Educational Websites Evaluation Project

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IDE 641-Techniques in Education Evaluation

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IDE 641-Educational Websites Evaluation

Introduction

Technology continues to grow at an astonishing rate and is a part of life for everyone in society. It is my thought that technology is accelerating at a pace that is even faster than the human imagination can keep up with. Therefore, it is safe to assume that technology plays a vital role in our educational systems and processes within society. Technology and education combined will continue to grow and play a vital role serving as a critical tool with how people learn in the future.

The educational websites of today are excellent examples of how both technology and education collide for the user. Educational websites allow for the designer to create an environment that personalizes the learning for its intended audience. Educational websites can allow ease of access for its intended audience and can provide a valuable interactive learning experience. Unlike with most other websites the goals and objectives of the educational website are particularly important. It is important to take a holistic non-biased view at educational websites to ensure that they meet the goals and objectives they set out to accomplish for their learners and intended audience. The human user interface plays a vital role in linking the user to the goals and objectives for the website. The ability to evaluate or judge each website will be critical to ensuring those objectives and goals and methods to achieve them through human user interface are being met. According to Potter (n.d). "evaluation is one of the most important steps in the design process, and yet it's usually the step that gets left out." (Lesson 10, para 3.) For this project I intend to provide a holistic professional evaluation of the human user interfaces and how they move to meet the websites goals and objectives with the following two selected educational websites:

➢ Fun Brain Educational Website
  ▪ URL: https://funbrain.com

➢ Turtle Diary Educational Website
  ▪ URL: https://www.turtlediary.com

Both websites are similar in their purpose and scope and have some differences in concepts, platform, interface, and design that I will discuss later in this project. First, the educational website funbrain according to its platform was formed in 1997 and has a target audience of learners in Kindergarten through 5th grade. In addition, this website has a secondary audience that aims to support the parents and educators for this domain of learners. Fun brain has numerous games, books, comics, and video to choose from for its students. These resources help the students with critical thinking, problem-solving and reading skills. The second website discussed in this report is the educational website turtle diary that has a target audience of learners in Kindergarten through 8th grade. Like funbrain, turtlediary also has a secondary target audience of both the parents and educators of these intended learners. Turtle diary provides a variety of educational resources for its learners in content practice, problem-solving skills, and fun educational interactive experiences. In addition, turtle diary also aims to

help reduce stress for parents of online students, provide resources, encourages educational gaming that corresponds with learning, and provides learner assessments for both parents and educators.

In comparison both educational websites contain an enormous amount of content for numerous grade levels of learners. In this project I will narrow my focus to comparing, contrasting, and evaluating the third-grade level for each website. The purpose of me narrowing the project will allow a more manageable and qualitative project presentation for the reader. There are many different tools available for website evaluation but for the purpose of this project, I aim to use just one type of rating form.

Website Rating Instrument

The instrument that I will use for the purpose of evaluating the above mentioned two educational websites during this project is a website rating form created by Dr. Tom Reeves *(Harmon & Reeves 1998©).* This tool can be found by following the below link:

[Harmon and Reeves Educational WWW Sites Evaluation Instrument](#)

Educational Web Sites Evaluation Instrument
Harmon & Reeves – Copyright 1998

According to the Harmon & Reeves evaluation instrument (1998, para. 1) "This instrument is meant to be used by teachers (pre-service or In-service) to evaluate Web sites that they might use for teaching and learning purposes with their students." The evaluation instrument uses a five-point scale, and the designed sub-questions are provided to help the evaluator in the critical thinking needed to provide the educational website with a successful evaluation.

I was given permission to use this website rating instrument via Syracuse University in course IDE- 641 for the purpose of this project. Within this project, I Kevin Schuller will modify the instrument to the proper application of evaluation for my selected websites. The modification of this educational website evaluation instrument will be applied to my two chosen educational websites (funbrain.com, turtlediary.com) to meet the requirements outlined in the rubric for my course of instruction. The modification will include removing any non-applicable criteria within the evaluation instrument to meet the needs of my two selected educational websites. In addition, there will be some additions made to the evaluation instrument based on resources and information provided within my course.

