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The Learner Journey Framework: A Constructivist Approach to Retention, Course Design, and Financial Sustainability in Higher Education

Brandi Robinson *

School of Educational Leadership, Bowie State University 17 Hermitage Dr., Destrehan, LA 70047

* E-mail of the corresponding author: brandirobinson0581@gmail.com

Abstract

The learner journey framework integrates constructivist principles with Bloom's Taxonomy to provide a structured course design and assessment creation model. This model emphasises scaffolded assessments that align with Bloom's cognitive levels—from recall and understanding to analysing, evaluating, and creating—to mitigate the retention challenges facing higher education institutions. As colleges and universities contend with growing financial pressures and the looming enrolment cliff, the learner journey framework offers a practical solution for improving student engagement, retention, and academic success. This article demonstrates how scaffolded learning can provide financial and academic sustainability through a synthesis of research on constructivism, sequential learning, feedback mechanisms, and cognitive development.

Keywords: Learner journey, Bloom's Taxonomy, constructivism, scaffolded learning, sequential learning, zone of proximal development, retention, enrolment cliff, financial sustainability

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1. Introduction

Student retention rates and the financial health of higher education institutions are closely intertwined. According to Schuh & Gansemer-Topf (2012), institutions increasingly rely on tuition revenue as public funding has decreased. Consequently, student attrition directly translates to significant revenue losses for colleges and universities (Raisman 2013; Schuh & Gansemer-Topf 2012), directly impacting their ability to function effectively.

Student attrition and institutional financial pressure are locked in a vicious cycle, with one exacerbating the other. Institutions pass on the financial stress caused by, for example, reduced federal grants and student subsidies, resulting in the rising cost of higher education (Archibald & Feldman 2016; Archibald & Feldman 2018). Many students, especially those from lower-income backgrounds with overwhelming financial challenges, cannot meet the rising costs of higher education, leading to higher dropout rates, negatively affecting retention and further straining institutional resources (Aina *et al.* 2022; Schuh & Gansemer-Topf 2012).

Berger *et al.* (2012) have argued that student retention has been historically linked to institutions' financial stability. Schools must maintain their student populations to secure academic continuity and financial solvency. This is particularly crucial in an era where competition for students has grown fiercer, and the reliance on tuition revenue has increased (Berger *et al.* 2012). For many institutions, especially those with limited research income or smaller endowments, losing students due to dropout or transfer can destabilise their financial standing. Thus, institutional dependency on tuition revenue creates substantial financial pressures on both colleges and students (Daughtrey *et al.* 2016; Sullivan *et al.* 2016; Titus 2016). As a result, institutions face mounting pressure to retain students to meet academic goals and ensure financial stability.

In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the use of online learning environments (Kumar & Pande 2021; Lee 2021), which may further exacerbate the challenges associated with improving student retention. For instance, Salter (2012) and, more recently, Barbera *et al.* (2017) have noted that while online programs offer flexibility, they suffer from lower retention rates than traditional in-person programs. The responsibility of keeping students engaged and persistent has transferred from the student to the higher education institution (Tight 2019). Thus, the modern challenges in a digital environment call for innovative retention strategies tailored to the needs of online learners (Salter 2012).

One of the critical challenges in addressing student retention is how research in this field is conducted. As Nora

& Crisp (2012) highlighted, much of the research focuses on first-year students when retention issues are not confined to first-year students. Financial stress, academic challenges, and insufficient support systems accumulate over time, compounding the dropout risk as students progress (Nora & Crisp 2012). Therefore, a longitudinal perspective is needed to understand the evolving factors affecting students' persistence throughout their academic careers.

2. The Need for a Scaffolded Learning Framework

Several theoretical student retention models have been proposed, focusing on broad strategies like student engagement, friendship support, family support, informal contact with the faculty, financial support, and academic counselling (Aljohani 2016). To address this gap of retention models focusing on a single intervention, such as improving student advising, we propose the Learner Journey Framework, which offers a more granular approach by emphasising the importance of scaffolded learning and sequential cognitive development using Bloom's Taxonomy (Anderson & Krathwohl 2001).

