

Chapter 3

Best Practices and Frameworks for Higher Education: Optimizing Learning Progressions Using Recent Tools

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ABSTRACT

This chapter explores the methods and models that have been used in other efforts to increase learners interest and outcomes in college for better learning advancements. The three determinations are: measurable and general learner outcomes; formative assessment strategies; and technology, which develops contextualized learning. Based on the pedagogical foundations of the chapter, scaffolding and backward design are highlighted as the ways for attesting to alignment between the course content and assessments and the targeted competencies. It elaborates current practices in the field of faculty development and institutional support in the process of creating a learning organization. Through an analysis of case and empirical studies, the authors demonstrate how structured progressions help learners in understanding concepts that will in turn help them to gain mastery of such concepts. It is useful for teachers in their search for strategies for the creation of meaningful and sequenced lessons for learners in college contexts.

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INTRODUCTION

These higher education landscapes have, therefore, assumed a very proactive outlook in the last few decades due to the rising stakes in the quality of education that is delivered, the application of technology in carrying out education practices, and change preparedness within the demography of workplaces. Attempts to respond to these change forces have now shifted to the optimization strategies toward enhancing the student outcomes in learning progression, and here lies the use of the following. It is now understood as a critical element of instructional practice in advanced learning. The learning progressions are the systematic and progressive sequence of steps that take learners from the beginners to the master level. In their optimal design and implementation, these should afford an orderly means of developing enhanced appreciation and reasoning and then applying such understanding in practice settings (Alyahyan & Düştegör, 2020).

This chapter reviews the enhanced practices and frameworks for learning progressions within higher education before eventually reviewing how a learning progression may be effectively applied for specific purposes of bolstering student learning, promoting achievement, and ensuring students are equipped with the necessary skills and competencies demanded of them in their future vocations. The chapter that follows looks at how such diverse approaches to learning as scaffolding, formative assessments, backward design, and use of technology all facilitate the architecture of teaching and learning experiences in ways that are coherent, flexible, and sensitive to students' requirements. The scaffolding of learning progressions is hence the support that the teachers receive in order to facilitate enhanced levels of learning from the current knowledge level. Scaffolding refers to the way of breaking a complex concept into a simple one to lessen help over time as students build confidence and competence. This alone empowers learners to progress from the current list of knowledge and encourages learners and students to learn independently and solve problems. Scaffolding is more effective in enhancing learner engagement than the two because, while it does test the knowledge of the students continually, it does not overwhelm them, making it learner friendly in the middle of challenging (Castro, 2019).

A critical resource for the effective and efficient use of learning progressions also entails the intelligent application of formative assessments. Unlike the summative evaluations, these assessments are made for offering feedback to students as long as they engage in learning sessions. Developmental quizzes help teachers catalog the progress of knowledge that is attained at one or another stage of the learning process and modify courses. Teachers can then give targeted advice and help, which would potentially be enough to keep the learners on track by informing students where they would fail. Self- and peer assessments enable learners to own their learning process, as formative assessment provides the necessary time for reflection (Doyle, 2023).

Thus, backwards design is a useful pedagogy in the construction of learning trajectories. It proceeds, instead, from what we'd like our student to be able to do with knowledge to design the assessment and instruction that will elicit that kind of learning. A major advantage of the backward design is that at the completion of the process, every component of the curriculum will merge into alignment to ensure more coherent and meaningful instruction about the end product for a course or a program. This means that employing backward design in learning progressions' development could be of great benefit to educators, mainly because it presents a clear poster for students regarding the sequential steps they are expected to take in order to demonstrate mastery of the aspect of focus in consideration (Biggs et al., 2022).

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