The following paragraphs provide an in-depth systematic evaluation process for the educational websites funbrain and turtlediary. The purpose of the detailed evaluations provided below will help capture a deeper understanding of these two interactive websites. Both the turtle diary and funbrain educational websites human-computer interfaces will help provide my project scope with their effectiveness, efficiency, and user friendliness.

Evaluations

Fun Brain Educational Website Evaluation

Educational Web Sites Evaluation Instrument
Harmon & Reeves – Copyright 1998

1. The information in this site is accurate.
Sub-questions to ask yourself:
a. Does the information appear consistent with what you already know about the educational website?
b. Does the educational website provide evidence that it comes from reputable sources?
c. Does the educational website contain any obvious biases, or is it maintained by an organization likely to have strong biases?
d. Does the site contain advertising that might limit the nature of the educational content?

Not Applicable	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
N/A	-2	-1	0	1	2

Evaluation Comments:
A. The overall site provides age-appropriate material for learners that are in the 3rd Grade and is consistent with what the topic should provide in any subject.
B. Reputable sources are exceptionally good in the reading section. It provides all relevant sourcing for the material.
C. ©Funbrain Holdings LLC-No obvious biases
D. Although this site is free, there are an extreme number of clickable advertisement boxes throughout the website that make user interface difficult and frustrating. There are various ways in which the user can click there way out of the site. It takes away from the content they present.

2. The information in this site is current.
Sub-questions to ask yourself:
a. Is the information subject to change or is the educational content for 3rd grade reliable?
b. If subject to change, when was the site last updated? Does the information appear up to date?

Not Applicable	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
N/A	-2	-1	0	1	2

Evaluation comments:
A. The content within the site for 3rd grade is stable and reliable. There are small opportunities for either increasing existing content *(if desired)* capacity or updating current content *(if applicable).*
B. Unknown date for site update. In conducting a */sitemap.xml* the information to determine when the site was last updated. The current information appears to be up to date within the educational website.

IDE 641-Educational Websites Evaluation

3. The information in this site is sufficient in scope.
Sub-questions to ask yourself:
a. Does this site contain sufficient breadth and depth of information related to the website?
b. Does this site contain sufficient breadth and depth of information related to the topics it claims to cover within the 3rd grade?

Not Applicable	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
N/A	-2	-1	0	1	2

Evaluation comments:
- A. The reading portion for 3rd grade level is exceptional. The other subjects such as math organization to a particular grade level are non-structured.
  (410 total interactive games, video, reading and resources for 3rd grade)
- B. There is the proper amount of breadth and depth for its intended purpose but navigation to certain subjects is challenging.

4. The level of information in this site is appropriate for my students.
Sub-questions to ask yourself:
a. Does the site contain information appropriate for learners with respect to 3rd grade?
b. Does the site contain information appropriate for learners with respect to the cognitive abilities of learners within 3rd grade?
c. Does the site contain educational content appropriate for 3rd grade learners with respect to their prior knowledge or concrete experiences of the topic?
d. Are there clearly defined learning goals and objectives for the learners within the interactive applications?
e. Are there any deficiencies in the students learning effectiveness and efficiency?

Not Applicable	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
N/A	-2	-1	0	1	2

Evaluation comments:
- A. Most of the content is looped between multiple grade levels and some maturity levels in content do not match up properly.
- B. The videos presented within the educational website provide no cognitive abilities rather it is more like watching cartoons. The math and reading areas really target good cognitive skill requirement.
- C. The ability to navigate to multiple sections can easily distract from building on prior knowledge exercises. Lacks structure to build from previous concrete experiences.
- D. In some areas learning goals and objectives are designed for the user but many areas provide fun for the user but lack goals and objectives.
- E. The individual course interfaces provide limited effectiveness.

5. The information in this site is presented clearly.
Sub-questions to ask yourself:
a. Is the educational content arranged in an orderly fashion for the 3rd grade sections of the educational websites?
b. Is the educational information, content, and resources presented clearly?
c. Does the site present the professional classroom environment appearance that would be expected of a learning website?

