HOW TO USE PEDAGOGICAL TERMS TO DESIGN EXCELLENT LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

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ANNOTATION

This article deals with the pedagogical terms to design excellent learning environment. Learning environment refers to the diverse physical locations, contexts, and cultures in which students learn. Since students may learn in a wide variety of settings, such as outside-of-school locations and outdoor environments, the term is often used as a more accurate or preferred alternative to classroom, which has more limited and traditional connotations—a room with rows of desks and a chalkboard, for example.

Key words: environment, establish, language, term, pedagogy

The term also encompasses the culture of a school or class—its presiding ethos and characteristics, including how individuals interact with and treat one another—as well as the ways in which teachers may organize an educational setting to facilitate learning.

Developing a total learning environment for students in a particular course or program is probably the most creative part of teaching. While there is a tendency to focus on either physical institutional learning environments (such as classrooms, lecture theatres and labs), or on the technologies used to to create online personal learning environments (PLEs), learning environments are broader than just these physical components. They will also include:

- the characteristics of the learners;
- the goals for teaching and learning;
- the activities that will best support learning;
- the assessment strategies that will best measure and drive learning
- the culture that infuses the learning environment.

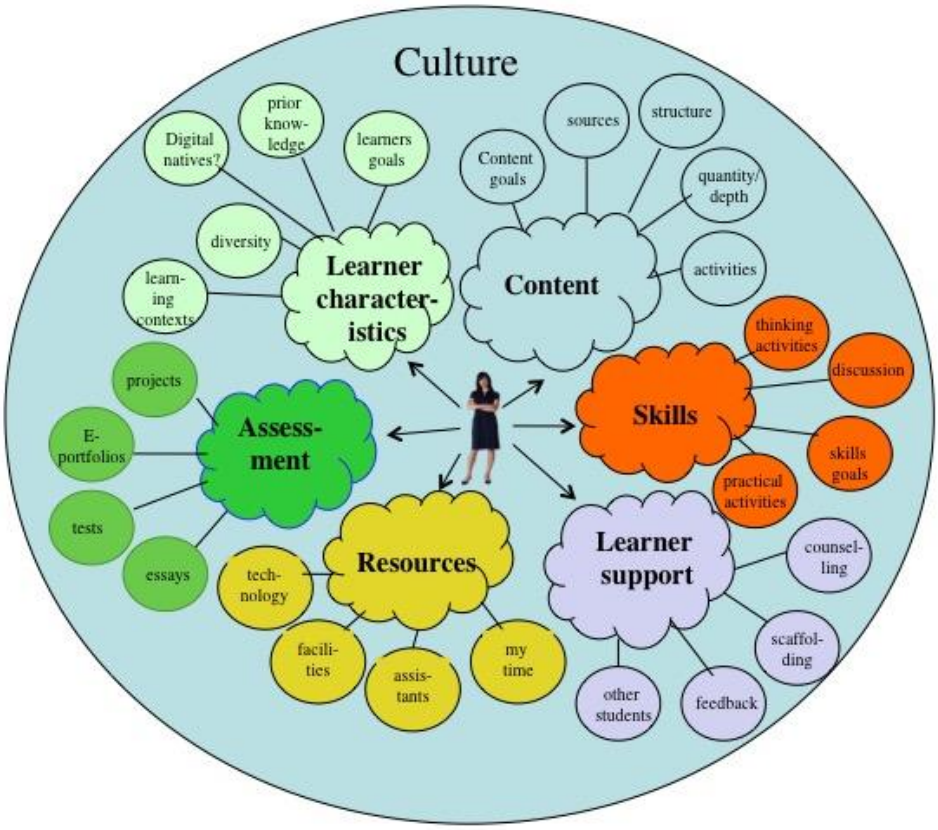

Figure A.2.2 A learning environment from a teacher's perspective

Figure A.2.2 illustrates one possible learning environment from the perspective of a teacher or instructor. A teacher may have little or no control over some components, such as learner characteristics or resources, but may have full control over other components such as choice of content and how learners will be supported. Within each of the main components there are a set of sub-components that will need to be considered. In fact, it is in the sub-components (content structure, practical activities, feedback, use of technology, assessment methods, and so on) where the real decisions need to be made.

I have listed just a few components in Figure A.2.2 and the set is not meant to be comprehensive. For instance it could have included other components, such as developing ethical behaviour, institutional factors, or external accreditation, each of which might also affect the learning environment in which a teacher or instructor has to work. Creating a model of a learning environment then is a heuristic device that aims to provide a comprehensive view of the whole teaching context for a particular course or program, by a particular instructor or teacher with a particular view of learning. Once again, the choice of components and their perceived importance will be

driven to some extent by personal epistemologies and beliefs about knowledge, learning and teaching methods.

Lastly, I have deliberately suggested a learning environment from the perspective of a teacher, as the teacher has the main responsibility for creating an appropriate learning environment, but it is also important to consider learning environments from the learners' perspectives. Indeed, adult or mature learners are capable of creating their own, personal, relatively autonomous learning environments.

