


Chapter 10


Learning Design in Higher Education: Building Communities of Practice


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ABSTRACT

This chapter presents the findings from four case studies by higher education curriculum teams who used the CoDesignS Learning Design Framework for designing online or blended learning modules as part of the Learning Design Bootcamp and/or an institutional community of practice (CoP). The aim of the bootcamp was to inspire and empower learning technologists, learning designers, and academics from different disciplines to acquire a learning design mindset. The learning design journeys of each team are explored and analysed. The CoDesignS Framework enabled the teams to develop their designs and to systematically scale up learning design practices within their organisations. The sharing of good practice through the Learning Design Bootcamp and institutional CoPs was a key factor in the development of educator identity and confidence. Together, the framework and CoPs positively impacted culture and mindset, resulting in improved quality of learning and teaching and enhanced student experience and outcomes.

INTRODUCTION

Learning design has become a discipline widely used in Higher Education (Olney et al., 2021; Conole & Wills, 2013; Dalziel et al., 2016) and there exist a number of frameworks and associated tools for learning design, such as those described by the Jisc learning design family tree (Jisc, 2018). Learning design provides a descriptive framework for the planning of teaching and learning and the conditions under which those activities are performed, either online or in the classroom by the teacher and the learners (Conole, 2007; Dalziel, 2016; Masterman, 2013). Goodyear (2015) argues that a greater focus on the design and planning phase of teaching can improve the quality of higher education through the creation of more engaging and active learning opportunities for students.

Michos and Hernández-Leo (2018) suggest that there is a sociocultural aspect to the learning design process which relates to how individual teachers work with others and the wider community. There is an emphasis on reaching a shared understanding between those involved in the process, often through visualisation of designs. These designs can then be shared with others through tools such as Learning Designer (Laurillard et al., 2018; UCL Knowledge Lab, 2021) or other online collaborative spaces. Persico and Pozzi (2015) emphasise the role of learning design CoPs in helping educators to make better informed design choices.

With the challenges imposed by COVID-19, learning design has become an instrumental discipline to ensure quality of education design and delivery in higher education institutions. However, very few CoPs have been established offering peer-to-peer professional development and support activities in this sector (Clement et

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