Learner Journey Framework tackles retention by creating a structured learner journey that incrementally builds cognitive abilities while scaffolding student learning and feedback mechanisms to improve academic retention and persistence. Research shows that learning progressions can effectively scaffold student learning by mapping tasks to specific skill levels and providing feedback aligned with student performance (Song *et al.* 2023). In the Learner Journey Framework, similar learning progressions can be applied to ensure that students are gradually introduced to more complex tasks, reducing the risk of cognitive overload while reinforcing skill development at each stage.

Sequential learning, with assessments and feedback mechanisms aligned to cognitive levels, is more likely to improve student engagement and facilitate their progress through their coursework, ultimately reducing dropout rates. Research supports the idea that providing students with formative feedback through scaffolded learning helps them reflect on their progress and adjust their strategies to improve academic performance. Scaffolded feedback encourages student growth and engagement by giving feedback on the product, process, and learning progress (Fluckiger *et al.* 2010). This approach aligns with the Learner Journey Framework, which scaffolds learning and feedback to ensure students master each cognitive level before progressing to more complex tasks.

Moreover, aligning feedback mechanisms with Bloom's cognitive levels (Knowledge, Comprehension, Application, Analysis, Synthesis, Evaluation) (Bhagyalakshmi & Seshachalam 2015) ensures that students receive consistent academic support, lower frustration with sudden jumps in learning expectations and thus contributes to reduced dropout rates due to cognitive overload.

Therefore, the Learner Journey Framework represents a financially sustainable strategy for institutions. Retaining students through scaffolded learning reduces the loss of tuition revenue that occurs when students drop out (Schuh & Gansemer-Topf 2012). The framework's adaptability across different learning environments, including online and in-person formats, allows institutions to address the diverse needs of their student populations while ensuring academic consistency and support. In addition, the Learner Journey Framework may indirectly help reduce student dropout due to financial burdens (Schuh & Gansemer-Topf 2012) by reducing cognitive overload and disengagement, while structured academic support through scaffolded learning helps students build confidence and mastery incrementally.

3. Core Theoretical Principles Underpinning Learner Journey Framework

3.1 Constructivist Learning Theory

At the core of the Learner Journey Framework is the application of constructivist learning theory, which posits that learners actively construct knowledge through interaction, engagement, and reflection rather than passively absorbing information (Bada & Olusegun 2015). According to Piaget (1977) and Vygotsky *et al.* (1980), learners build their understanding by connecting new knowledge with prior experiences and progressing through increasingly complex tasks. Constructivism emphasises that students must actively participate in their learning, engaging with content in a way that challenges their thinking and encourages deeper cognitive processing.

One of the most influential components of constructivist theory is Vygotsky's Zone Of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Vygotsky *et al.* 1980), which refers to the difference between what a learner can do independently and what they can achieve with appropriate guidance and support. Within the Learner Journey Framework, the idea of scaffolding is directly drawn from the ZPD. Scaffolding involves providing learners with temporary support,

which is gradually removed as they gain independence in mastering a concept or skill. This ensures that learners are continually challenged but not overwhelmed by tasks that are too difficult.

Scaffolding is essential for avoiding sudden jumps in expectations that can occur when learners are asked to engage with tasks beyond their current cognitive abilities without sufficient preparation. When learners encounter these jumps—where assessments or activities leap to higher cognitive levels without the necessary foundational support—they are more likely to disengage, give up, or perform poorly. This often leads to a lack of persistence in courses, contributing to lower retention rates.

The Learner Journey Framework ensures that such jumps do not occur by systematically mapping learning objectives to Bloom's Taxonomy and ensuring that assessments are scaffolded through progressively more challenging cognitive levels. In a scaffolded environment, students develop basic knowledge (e.g., remembering and understanding), which they can then apply in more complex situations (e.g., analysing and evaluating). By gradually building on prior knowledge, students are better prepared for higher-order cognitive tasks like creating, thus minimising the risk of cognitive overload and increasing the likelihood of course completion.

3.2 Bloom's Taxonomy

Bloom's taxonomy categorises cognitive skills into a hierarchy that progresses from basic knowledge recall to higher-order thinking, such as evaluation and creation. Originally proposed by educational psychologist Prof. Benjamin Bloom in 1956 (Bloom *et al.* 1956), the taxonomy was later revised by his students Anderson & Krathwohl (2001). The revised taxonomy emphasises action verbs, such as "remember," "understand," "apply," "analyse," "evaluate," and "create," making it a practical tool for designing assessments that align with learning objectives (Anderson & Krathwohl 2001).