The significant point is that it is important to identify those components that need to be considered in teaching a course or program, and in particular that there are other components besides content or curriculum. Each of the key components of the learning environment I have chosen as an example are discussed briefly in the following sections, with a focus on the components of a learning environment that are particularly relevant for a digital age.

Pedagogical design, a novel term in the conceptual landscape of instruction, teaching, learning and learning support, refers to any systematic choice and use of procedures, methods, prescriptions, and devices in order to bring about effective, efficient, and productive learning. lt has attributes in common with other design endeavors, like architecture and engineering which build upon an extensive knowledge base for task fulfillment and problem-finding, problem-analysis, and problem-solving. The outcome of any systematic pedagogical design activity is a plan or scenario that defines the format, content, and structure of the environment, the delivery systems, and implementation strategies. With the upraise of more open, electronic learning environments, these definitions undoubtedly need some adaptation. In most recent models of design, the following components are present (a) an intruding analysis of the knowledge base on learning and instructional theories, (b) the frame of reference design is used for, like context, target group, and content, and (c) a set of validated rules or procedures to regulate and realize the design process and product. Hannafin, Hannafin, and Land refer to grounded learning systems design defined as "the systematic implementation of processes and procedures that are rooted in established theory and research in human learning" (p. 102). In this way, the more traditional and strict demarcation between design, development, and implementation seems to blur.

Gradually, some more systematic procedures were developed to consolidate knowledge about designing, using the so-called systems approach. Instructional design mainly consists of task-analysis, problem-solving and testing by a team of experts in complex domains. However, since experts became scarce, instructional knowledge was documented and put into formal didactical models and procedures. That models consist of predefined objectives (target position), description of trainee characteristics (actual position), and methods and content to bridge the gap between both positions. In this

view, the quality of instructional design highly depends on the fit between the design model and its intelligent use by a designer. However, that models heavily rest upon a behaviorist view on both instruction and learning with centrality of external, programmed control, decomposition of complexity, focus on content or subject matter, and simple learning principles. lt are the designers who entirely define and produce instruction, while teachers and learners are the consumers of rather alienating design products they have to implement at the end of the chain.

Later on, a more cognitive position on design is taken, based on outcomes of research on cognitive processing. Learning is conceived of as an active, goal-oriented, and self-regulated process during which the learner continuously constructs meaning out of the environmental stimuli. The design process, then, is no more directed towards external and programmed control of the learners' overt behavior, but mainly towards the support of the learners' self-control: learning environments aim now at enhancing cognitive and meta-cognitive processes. It is called cognitive instructional design (CID). Since learning as a process is mainly the transition from a novice position towards that of a (semi-) expert, instructional design is tailored to the idiosyncratic characteristics of the learner in terms of both domain knowledge and (meta)cognitive strategies. Using processes like scaffolding and fading, increasing the self-regulating power of the learner is on the design agenda. This, however, puts the design process on a longitudinal, developmental line and it creates links with curriculum design.

Favorable outcomes of cooperative learning can be attributed to some factors. Firstly, learners can profit from the fact that they have to coordinate their interactions through both making their reasoning explicit and understanding the other's line of reasoning or arguments. Secondly, cooperation can elicit the so-called socio-cognitive conflict, which forces learners to revise their cognition when confronted with unknown or Contradietory information from partners. Thirdly, collaboration challenges the thinking processes, since one has to defend his or her point of view, offer arguments, tune own information to that of the partners, and evaluate possible solutions for problems. In short, a Iot of public reflection is going on in cooperative settings. Lastly, cognitive interaction in groups stimulates the precise and exact wording since one always has to verbalize one's own knowledge. This characteristic of cooperation raises the problem of language use in multilingual (networked) environments. Not only grammar and lexicographical issues, but accessibility of the cultural background are essential for any attribution of meaning. lf transnational interaction between native and non-native speakers is going on, the question of clear understanding of the communication in that languages becomes an important topic of concern. Cooperative learning influences both academic task fulfillment and student motivation in terms of increased students' self-efficacy, learning goal orientation, and intrinsic valuing of the

learning task. A first factor that accounts for these effects is the positive motivational impact of peer support for learning. When peers recognize that success in learning depends upon the success of their peers, they are more likely to provide emotional and tutorial support for learning. A second factor is the support of the group for facing the perceived task difficulty. Cooperative groups have higher Levels of self-efficacy regarding the achievement task because they are challenged by group members to cope with difficulties and to persevere. A third factor is that group activities encourage students to display greater intrinsic value of the subject matter or the task to be fulfilled. Crook refers to two important features of group tasks: allowing problem-solving and discussion of competing hypotheses. A fourth factor is the need to make one's own knowledge explicit and hence disputable by other members of the group. Increased motivation will also increase time-on-task, one of the variables most clearly influencing learning outcomes.

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