Not Applicable	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
N/A	-2	-1	0	1	2

Evaluation Comments:
- A. The information is organized within the 3rd grade level tab but then becomes undefined by subject area. Content not organized within grade level.
- B. The educational individual applications are very clearly articulated, and information is presented clearly. Each separate model has instructions for module and interface.
- C. The structure of the website needs a more professional balance and adds really detract from the educational environment.

6. Navigation in this site is user-friendly.
Sub-questions to ask yourself:
a. How easy is it to find information, content, subject, and resources in this educational website?
b. How easy is it to move around in this educational website without getting lost or finding yourself on a different website?
c. Does the website provide multiple ways of accessing the same information (e.g., does the site have a built-in search capability)?

Not Applicable	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
N/A	-2	-1	0	1	2

Evaluation Comments:
- A. Navigation of this educational website is exceedingly difficult due to numerous adds and poor structure throughout the site.
- B. The site provides adds in abundance and it is very easy to navigate to a unintended site.
- C. There is a search engine, but it yields poor results unless you specifically know the resource name you are looking for.

7. Media is integrated effectively in this site.

Sub-questions to ask yourself:

a. *Does the site make good use of graphics? Audio? Animation? Video?*
b. *Is the media used effectively in conveying the educational content, subject, and resources to 3rd grade level learners?*
c. *Is the information in the site enhanced by the media in it? Does the media help support the information to aide in learning of the 3rd grade student?*
d. *Does the media elicit the right emotional responses for the 3rd grade student?*

Not Applicable	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
N/A	-2	-1	0	1	2

Evaluation Comments:

A. The graphics that support the website are generic and lack a bit of depth. They are adequate for the intended audience of 3rd grade students but could lack a second level of development.
B. The media interaction provides the intended student with a good experience. The combination of user interface and graphics make each lesson unique and appealing.
C. The information in the gaming portions help the student to stay engaged and the reading provides an experience like the student is seeing the book from afar.
D. The media provides an incredibly fun and emotional interaction between the content and its user.

8. This site provides maps that clarify the site contents.

Sub-questions to ask yourself:

a. *Does the site provide a clear overview of what each section of 3rd grade contains?*
b. *Is it obvious what the site does not contain as it relates to the 3rd grade learner?*
c. *Does the site contain a map or table of contents that allows you to see the user to view | previously or not yet viewed educational material?*
d. *Does the site allow organization or structure of separate subject content that clarifies the contents within each subject clearly for the 3rd grade learner?*

Not Applicable	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
N/A	-2	-1	0	1	2

Evaluation Comments:

A. The 3rd grade section of the educational website has colored tabs that help identify purpose and contents of individual applications.
B. There is a large amount of content within the site and extremely hard to determine what is missing within the site for the students.
C. There is no function that allows to view or track previously content or material.
D. The site breaks down in order by subject in sections of six with adds separating the content. It is difficult to find each section as you must continue to scroll down.

9. This site exemplifies good web design.

Sub-questions to ask yourself:

a. Is it obvious to a 3rd grade learner on how to successfully interact with this site?

b. If needed, does the site contain a useful help section that makes it easy for a 3rd grader learner to interact with?

c. Are all the possible interactions on a page obvious to a 3rd grade learner?

d. Is the page aesthetically appealing and age appropriate to the learner?

e. Are their additional aesthetics that help reduce white space on the website and tie into learning goals and strategies for the 3rd grade learner?

Not Applicable	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
N/A	-2	-1	0	1	2

Evaluation Comments:

    A. The tab access allows obvious interaction and instructions are clearly provided for user interface.

    B. There is a search function, but no help function within any interaction of the site.

    C. There are several distractions on the page that are outside of the content that confuse the user. The page interaction is a distractor from the content and learning objectives it is trying to achieve.

    D. The page lacks in the three components of proper aesthetics. The use of numerous colors, proper balance and topography structure are not present within the site.

    E. Poor use of white space that offers little apart from adds.

10. This site is a reliable source of information.

Sub-questions to ask yourself:

a. How often is the site down when you try to access it?

b. How long does it take for the pages of the site to come up at the time of day you most likely will use it?

c. Is the site likely to remain on the Web in the future?

d. Will the cost of the site deter the amount of users to the educational website?