Bloom's taxonomy serves as the natural foundation for the Learner Journey Framework. Learner Journey Framework leverages the taxonomy to scaffold learning and ensure students are systematically supported as they move from lower-order cognitive tasks to higher-order skills. This provides a structured progression through which learners incrementally develop their knowledge and skills. As Armstrong (2010) explains, scaffolded learning helps students avoid cognitive overload by breaking complex tasks into smaller, more manageable steps. This process ensures that students are not overwhelmed by advanced tasks before they have mastered the foundational skills necessary to succeed. In the Learner Journey Framework, each level of Bloom's Taxonomy plays a specific role in scaffolding learning (Figure 1):

1. Remembering (Level 1): At this foundational level, students recall basic facts, concepts, and procedures. The Learner Journey Framework uses this level to establish the groundwork for future learning by ensuring students can access and recall essential information.
2. Understanding (Level 2): After mastering basic recall, students move to the next stage, demonstrating comprehension by explaining concepts and contextualising information. This step is crucial for students to grasp the material deeply enough to apply it in different scenarios.
3. Applying (Level 3): At this level, students are tasked with applying their knowledge to real-world situations. This is a critical step for moving from theory to practice, particularly in healthcare, business, and engineering, where students must transfer classroom learning to practical tasks (Armstrong 2010).
4. Analysing (Level 4): In this stage, students break down complex information into its parts, identifying patterns, relationships, and underlying structures. This level involves higher-order thinking, where learners must go beyond surface-level understanding and critically assess the material.
5. Evaluating (Level 5): In the evaluation phase, learners are asked to make informed judgments about the value of ideas or materials based on criteria or standards. This stage helps students build decision-making and analytical skills by requiring them to weigh evidence, argue for a position, or assess solutions.
6. Creating (Level 6): The final cognitive level in Bloom's Taxonomy involves generating new ideas, products, or solutions by synthesising previously learned material. This is where learners demonstrate mastery by innovating or solving novel problems using their accumulated knowledge.

Each of these levels builds on the previous one, allowing students to progress incrementally through their learning journey without experiencing sudden jumps in cognitive complexity. This structured approach ensures that learners are adequately prepared for each new challenge, reducing the likelihood of disengagement or poor performance.

4. Potential Impact of Learner Journey Framework

4.1 Financial Impact of Retention Through Scaffolded Learning

By increasing retention rates, scaffolded learning frameworks like the Learner Journey Framework can reduce attrition and improve institutional financial sustainability. A 1% increase in student retention can substantially impact tuition revenue. For instance, if a university enrols 8,000 students, each paying $20,000 in annual tuition, retaining just 1% would result in 80 enrolments, translating to $1.6 million in additional tuition revenue. This demonstrates the financial importance of retention efforts; minor improvements can lead to significant gains, bolstering the institution's financial health by ensuring more students stay and continue paying tuition. Similarly, Raisman (2013) estimated that the revenue due to student attrition in 1,669 US colleges and universities is over $16 billion combined or $1 million on average, with students most commonly citing "College Doesn't Care" (33%), followed by "Not Worth It" (19%), "Poor Service and Treatment" (16%), "Schedule" (13%), "Finances" (10%), "Educational Quality" (6%), "Grades" (2%), and "Personal" (1%) as their primary reasons for dropping out. Most of these factors, except schedule, finance, and personal reasons, can be directly addressed by the combination of sequential learning plus continuous assessments and feedback mechanisms aligned to cognitive levels proposed in the Learner Journey Framework, which, if addressed, would lead to retaining 76% of the students. This would translate to a recoupment of $760,000 for an institution losing $1 million annually.

Therefore, institutions can retain more students and secure long-term financial stability by consistently supporting students through structured learning experiences. Additionally, improved student outcomes from scaffolded learning can increase institutional reputations, attract new students, and enhance competitive positioning in the education market.

4.2 Student Belonging, Academic Achievement, and Academic Hardiness

Studies by Ahn & Davis (2019) suggest that students who feel a sense of belonging are more likely to engage academically and socially, contributing to their persistence and retention. Belonging is a crucial factor in academic engagement, with studies showing that when students feel connected to their academic environment, they are more likely to overcome challenges and achieve their academic goals (Thomas 2012). "The What Works? Student Retention & Success" program emphasises that academic and social engagement are crucial for improving retention, as they foster a sense of belonging that leads to greater academic achievement (Thomas 2012).

