

Learning Design Research in Action

A/Prof Eva Dobozy
Curtin Business School
Curtin University

Ms Leanne Cameron
Faculty of Education & Arts
Australian Catholic University

A/Prof Shirley Agostinho
School of Education
University of Wollongong

Dr Chris Campbell
School of Education
University of Queensland

Dr Panos Vlachopoulos
Faculty of Medicine
Macquarie University

The new field of Learning Design is gaining traction in higher education, aiming to address a number of challenges in technology enhanced learning and teaching. This symposium seeks to build on the national Learning Design Research strengths and help highlight Australian Learning Design theory and practice expertise. It also aims to further consolidate the Australian and international Learning Design community.

The content of this submission directly addresses the following topics: An introduction of the Learning Design Framework, Generic Templates, Teacher Design Thinking in Higher Education, Connecting Connectivism and Learning Design, and Translating Learning Outcomes into Learning Designs. The symposium will be divided into five topic-based presentations. The topic discussions will be led by members of the Australian Learning Design network. Discussion will be open and audience interaction will be encouraged.

Keywords: Learning Design Research, Learning Design Framework, Connectivism, design thinking, design practice, generic templates, learning outcomes

Paper 1 – Learning Design SIG Update and an introduction of the Learning Design Framework

This presentation will provide a short overview of the rationale of the Learning Design Special Interest Group, report on the first Webinar, and canvassing ideas and Webinar topics for next year. This will be an interactive presentation inviting new SIG members to join and canvassing ideas and research topics. It will also introduce the Larnaca group's Learning Design Framework.

Discussion Leads:

Eva Dobozy: Curtin University, Perth, Australia

Leanne Cameron: Australian Catholic University, Sydney, Australia

Paper 2 - Generic templates: Promoting the use of high quality learning designs in higher education

With research pointing to a relationship between student engagement and attrition rates, lecturers need to be mindful of a wide range of factors when designing for their students' learning. Learning design is a professional activity for which many of our academic staff is not trained. There exist examples of learning designs which apply to the most recent research into learning, but a number of studies have shown that they are not widely utilised in all disciplines (Cameron, 2013; Neumann, Parry & Becher, 2002 and Scott, 2006). More and more generic template designs are being developed (Dobozy & Dalziel, 2016) to assist lecturers construct student-centric and engaging learning experiences. This presentation will introduce a number of these templates and explore with the audience how suitable these might be for a variety of contexts.

Discussion Lead:

Leanne Cameron: Australian Catholic University, Sydney, Australia

Paper 3 – Investigating Teacher Design Thinking in Higher Education

A routine yet important aspect of a university teacher's role is to design learning experiences for students. The field of learning design emerged as a strategy to support this design work, with a particular focus in supporting technology integration. However, in order to progress this field, we need to gain a better understanding of teachers' design work, to build an empirical evidence base so that future design support initiatives are closely aligned with teacher design practices. This presentation will summarise what we have discovered from our research about university teacher design practices. A key finding is that university teachers exhibit design thinking characteristics (Bennett, Agostinho, & Lockyer, 2016; Lockyer, Agostinho, & Bennett, 2016) thus the presentation will stimulate discussion of why it is important to conceptualise university teacher work as 'design'.

Discussion Lead:

Shirley Agostinho: University of Wollongong, Sydney, Australia

Paper 4 – Connecting Connectivism with Learning Design

Connectivism (Siemens, 2005; 2006) is a relatively new learning theory that has both advocates and detractors. Detractors and advocates seem to agree that connectivism can contribute to the current evolution of learning theories. Connectivism originates in social constructivist theories, by mixing human and non-human tools for learning, analysing and meaning making. This presentation will explore the link between Connectivism and Learning Design and provide some practical examples to illustrate this nexus.

References:

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Siemens, G. (2006a). Connectivism: Learning theory or pastime for the self-amused? Retrieved from http://www.elearnspace.org/Articles/Connectivism_self-amused.html

Discussion Leads:

Chris Campbell: The University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia

Eva Dobozy: Curtin University, Perth, Australia

Paper 5 – Learning Design and Social Network Analysis

In this presentation we will explore the potential of Social Network Analysis (SNA) as a method to help us improve Learning Design practices. Panos will use the results from a comparative study between an intensive mode delivery and a traditional standard delivery mode of the same unit to demonstrate how SNA helped him improve his understanding of learning in collaborative activities. He will provide an analysis that shows how people learn, what they learn, and in particular with and from whom they learn. He will conclude with a discussion around the impact that learning design can have on the formation of different networks of learners online, including the impact of the role of the tutor.

Discussion Lead:

Panos Vlachopoulos: Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia

Biographies of Panel Members

A/Prof Eva Dobozy is Deputy Dean, Learning and Teaching at the Curtin Business School in Perth. Her interest and research work is concerned with the issue of effective pedagogical modelling in face-to-face, blended and online learning environments through the design of learning-centric and highly interactive curricula. Her research focuses on template construction, reuse of learning designs and small data learning analytics.

Leanne Cameron is currently Lecturer in Educational Studies in the Faculty of Education & Arts at the Australian Catholic University. She spent a number of years working on several federally funded learning design projects with MELCOE (Macquarie E-learning Centre of Excellence) and has published regularly on Learning Design. The focus of her current work is investigating how effective learning designs can be used to introduce different teaching and learning approaches to different disciplines/subjects.

A/Prof Shirley Agostinho is a teaching and research scholar in the School of Education at the University of Wollongong. Shirley's research career focuses on investigating how information and communication technology (ICT) can be used to enhance learning. Her research is devoted to designing effective learning environments and encompasses the dual perspectives of examining how teachers can be supported to design high quality learning experiences and how learners can support their own learning through the use of ICT. Her current research work is investigating teacher design thinking.

Dr Chris Campbell is a Lecturer in Digital Technologies at The University of Queensland and has been conducting research into the area of learning design for the past few years. She currently has a project in Malaysian schools investigating teachers' cloud-based learning designs. Chris is also interrogating learning design with the Smithsonian Learning Lab as part of her 2016 Queensland-Smithsonian Fellowship. Her other research is into new and emerging technologies.

Dr Panos Vlachopoulos, is a Senior Teaching Fellow in Learning Innovations in the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences at Macquarie University. He studied Philosophy and Pedagogy at Aristotle University of Thessaloniki Greece, followed by an M.Ed in E-learning from the University of Manchester and a PhD in Education (Online Pedagogy) from the University of Aberdeen. His areas of expertise include online tutoring, the facilitation of student-driven learning, and the development of academic staff capabilities for teaching online. He has international experience of online learning design, teaching and research in technology-enhanced learning from diverse educational contexts such as universities in the UK, Hong Kong, New Zealand and Greece.

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Please cite as: Dobozy, E. & Cameron, L., Agostinho, S., Campbell, C. & Vlachopoulos, P. (2016). Learning Design Research in Action. In S. Barker, S. Dawson, A. Pardo, & C. Colvin (Eds.), *Show Me The Learning. Proceedings ASCILITE 2016 Adelaide* (pp. 203-205). <https://doi.org/10.14742/apubs.2016.878>

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