Designing Courses for Significant Learning

Belmont University
Tuesday, August 18, 2009

Virginia S. Lee, Ph.D.
Virginia S. Lee & Associates, LLC
Workshop Expectations

- To explore the integrated course design model for significant learning and begin to apply it to a course that you teach
- To begin to design a common course using the model
A colleague asks for help...

**Course Goals:**
To understand the breadth and scope of psychology
To approach problems as a psychologist would
To comprehend primary research

**Evaluation Scheme:**
Midterm 40%
Final 50%
Class participation 10%

What suggestions would you make?
Four Components of Good Teaching

1. Knowledge of Subject Matter
2. Design of Learning Experiences
3. Interaction with Students
4. Management of Course

Beginning of the Course
Vision
Visioning Exercise

Think of a course you currently teach. What is the learning you most deeply value and wish for your students?
Integrated Course Design Model

Learning Outcomes

Teaching & Learning Activities

Feedback & Assessment

Situational Factors

Based on Dee Fink, Creating Significant Learning Experiences
Criteria of “Good” Course Design

Situational Factors

In-Depth Situational Analysis

Active Learning

Educative Assessment

Teaching & Learning Activities

Feedback & Assessment

Learning Goals

Significant Learning
Integrated Course Design Model

Based on Dee Fink, *Creating Significant Learning Experiences*
Situational Factors

Specific Context of the Teaching/Learning Situation

- How many students are in the class?
- Is the course lower division, upper division, or graduate level?
- How long and frequent are the class meetings?
- How will the course be delivered: live in a classroom, online?

General Context of the Learning Situation

What learning expectations are placed on the courses by:

- Society?
- University, College and/or Department?
- The Profession?
Situational Factors cont’d

Nature of the Subject

- Is this subject primarily theoretical, practical, or some combination?
- Is the subject primarily convergent or divergent?
- Are there important changes or controversies occurring within this field of study?
- What ideas, concepts, skills in the course are particularly challenging for students?

Characteristics of the Learners

- What is the life situation of the learners (e.g., working, family, professional goals)?
- What prior knowledge, experiences, and initial feelings do the students have in relation to this subject?
- What are their learning goals, expectations, and preferred learning styles?
Characteristics of the Teacher

- What beliefs and values does the teacher have about teaching and learning?
- What is his/her attitude toward the subject, students, course?
- What are his/her teaching skills?
- What level of knowledge or familiarity does he/she have with this subject?
Thinking about a course you currently teach, which of these situational factors seem most critical as you design the course?
Integrated Course Design Model

Learning Outcomes

Situational Factors

Based on Dee Fink, Creating Significant Learning Experiences
Taxonomy of Significant Learning

From Dee Fink, Creating Significant Learning Experiences
In a course with significant learning, students will

1. Understand and remember the key concepts, terms, relationships, etc.

2. Know how to use the concepts, terms, etc.

3. Be able to relate this subject to other subjects, their lives, and the wider world.

4. Understand the personal and social implications of knowing about this subject.

5. Value this subject and further learning about it.

6. Know how to keep on learning about this subject, after the course is over.
Sample Learning Outcomes from an Introductory Psychology Course

- **Foundational knowledge**

  Explain selected fundamental concepts in psychology in your own words.

- **Application**

  Think like a psychologist by using psychological theories to solve real world problems and engaging in psychological research.
Sample Learning Outcomes from an Introductory Psychology Course

- **Integration**

  Relate psychological concepts & theories to your own experience including relationships with others, day-to-day events & experiences, articles & books you have read, and/or talks, films, programs, performances viewed & attended.

- **Human Dimension**

  Identify your strengths & weaknesses as a group member through self reflection & the feedback of other group members.
Sample Learning Outcomes from an Introductory Psychology Course

- **Caring**

  Demonstrate the valuing of the psychological perspective in one or more ways including taking further courses in psychology, reading a journal or magazine such as *Psychology Today*, and/or seeking out talks or films on psychological topics.