The Learner Journey Framework enhances academic achievement and plays a critical role in fostering a sense of belonging among students, a factor, as discussed above, that is closely linked to their success in higher education. The Learner Journey Framework supports belonging by providing structured, scaffolded learning experiences that enable students to achieve small academic victories at each stage of their learning journey. These incremental successes help build students' confidence and academic self-efficacy, reinforcing their belief that they are capable and valued academic community members. Academic success becomes a driver of belonging, as students see their efforts and achievements as integral to their identity within the institution.

Moreover, the framework promotes academic hardiness, which mediates the relationship between belonging and academic achievement. Academic hardiness, characterised by commitment, control, and challenge, enables students to face academic difficulties with resilience and perseverance (Abdollahi & Noltemeyer 2016). Students with higher levels of academic hardiness are better equipped to regulate their emotions, stay engaged during stressful academic periods, and persist through challenging coursework (Cheng *et al.* 2019; Kamtsios & Karagiannopoulou 2015; Wardani 2020). This resilience is crucial for achieving long-term academic success, as students with a strong sense of belonging and academic hardiness are more likely to view their academic journey as one of continuous improvement rather than one marked by insurmountable barriers (Abdollahi & Noltemeyer 2016).

The Learner Journey Framework's scaffolded approach allows students to gradually build their commitment to academic tasks, develop control over their learning experiences, and view academic challenges as opportunities for growth rather than obstacles. Sequential learning ensures that students engage with content step-by-step, building confidence and competence as they move from foundational to advanced cognitive tasks. Unlike more traditional models, where students may be expected to make cognitive leaps without adequate preparation, this framework offers a structured approach that ensures learners are fully equipped to meet each new challenge. This gradual progression mitigates the risk of cognitive overload, helping learners feel more confident in handling more complex concepts. It also reduces the likelihood of disengagement due to frustration, as learners are given the tools they need to succeed at each stage (Anderson & Krathwohl 2001). By scaffolding instruction and ensuring mastery at each level, the Learner Journey Framework reinforces long-term retention of material, which

is crucial for students' academic success. Sequential learning also encourages students to apply prior knowledge in new contexts, fostering a sense of achievement and helping students persist through challenging material. This approach builds intellectual capacity and instils discipline-specific skills that learners can transfer to future academic or professional pursuits.

Therefore, by fostering academic hardiness and a sense of belonging, the Learner Journey Framework directly supports student retention and success, making it a valuable strategy for institutions looking to improve academic outcomes and reduce dropout rates.

5. Recommendations for the Implementation of the Learner Journey Framework

Implementing the Learner Journey Framework relies on a systematic and collaborative process that aligns course objectives, module objectives, and Bloom's cognitive levels. Institutions can utilise instructional designers or curriculum specialists to map and refine course designs within the framework and identify gaps in Bloom's levels that should be addressed. In closing cognitive gaps in the course design, learners will have increased academic success and persistence, which can reduce the faculty workload. Therefore, For institutions looking to implement the Learner Journey Framework, we recommend the following four steps for initial implementation before considering scaling up.

5.1 Mapping Objectives for Alignment

First, module-level objectives should be mapped to course objectives to implement the framework. Then, instructional designers should collaborate with faculty to ensure accurate course objectives or competencies alignment (Kumar & Ritzhaupt 2017). Designers also review and position each module objective within Bloom's Taxonomy to ensure a logical cognitive progression (Berger *et al.* 2012). The course content should begin with foundational skills like "remember" and "understand" and then progress to advanced objectives like "analyse" and "evaluate."

5.2 Identifying and Addressing Cognitive Jumps

A critical component of the mapping process is identifying and addressing any cognitive jumps within the curriculum (File 2012). A cognitive jump occurs when an objective moves abruptly to a higher level in Bloom's Taxonomy without adequate scaffolding or preparation (Figure 2). For instance, if a module objective requires learners to apply (Level 3) a concept immediately following an understanding (Level 2) activity, this transition may result in student frustration or disengagement. To address these challenges, instructional designers should work alongside faculty to create intermediary steps or scaffolded activities that close cognitive gaps, helping learners build on their existing knowledge and skills and ensuring they are ready for more advanced tasks.