Not Applicable	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
N/A	-2	-1	0	1	2

Evaluation Comments:

    A. During multiple evaluation periods the site always remained functional and useable as it was intended.

    B. The load time for the site was excellent and there was never a time where website use or functionality was affected

    C. This website is exceedingly popular and is likely to stay on the web. Multiple search engines have this as a top hit for educational websites.

    D. The site is free of cost and is a benefit to the educational website

11. The constraints of this site do not outweigh its value.
Sub-questions to ask yourself:
a.   Does the site require extensions that must be downloaded and may present difficulties?
b.   Does the site require one specific browser (e.g., Netscape Communicator or Internet Explorer)?
c.   Does the site require hardware features that the learner not have (e.g., sound card)?
d.   Does the site contain features that require specific systems software (e.g., Windows '95)?
e.   Are any fees associated with using the site?

Not Applicable	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
N/A	-2	-1	0	1	2

Evaluation Comments:
A. There are no extensions that must be downloaded causing difficulties for the user.
B. The educational website can be used with a variety of browsers to include *(internet explorer, safari, google chrome, etc.)*
C. This educational website worked on many platforms with no hardware interface restrictions.
D. This educational website had no software restrictions on various platforms.
E. This site is free for the user and that contributes to its popularity on the web.

12. This site protects the confidentiality of the user and security of the site.
Sub-questions to ask yourself:
a. Does the site require the learner to submit information about themselves or their school before granting access? If so, what does it do with this information?
b. Does the site require "cookies" or other information about the learner's system?
c. Does the terms and conditions clearly articulate copyright regulations for the user?   Does a parent or guardian need to acknowledge terms and conditions?
d. If, so does the are the terms and conditions agreement required for the user to acknowledge prior to use of the website?
e. Does the terms and conditions clearly articulate liabilities between the site and the user?

Not Applicable	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
N/A	-2	-1	0	1	2

Evaluation Comments:
A. There is no information requirement of the user for use of the website.
B. There is no disclosure for "cookies" within the website.
C. The terms and conditions are clearly spelled out for copyright violations of users. Parents do not need to acknowledge before use.
D. The terms and conditions do not require user acknowledgement within website.
E. All liabilities for both the user and website are defined within the terms and conditions.

Turtle Diary Educational Website Evaluation

Educational Web Sites Evaluation Instrument
Harmon & Reeves – Copyright 1998

1. The information in this site is accurate.
Sub-questions to ask yourself:
a. Does the information appear consistent with what you already know about the educational website?
b. Does the educational website provide evidence that it comes from reputable sources?
c. Does the educational website contain any obvious biases, or is it maintained by an organization likely to have strong biases?
d. Does the site contain advertising that might limit the nature of the educational content?

Not Applicable	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
N/A	-2	-1	0	1	2

Evaluation Comments:
A. The overall site provides age-appropriate material for learners that are in the 3rd Grade and is consistent with what the topic. The variety available provides the consistency.
B. Achievements from the ADS and Homeschool.com attribute to reputation on the site. Site also has achievements for the leading site in elementary education.
C. ©2021Turtlediary.com-There is a slight bias towards advertisements within the site.
D. Although this site is free, it comes with advertisements. To remove advertisements, the site cost is $69.99/year for parents and $199.99 for teachers up to 30 students.

2. The information in this site is current.
Sub-questions to ask yourself:
a. Is the information subject to change or is the educational content for 3rd grade reliable?
b. If subject to change, when was the site last updated? Does the information appear up to date?

Not Applicable	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
N/A	-2	-1	0	1	2

Evaluation comments:
A. The content within the site is stable and extremely reliable. There are small changes to daily content that allow the user interface and content to remain relevant.
B. Last website update was 22 February 2021. In conducting a */sitemap.xml* the information to determine when the site was last updated. The current information is up to date within the educational website.

3. The information in this site is sufficient in scope.
Sub-questions to ask yourself:
a. Does this site contain sufficient breadth and depth of information related to the website?
b. Does this site contain sufficient breadth and depth of information related to the topics it claims to cover within the 3rd grade?