- **Learning how to learn**

  Using scoring guides developed by the instructor, analyze your own performance on selected class assignments and develop strategies for improvement.
Interactive Nature of Significant Learning
Using the Taxonomy of Significant Learning, experiment writing six outcomes for your course, one for each type of outcome in the taxonomy.
Integrated Course Design Model

Learning Outcomes

Feedback & Assessment

Situational Factors

Based on Dee Fink, Creating Significant Learning Experiences
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Goals/Method of Evaluation</th>
<th>Concept Map</th>
<th>Learning Journal</th>
<th>Vision Exercise</th>
<th>Behavioral Modification Exercise</th>
<th>Expert Write-up</th>
<th>IQ Test Paper</th>
<th>Final Exercise</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Explain fundamental concepts in psychology</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Think like a psychologist</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand yourself better as a learner</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Desirable Components of Feedback and Assessment

Adapted from Dee Fink, *Creating Significant Learning Experiences*
Forward-Looking Assessment

- Focuses on what students should be able to DO in the future
- Focuses on real-life context
- Has students imagine themselves in a situation where people are actually using this knowledge
- Involves assignments and tests that require exploration and judgment rather than reciting or restating facts
- Focuses assessment on integrated use of skills
A simulation of a clinic
FIDeLity Feedback

- Frequent
- Immediate
- Discriminating (based on criteria & standards)
- Loving or supportive approach used

From Dee Fink, *Creating Significant Learning Experiences*
Develop a possible assessment for two of the learning outcomes you wrote earlier, including one forward-looking assessment.
Integrated Course Design Model

Based on Dee Fink, *Creating Significant Learning Experiences*
A Model of Active Learning (The Basic Version)

Passive Learning

Receiving Information & Ideas

Active Learning

Experience

Reflective dialogue with:

Doing

Self

Observing

Others
A Holistic View of Active Learning

Experience

Information & Ideas

Reflection
# Multiple Activities that Promote Active Learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INFORMATION &amp; IDEAS</th>
<th>EXPERIENCE</th>
<th>REFLECTIVE DIALOGUE, with:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>DIRECT</strong></td>
<td>&quot;Doing&quot;</td>
<td>Self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Original data</td>
<td>• Real Doing, in authentic settings</td>
<td>• Reflective thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Original sources</td>
<td>• Direct observation of phenomena</td>
<td>• Journaling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>INDIRECT, VICARIOUS</strong></td>
<td>&quot;Observing&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Secondary data and sources</td>
<td>• Case studies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Lectures, textbooks</td>
<td>• Gaming, Simulations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Role play</td>
<td>• Stories (can be accessed via: film, literature, oral history)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ONLINE</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Course website</td>
<td>• Teacher can assign students to &quot;directly experience&quot; ...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Internet</td>
<td>• Students can engage in &quot;indirect&quot; kinds of experience online</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

• Students can reflect, and then engage in various kinds of dialogue online.
A Case Study of Active Learning

In a course “Leadership for Engineers,” the instructor does the following:

- Begins the course by asking students to think about what leadership means to them, individually and then collectively.

- Then the class reads a book or case study about people in leadership positions (e.g., Abraham Lincoln).

- Following this, they re-visit the central question of “What constitutes leadership?” and revise their earlier definition accordingly.

- This sequence is repeated throughout the course: students read something, revisit the central question, read something, revisit the central question, etc.
Exercise

Question #1

How does the course incorporate each of the three components of holistic active learning?

1. Information and Ideas
2. Experience
3. Reflection

Question #2

How might you strengthen each of the three components—information & ideas, experience, reflection—in the course?
Rich Learning Experiences

- **What are they?**

  Learning experiences in which students are able to simultaneously acquire *multiple* types of learning goals from the Taxonomy through the integration of information & ideas, experience, and reflection.

- **What are some examples?**

  **In-class:** debates, role plays, simulations, dramatizations

  **Out of class:** service learning, authentic projects, internships, situational observations
A simulation of a clinic
For the two learning outcomes you wrote earlier and their associated assessments, what kinds of learning activities would assist students in attaining these outcomes?
Questions? Please feel free to contact me:

Virginia S. Lee, Ph.D.
Principal & Senior Consultant

**Virginia S. Lee & Associates, LLC**
P.O. Box 51746
Durham, NC 27717-1746
(919) 493-4729
vslee@virginiaslee.com
http://www.virginiaslee.com