5.3 Integrating Feedback Mechanisms

Feedback methods are essential in the Learner Journey Framework as they guide learners to advance through each cognitive level. Institutions may incorporate automated tools like H5P into course design to ease faculty workload (Singleton *et al.* 2023). These tools enable the delivery of formative feedback at each stage of learning, ensuring students receive timely and constructive input without overburdening instructors. For example, in a module focused on the "apply" level of Bloom's Taxonomy, learners might complete an interactive H5P activity requiring them to solve a real-world problem. Then, learners receive immediate feedback that affirms correct answers and explains incorrect ones. This improves the student experience and supports faculty by streamlining the feedback process.

5.4 Piloting

Evaluation and pilot programs are crucial before introducing large-scale educational reforms (Senior *et al.* 2024; Swanwick 2007). They help identify challenges with the current curriculum design and the implementation strategy. In addition, pilot programs can demonstrate the program's strengths and instil confidence among the various stakeholders involved in the course's implementation. For example, we ran a pilot study (data not previously published) applying the Learner Journey Framework in a Digital Techniques course at a small arts-focused college, which revealed its potential for enhancing student success. Data from 100 students in Fall 2022 and 100 students in Fall 2023 demonstrated substantial improvements in key performance metrics: The failure rate decreased dramatically, dropping from 17% to 1%, while the average grade increased from 79% to 89%, showing a 9.6% improvement. Withdrawal rates declined from 9.2% to 5.7%, indicating that students were more likely to stay engaged and complete the course. These findings demonstrate the value of scaffolded learning strategies, clear alignment with Bloom's Taxonomy, and the use of tools like H5P for providing consistent

feedback. These practices collectively fostered a supportive learning environment where students could steadily develop their abilities and confidence, enhancing retention and academic success. Though this data represents a single course, the results underscore the framework's potential to enhance retention, performance, and persistence across various contexts when thoughtfully applied.

6. Scalability and Practical Examples

Scaling the Learner Journey Framework across institutions with varying levels of resources presents challenges, but it is achievable with thoughtful implementation. Institutions with robust technological infrastructures can leverage tools like H5P (Rayyan 2024), Storyline (Häggström *et al.* 2020), or LMS-based knowledge checks (Palahicky & Halcomb-Smith 2020) to automate feedback and streamline scaffolded learning experiences (Grévisse *et al.* 2019; Janson *et al.* 2020).

However, smaller institutions or those with fewer technological resources can still benefit from the framework by utilising low-tech solutions such as peer-to-peer feedback loops, Google Forms, or paper-based assessments. For resource-limited institutions, these alternatives can still provide valuable feedback mechanisms, ensuring that students receive scaffolded learning experiences even without advanced technology. Classroom discussions or in-class activities can also simulate scaffolded learning environments where immediate feedback is provided in person.

Institutions can also begin by piloting the Learner Journey Framework in high-impact courses or programs that historically experience high dropout rates. By focusing on these courses first, institutions can make a meaningful difference in retention without requiring a full-scale, resource-intensive overhaul of all courses simultaneously. The framework can be expanded across other programs and disciplines as success is demonstrated.

The Learner Journey Framework also supports diverse learners, including non-traditional students, first-generation college students, or those from underrepresented backgrounds, by offering flexible scaffolding that adapts to individual learning paces and needs. For students who may not have had prior exposure to advanced academic concepts, scaffolded learning provides the necessary support to bridge gaps in understanding and allows learners to build confidence gradually. This approach ensures that all students, regardless of their starting point, receive the guidance they need to reach mastery. By scaffolding learning and allowing for differentiation, the framework helps create inclusive learning environments where every student can succeed, ultimately improving retention and equity outcomes (Liang & Richardson 2009). Moreover, the adaptability of the framework allows instructors to incorporate culturally responsive teaching practices, ensuring that students' backgrounds and experiences are respected and integrated into the learning process. This inclusivity, combined with scaffolded academic support, enhances learner engagement and contributes to a more equitable academic environment where all students can succeed.