Not Applicable	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
N/A	-2	-1	0	1	2

Evaluation comments:
   A. The subject variety for 3rd grade level gaming is exceptional.   There are numerous educationally focused subjects, assessments, quizzes, worksheets, games, etc.
      (1106 total interactive games, videos, exams, assessments, and resources for 3rd grade)
   B. There is a vast amount of breadth and depth for its intended purpose within the content and topics.   The information deep in subject variety, resources, and assessments.

4. The level of information in this site is appropriate for my students.
Sub-questions to ask yourself:
a. Does the site contain information appropriate for learners with respect to 3rd grade?
b. Does the site contain information appropriate for learners with respect to the cognitive abilities of learners within 3rd grade?
c. Does the site contain educational content appropriate for 3rd grade learners with respect to their prior knowledge or concrete experiences of the topic?
d. Are there clearly defined learning goals and objectives for the learners within the interactive applications?
e. Are there any deficiencies in the students learning effectiveness and efficiency?

Not Applicable	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
N/A	-2	-1	0	1	2

Evaluation comments:
   A. The content within this website is specifically focused to the appropriate grade level. Each grade level content accurate and provides the right maturity interface.
   B. The cognitive domain for the 3rd grade section is vast and is an excellent resource to challenge the critical thinking and problem-solving skills needed.
   C. Each subject, lesson, and topic sections are designed to successfully tie into past concrete experiences and previous lesson content.
   D. Lesson and assessment areas directly tie into learning goals and objectives for each user.
   E. The individual course interfaces provide excellent effectiveness and efficiency for the user through challenging and relevant curriculum.

5. The information in this site is presented clearly.
Sub-questions to ask yourself:
a. Is the educational content arranged in an orderly fashion for the 3rd grade sections of the educational websites?
b. Is the educational information, content, and resources presented clearly?
c. Does the site present the professional classroom environment appearance that would be expected of a learning website?

Not Applicable	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
N/A	-2	-1	0	1	2

Evaluation Comments:
A. The information is organized within the 3rd grade level is organized not only by subject but also topic content ensuring good structure throughout.
B. The educational individual applications are clearly articulated, and information is presented clearly. Each separate model has in depth instructions for module and interface.
C. The structure of the website provides an extremely professional appearance and contributes to the user's educational environment and experiences. The free side of the site does have some limitations to the overall professional appearance due to adds.

6. Navigation in this site is user-friendly.
Sub-questions to ask yourself:
a. How easy is it to find information, content, subject, and resources in this educational website?
b. How easy is it to move around in this educational website without getting lost or finding yourself on a different website?
c. Does the website provide multiple ways of accessing the same information (e.g., does the site have a built-in search capability)?

Not Applicable	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
N/A	-2	-1	0	1	2

Evaluation Comments:
A. Navigation of this educational website is incredibly easy and keeps the user focused on the subject and content they are attempting to experience.
B. The paid side of the site eliminates the ads, and the free side of the site contains ads to support its use. Ads are age appropriate for the user of the site.
C. There is a search engine that yields results tied to not only the site but the web in its entirety. If the user is not careful can easily navigate off the site to another intended site. There is a sitemap located at the bottom that is a bit hard to find but provides excellent navigation to anywhere on the site.

7. Media is integrated effectively in this site.
Sub-questions to ask yourself:
a. Does the site make good use of graphics? Audio? Animation? Video?
b. Is the media used effectively in conveying the educational content, subject, and resources to 3rd grade level learners?
c. Is the information in the site enhanced by the media in it? Does the media help support the information to aide in learning of the 3rd grade student?
d. Does the media elicit the right emotional responses for the 3rd grade student?

Not Applicable	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
N/A	-2	-1	0	1	2

Evaluation Comments:
- A. The graphics are rich in color and contrast. They do an excellent job in providing focus and user interface ability. The lack of audio needs improvement on the homepage.
- B. The media interaction provides the intended student with a good experience. The combination of user interface and graphics make each lesson unique and appealing.
- C. The information is rich in depth and breadth and the media plays a vital role in the learning theories and experiences.
- D. The media provides an incredibly fun and emotional interaction between the content and its user. It is not only fun but also very professional for the educational setting.

