical reflection allows students to reflect on how they're *becoming* spiritually self-reliant as they seek revelation and guidance throughout the learning process.

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SMI RESULTS Behavior and mindset growth align with foundations of transformational learning theory. Students experience conceptual shifts and behavioral changes; existing assumptions, beliefs, values, and perspectives are questioned, revised, or changed. Students gain a deeper awareness of self and others, leading to deeper interactive learning and ministry. Students and instructors who act in faith, with a desire and willingness to experience a change, will recognize the enabling power of grace that flows through the Atonement of Jesus Christ as it fills the void of weaknesses, shortcomings, and inadequacies. Through this power and divine means of help, the fruits of deep learning--- confidence, capability, and competence--- are observable.