7. The Need to Address Faculty and Student Resistance While Transitioning To Learner Journey Framework

7.1 Faculty Resistance

Faculty's resistance to ideological or pedagogical changes has been well-documented in the literature, with time constraints, lack of skill and confidence using a new pedagogy, or uncertainties around modifying the learning material to suit the new pedagogy (or status quo bias) as commonly cited reasons for resistance to change (Dana *et al.* 2021; Gratz & Looney 2020; Rodriguez 1998; Tagg 2012). Likely, faculty may also resist the introduction of scaffolded learning due to concerns about increased workload, retraining, or changing established teaching practices. Additionally, the shift toward scaffolded learning may require significant course redesign, which could be time-consuming. Therefore, faculty resistance represents a significant challenge in transitioning to a scaffolded learning model. Many educators may perceive the approach as requiring substantial time or effort to redesign their courses, leading to hesitation or pushback.

Implementing institutions can adopt several strategies to address faculty resistance. For instance, institutions should develop awareness programs to emphasise the long-term benefits of scaffolded learning, such as reduced grading workloads through automated feedback tools and increased student success, which reflects positively on the faculty (Nilson & Stanny 2023; Venance *et al.* 2014). Subsequently, institutions should develop and conduct targeted professional development programs to ensure faculties have the technical know-how to reap the practical benefits of scaffolded learning, such as improved student outcomes and reduced workloads through automated tools like H5P. In addition, workshops should provide actionable guidance, equipping faculty with the

skills and resources to integrate scaffolded techniques into their teaching without feeling overwhelmed. Institutions can provide step-by-step professional development for faculty to ease the transition, starting with small-scale scaffolded interventions before implementing more extensive course-wide changes. Providing ongoing professional development programs and instructional design support can help faculty see the value in scaffolded learning and reduce the perceived burden of course redesign (Sunal *et al.* 2010). Peer mentoring programs, where experienced faculty who have already adopted scaffolded learning models mentor their colleagues, can also reduce anxiety and resistance (Colvin & Ashman 2010; Reid 2008). Moreover, providing instructional design support and showcasing how scaffolded learning can enhance teaching efficiency in the long term will encourage faculty buy-in.

Another effective strategy is to pilot scaffolded learning in high-impact courses that have historically experienced high failure or withdrawal rates. Starting with a smaller implementation allows faculty to see the approach's tangible benefits on student success while minimising the perceived risks of a department-wide change. To reduce resistance, institutions could offer faculty incentives such as stipends, reduced teaching responsibilities, or public recognition for adopting scaffolded learning and demonstrating measurable outcomes. Highlighting faculty achievements during meetings or in newsletters encourages a collaborative and innovative culture. In addition, faculty can be paired with instructional designers to mitigate the demands of course redesign. Instructional designers support course development by mapping objectives to Bloom's Taxonomy, identifying gaps in cognitive progression, and embedding effective feedback mechanisms. Furthermore, providing additional teaching or technological support and implementing incremental changes starting, for instance, with high-impact, low-performing courses where scaffolded learning might yield the most significant retention improvements, may also mitigate, at least in part, the constraints imposed by additional time commitment due to course restructuring (Evans & Henrichsen 2008; Mitchell *et al.* 2014).

7.1 Student Resistance

While scaffolded learning can offer significant academic benefits, some students may resist this approach due to uncertainties arising from the lack of step-by-step classroom instructions that are common in standard teaching or unfamiliarity with self-directed learning, the more significant effort needed for active knowledge construction, and viewing scaffold learning as overly structured or limiting their autonomy (Owens *et al.* 2017).

The strategies discussed above to mitigate faculty resistance can also be instrumental in addressing student resistance. It is essential to communicate the benefits of scaffolded learning and expectations from the students early in the course to mitigate student resistance (Tharayil *et al.* 2018). Students should understand that this model builds confidence through structured support and incremental mastery, reducing the risk of failure or disengagement (Tharayil *et al.* 2018). Additionally, offering self-assessment tools or optional scaffolded pathways can provide a sense of autonomy within a structured learning experience, helping students feel more in control of their progress (Panadero *et al.* 2016; Tharayil *et al.* 2018).