8. This site provides maps that clarify the site contents.
Sub-questions to ask yourself:
a. Does the site provide a clear overview of what each section of 3rd grade contains?
b. Is it obvious what the site does not contain as it relates to the 3rd grade learner?
c. Does the site contain a map or table of contents that allows you to see the user to view previously or not yet viewed educational material?
d. Does the site allow organization or structure of separate subject content that clarifies the contents within each subject clearly for the 3rd grade learner?

Not Applicable	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
N/A	-2	-1	0	1	2

Evaluation Comments:
- A. The 3rd grade section of the educational website has bold tab structure with pictures that aid the visual learner in understanding what the content provides and its expectations.
- B. There is an enormous amount of content within the site and does allow a way to monitor what the site does not contain. It does a good job articulating what it does provide.
- C. There is no function that allows to view or track previously content or material.
- D. The site breaks down in order by subject and topic clearly for the user of the website. It is easy to find each section on one screen to ensure clarity of the contents within.

9. This site exemplifies good web design.

Sub-questions to ask yourself:

a. Is it obvious to a 3rd grade learner on how to successfully interact with this site?

b. If needed, does the site contain a useful help section that makes it easy for a 3rd grader learner to interact with?

c. Are all the possible interactions on a page obvious to a 3rd grade learner?

d. Is the page aesthetically appealing and age appropriate to the learner?

e. Are their additional aesthetics that help reduce white space on the website and tie into learning goals and strategies for the 3rd grade learner?

Not Applicable	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
N/A	-2	-1	0	1	2

Evaluation Comments:

A. The symbols, graphic and text allow aid in providing easy visualization and instructions that allow obvious interaction within the website.

B. There are numerous ways to receive help within the site. The FAQ section provides answers to common questions and the contact section is available for any other questions. There is no help feature for any computer automated help within the site.

C. The page provides all three components of proper aesthetics. The use of numerous colors, proper balance and topography structure are present within the site and serve as one of the sites strengths.

D. Proper use of white space to provide appeal, information, links, and navigation within the website.

10. This site is a reliable source of information.

Sub-questions to ask yourself:

a. How often is the site down when you try to access it?

b. How long does it take for the pages of the site to come up at the time of day you most likely will use it?

c. Is the site likely to remain on the Web in the future?

d. Will the cost of the site deter the amount of users to the educational website?

Not Applicable	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
N/A	-2	-1	0	1	2

Evaluation Comments:

A. During multiple evaluation periods the site always remained functional and useable as it was intended. It was the same user function on both the paid and free sites.

B. The load time for the site was excellent and there was never a time where website use or functionality was affected.

C. This website is exceedingly popular and is likely to stay on the web. Multiple search engines have this as a top hit for educational websites.

D. The cost can potentially limit the amount of users that interact with the sight.

11. The constraints of this site do not outweigh its value.
Sub-questions to ask yourself:
a. *Does the site require extensions that must be downloaded and may present difficulties?*
b. *Does the site require one specific browser (e.g., Netscape Communicator or Internet Explorer)?*
c. *Does the site require hardware features that you may not have (e.g., sound card)?*
d. *Does the site contain features that require specific systems software (e.g., Windows '95)?*
e. *Are any fees associated with using the site?*

Not Applicable	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
N/A	-2	-1	0	1	2

Evaluation Comments:
- A. Many of the games need extensions that are not available with update browsers. Flash updates are a problem within the educational website.
- B. The educational website cannot be used with a variety of browsers to include *(internet explorer, safari, google chrome, etc.)* Modern browsers pose a serious issue.
- C. This educational website worked on many platforms with no hardware interface restrictions.
- D. This educational website had no software restrictions minus the previously stated browser issues on various platforms.
- E. This site is free for the user and that contributes to its popularity on the web. The paid site provides a richer experience as a steep cost to the user.

