

8-3: Separating “work” from “practice”

Another big distinction to Doctor Andrew Ericson made in his study of the deliberate practice was difference between work and practice. And so the idea is a lot of us feel that we are getting a lot of practice because we are using the skill a lot. So if you're programmer and your day job is programming you feel I'm getting a lot of practice programming because I'm programming all the time. But this is the bit of distinction and you will sometimes get better by doing a lot of work but this is isn't necessarily the case. So Doctor Erickson study typist for example, found that skill would often plateau, even though their typing a lot. And typing and knowing how fast your typing is something you're going to get immediate feedback on, you're going to know how fast you are typing and your skill is going just plateau are often in this environment even though you are getting a lot of practice. And this is because there is a difference you work and practice. Work is aim in getting a result, so you're using your skill to get a particular objective. So if you are a programmer by trade, then using your programming skills to finish your project from your employer or something that you're personally working on. That is to gain a result; the reason that you are doing it is to piece of software in the end or to do a task that was assigned to you by your boss. This in contrast with practice now if you're practicing, you would have particular project or particular task as you assigning which the result isn't important. The result is what you're after, what your result you're trying to get with is learning the new skill or getting better to particular discipline.

So another way to think of this is the difference between drills and playing a game in sports. So athletes go often do drills which are not the actual purpose of playing the games. So you're not actually, when you're doing dribbling drills in basketball. Lay up drills in basketball; you're not keeping scores, there are no 2 teams. You just repeatedly do some small aspect more aspect of the game. Now this is also true you're trying to learn lot of other skills that are necessarily sports or music when this is quite common practice. By setting aside practice session; even if they're short and you focus on a very specific things that you want to work on and they can drive them away they are not necessarily to achieve a result but they are there to force you to use very particular skill that you are trying to learn. Your skill level will improve. So consider that as well, if you're trying to become a better programmer or writer or designer.

Consider also how you can separate work from practice. Now you can't integrate the two in certain extent, so maybe if you have a bit of flexibility in your job or you have a little bit of flexibility in your career which type of project you can pursue. You can try to pursue once you can maximize your learning. However this will always be a bit slower than actually setting aside sometime to focus specifically on that skill because when you have 2 objectives in mind, the result of the work, if I am a writer for example I have the

result of wanting my writing to be seen by other people to be a useful article that I can add to a blog or to a book. That's the result that I wanted to achieve. And to a certain extent you can be able to do that by practice effort by trying to read an article and also practice a certain skill that I try to learn as well as the composition the result. But you always be, sort of satisfied between those two alternatives. Another way to do that is to set aside time to focus on the drill that you are trying to learn. So as a writer I might focus on only creating headlines or only working thru the same article, rewriting it a dozen times. So I'm not worried about the content, I'm only worried my skill as a writer. That's another thing you can think about as well. You might even want to redo projects that are sort of trivial so you already know how the project works so you don't have to waste time figuring out the project details. But you can focus on the new one using a particular style or using a particular pattern. So think about separating work from practice in extent possible because often when people Plato, it's because their work is not really providing the environment as conducive to learning. So sometimes you need to create a separate environment specifically for practice