

Topic #3: Fenella's Online Learning Design Model

I firmly believe that at the heart of every learning design model there lies an assumption and hope that educators can help students to achieve growth; socially, emotionally and academically. For this reason, I have likened my design model to a tree: the roots stemming from my philosophies and theories, the trunk constituting the content and curriculum, and the branches and greenery representing the interactions, learning and growth.

My courses have developed and changed over the years, but so have the theorists' models that weave their way through my course design. I see bits and pieces of many different theorists' models in my courses. Although the original correspondence courses I taught years ago relied heavily on Otto Peters' Industrialization theory, I find that automation has led to a few shifts. For example, the degree and way in which 'division of labour' occurs has changed (a systems analyst is now needed instead of an inventory clerk, etc.). Meanwhile, the first Moodle courses I imported in 2011 displayed pervasive characteristics of Borje Holmberg's guided didactic conversation. They also contained a healthy dose of BF Skinner's behaviourist theory for the '*what*' questions (I teach science courses). In the last few years, the courses have seen an infusion of Piaget's constructivism, and I look forward to continuing to explore ways to integrate George Seimens' and Stephen Downes connectivist approaches to learning (there are many possibilities with social media these days). Furthermore, due to teaching adults who are often working in remote locations, my learning design model includes aspects of Charles Wedemeyer's Independent Study theory. In my courses, I also try to incorporate a fair bit of two-way communication via technology, as outlined in Garrison and Shale's Transactional Learning theory. These are a few of the models and theories represented in my course design.

Content and curriculum depend on the needs of the **student, community, and educational system**, and also on the philosophies and theories of those developing the DL or online courses. For example, some educators like David Cormier believe the [community can be the curriculum](#). However, the content and curriculum in my courses often arise from the needs and goals of the aforementioned three main components; components which constitute the top of the 'tree' in my schema. I find it important to continually reassess, reanalyze, and redesign the content and curriculum to reflect the ever-changing needs of the student, community, and education system.

Resources used in course design can vary. Years ago, resources were supplied predominantly by the educational system, but now in the digital age, resources are often accessed from outside the system (i.e., from the Web and the 'cloud'). The method, media, and materials required for implementation of the course design can change, depending on the student's needs, the community's need, and the educational system's PLOs. When a student first registers in my courses, prior learning is briefly assessed, and students are introduced to online tools and helped to develop their skills with online navigation. An interview process highlights the student's level of need for social intercourse and connectivity with others, and also their comfort with self-directed study.

Finally, our communities need healthy, happy, responsible and productive citizens who can contribute positively to the workforce and society. It is our education system that plays a major role in responding to this need. Thus, the Ministry's PLOs are a necessary part of the learning design model. As a teacher, I feel it is important to consider all three components (the student, the community, and the Ministry's mandate) when developing an online course. The objectives arising out of these considerations determine the strategies and delivery methods used in the design of

online courses, and hence their lessons. By keeping in mind Bloom's Taxonomy revised for the digital age and 21st Century learning, I am trying to include more opportunities for creation and innovation within my online learning design model. It is a model that I anticipate will branch off in other directions as I learn through the design process ... Yes, it is a living, breathing model that can grow in a variety of directions!

Sources

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