12. This site protects the confidentiality of the user and security of the site.
Sub-questions to ask yourself:
a. *Does the site require the learner to submit information about themselves or their school before granting access? If so, what does it do with this information?*
b. *Does the site require "cookies" or other information about the learner's system?*
c. *Does the terms and conditions clearly articulate copyright regulations for the user? Does a parent or guardian need to acknowledge terms and conditions?*
d. *If, so does the are the terms and conditions agreement required for the user to acknowledge prior to use of the website?*
e. *Does the terms and conditions clearly articulate liabilities between the site and the user?*

Not Applicable	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
N/A	-2	-1	0	1	2

Evaluation Comments:
- A. There is no information requirement of free users but there is of paid users.
- B. There is a clear disclosure and explanation for "cookies" within the website.
- C. The terms and conditions are clearly spelled out for copyright violations of users. The paid site requires parent interactions, but the free site does not.
- D. The terms and conditions do not require user acknowledgement within website for free users, but it is required for paid users.
- E. All liabilities for both the user and website are defined within the terms and conditions.

IDE 641-Educational Websites Evaluation

Compare and Contrast

   The results within this evaluation indicated a stark difference between the two educational websites. The evaluation of these similar educational websites *(although designed for the same basic purpose and content)* were on the opposite sides of the spectrum. The goal and objectives of both educational websites look at providing students in the 3rd grade with innovative technology to make learning both fun and educational. One of these websites proved to be far superior to the other for several different reasons.

   Funbrain is an extremely popular free educational website that lacks a bit of accuracy within its content and design. The literature side works well for providing a wide variety of books aimed at making reading appealing to the user. The educational games that are contained within this site are entertaining for the learner, but it does not seem to effectively challenge the cognitive domain for its user. Some games provide entertainment but not educational value. Most of the videos contained within the 3rd grade section are nothing more than cartoons you would see on television. The videos also lacked good structured and efficient educational content. The overall content and its organization contained within the 3rd grade level category is bunched together with other grade levels. For example, you might find a game, video or book that is designed for a user that is in grades Kindergarten through 5th grade. This can be problematic as it lacks specific cognitive learning theories for a specific grade level. The category becomes too broad and misses on the intended goals and objectives for learning at a particular grade level. I found navigation within the site exceedingly difficult as the use of ads (due to it being a free site) that severely detracts and distracts the user from the learning experience. On many occasions it is difficult to focus on the lesson, game, or book because ads are visually distracting you from the content and the learning content appears in a small box within the larger website. In some applications you can make the content bigger to help with learner focus, but the ads never really disappear. Although there are numerous activities they do not seem to nest and rely on past concrete experiences to aid in cognitive growth. Information is organized poorly and is not presented in a professional manner that would lead the user down an educational path. The graphics and media within the site lack depth and richness and seem very generic in nature. This also takes away from the appeal and reliability of the educational environment that the website is designed for. I do not think this website has an overall good web design because the user has a difficult time searching for information or getting help within the website. Overall, the site lacks balance, richness, structure, and navigation. The site did work as intended and had little technical functionality issues. This functionality made this website reliable on every occasion I visited it. The ease of access for this site because of the cost is ultimately why I believe this is such a popular site. Parents and teachers with users that visit this site should understand the lack of effective and efficient educational content compared to other sites that are on the web. Funbrain has a good foundation but needs improvement and adjustments to more educational effective and efficient content and less entertainment.

To do this, I believe that it might incur cost and ultimately move this website away from being able to provide its service for free. There is some validity to the old saying in *you get what you pay for* in this educational website.