Conclusion: A Financially Sustainable Approach to Retention Amid the Enrolment Cliff

As higher education institutions face the dual pressures of the enrolment cliff and rising financial instability, retaining students is more critical than ever. By providing scaffolded learning experiences and aligning feedback with Bloom's Taxonomy, the Learner Journey Framework offers a comprehensive solution for improving student engagement, retention, and academic success.

The Learner Journey Framework reduces dropout rates and promotes long-term student success by integrating structured assessments and feedback mechanisms that support students at every stage of their cognitive development. Additionally, the framework's adaptability across different learning environments, whether in-person, online, or hybrid, ensures its applicability to various institutions, regardless of resource constraints.

In conclusion, the Learner Journey Framework presents a scalable, practical, and financially sustainable approach to addressing retention challenges in higher education, particularly as institutions navigate the impacts of the enrolment cliff. By emphasising sequential learning and scaffolded feedback, this framework ensures that students are supported throughout their academic journey, improving retention and financial sustainability for higher education institutions.

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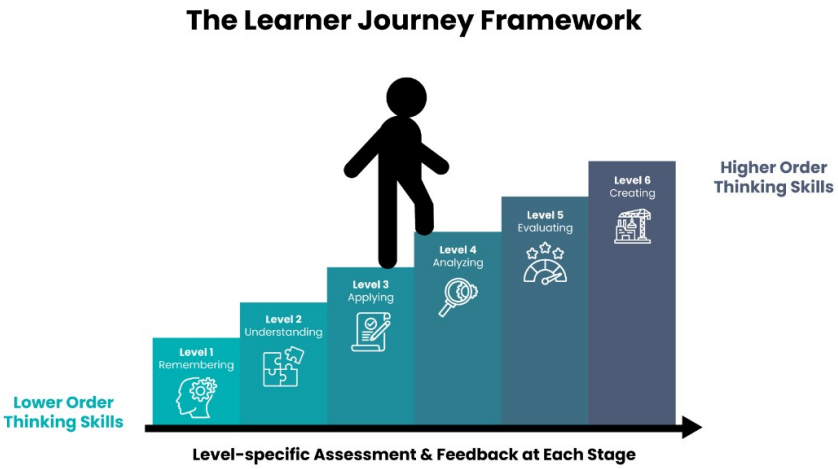

Figure 1. The six levels of 'Bloom's Taxonomy form the backbone of the Learner Journey Framework, where each level builds on the previous one so that students progress incrementally through their learning journey.

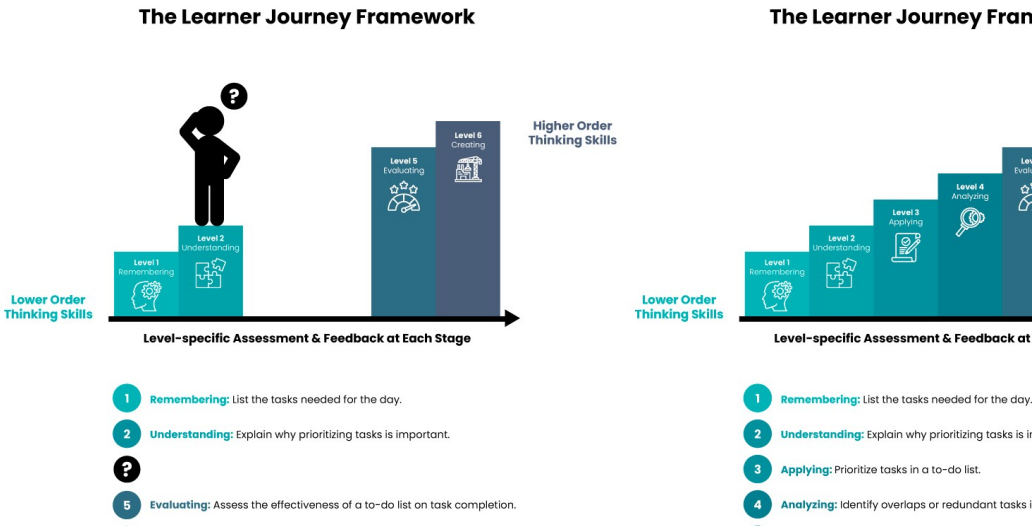

Figure 2. The six levels of Bloom's Taxonomy applied to the Learner Journey Framework, demonstrating how learners progress through each stage, with level-specific assessment and feedback, from remembering and understanding to creating.