     Turtle diary is an extraordinarily versatile website that can cater to free and paid users. The experience for paid users is much more extensive but the free users still have a particularly good educational experience. The information within the website is extremely accurate and the website itself boasts numerous awards and achievements. The cost of a membership to this site can be expensive for some users. The information and content within the site are kept current and up to date daily. There is an impressive amount of content and a wide variety of topics available to all users within the site. This site is different than fun brain in that it also offers assessments, exams, lesson plans, quizzes, tools for teachers, printable worksheets, biographies and much more. The additional educational resources really add to the capabilities of the learner environment and set it apart from fun brain. Turtle diary is unlike fun brain in that it provides more of a focus on education versus entertainment. Turtle diary is clearly committed to its efforts to make education as its foundation. There are in fact fun interactive games that provide entertainment but there is also educational substance and structure within the 3rd grade section. The lessons, educational material, resources, and information are specifically geared to the age of its intended learner. The educational material is challenging and provides a level of effectiveness and efficiency that is relevant to its user. The educational material really helps aid in cognitive growth and builds on previous concrete experiences for each user. There are a few distractions on the free side of the site due to ads, but the overall professional structure of the site looks to reduce that as much as possible. Navigation of this site is much easier than that of fun brain and there are far fewer times that I found myself out of the desired content area. Searching for material within the site can be a bit challenging as it searches the web holistically. The search engine within the website links the search results to those based on the entire web and not just the site. When using the search engine, if the user is not careful, can be easily diverted to other unintended websites. The frequently asked questions, site map, and contact areas of the website really aid in any help or navigation challenges within the website. The organization, structure, and media efficiency are also a positive takeaway for this website. Better use of audio features could help enhance the experience. The media games and content provide entertainment but also maintain a professional educational experience. Turtle diary has extraordinary organization and structure that cater to different learning styles and clearly identify goals and objectives. The 3rd grade section of the site exemplifies good web design. The graphics, color choice, layout and text selection provide excellent balance, topography, white space useability, and structure to the educational website. The website is reliable and worked every time it was visited. Overall, the website is popular but costly to the paid user. To utilize all the benefits of the site you pay a significant amount of money. That cost could sway some potential users as not everyone has the monetary ability to reap all the benefits of the website.

Still the free user gets to experience a lot of valuable educational content and use some of the great benefits this site has to offer.

In the end and based on the results of my evaluation I feel Turtle Diary is a far better educational website than Fun Brain. I have come to this conclusion due to the design, scope, goals, and objectives of what each site is intended for. Simply put Fun Brain seems to rely more on its free entertainment value versus Turtle Diary's solid educational foundation. Some of the increased qualitative educational content within Turtle Diary is due to the ability to apply the money it earns into the design, content, and resources of the website. Fun Brain has more of an entertainment aurora around it and it seems that educational content comes in as a second priority. Turtle Diary is also far better catered to the parents and teachers of its learners as it provides far more assessment tools and resources for education. Unlike Fun Brain there is a clear priority of education as a main priority and the entertainment aspect as a second. Both educational websites provide a positive experience with clearly delineated strengths and weaknesses. The decision as to which website to use will depend on the monetary resources the user wants to dedicate and the goals and objectives in which each learner is visiting the educational website for.

Evaluation Process Summary

The utilization of the Dr. Tom Reeves *(Harmon & Reeves 1998©)* educational website evaluation instrument was a very eye opening and informative experience. Website evaluation looks to focus on a particular target and in this case, it was the educational website. In this evaluation the twelve subject areas and sub questions were quite challenging for me. Evaluation involves judgement and this evaluation was not an exception. The answers to many of these questions are very subjective in nature and I tried to format my answers based on as much detailed analysis and data collection that I could. My natural tendency during this evaluation was to try to find an objective way to measure my results and I very much struggled with the subjective nature of my answers. To be as accurate as I could with my subjection, this evaluation instrument needed to be slightly modified to fit the needs of my two educational websites. I found that in my evaluation there was only some minor removing, adding, and adjusting of the questions. In my mind this evaluation instrument hit the mark by providing me with the right information to expertly evaluate the two educational websites.

Conclusion

The judgement of the evaluation process in these two websites was much more difficult for me than I anticipated. It was extremely difficult for me after my readings and course instruction to practically apply all the information I learned about evaluations to this project. The subjective nature and judgement of any evaluation does not necessarily equate to an effective one. Not all websites are created equally, and many do not contain accurate and reliable information that nests with the intended goals and objectives. The ability to evaluate these websites properly should start with clearly

defined objectives for your evaluation, identifying proper balance within the website, and producing a judgement on the information contained within. The goal of this evaluation produced within this report theoretically would lead to improvements within the site and increase the student's efficiency and effectiveness in learning. In addition, this evaluation would help the website owners to improve an already existing product to determine its effectiveness, efficiency, merit, and value. I have learned that the evaluation process whether formative or summative takes practice to master. I have discovered valuable lessons during this project on evaluations that I will be able to use in future evaluations. I have a long ways to go before I become a proficient evaluator, but this project really helped me to be able to utilize some practical application to many evaluations as an instructional designer in the future.

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