

# Learning Design

## Concept of Learning Design

Recently the concept of “Learning Design” has gained momentum in the education space, mostly through discussions at conferences, webinars, e-books, and more. Being topical though doesn’t make it new, in fact the concept has been evolving since the early 2000’s, deeply rooted in Design Thinking. So, what is it? How is it different than what we had before? Why does Smart Sparrow care? Why should *you* care?

For many, it also means shifting focus from the teacher to ‘thinking about learners’ first — who they are, what they know, how they think, and how to reach them effectively so they get the most out of their educational experience.

It’s an intentional process that asks educators to think beyond “What do I need to teach?” and to carefully consider “What is the best way for my learners to learn and understand this concept?”. It shifts the focus of education from simply delivering content to molding the full instructor-learner experience.

A “learning design” is defined as the description of the teaching-learning process that takes place in the unit of learning. It is the ‘application of a pedagogical model’ for a specific learning objective, target group, and a specific context or knowledge domain.

However, Learning Design is the framework that supports learning experiences. It is a variety of ways of designing ‘student learning experiences’, that is, a sequence of types of activities and interactions. It refers to deliberate choices about ‘what, when, where and how to teach’. Decisions need to be made about the content, structure, timing, pedagogical strategies, sequence of learning activities, and the type and frequency of assessment in the course, as well as the nature of technology used to support learning.

The learning design specifies the teaching-learning process. It’s a more or less formal description of a pedagogical scenario (also called educational script) and that may or may not follow an instructional design model. A “unit of learning” can be any instructional or learning event of any granularity, for example, a course, a workshop, a lesson, or an informal learning event.

The key principle in learning design is that it represents the learning activities and the support activities that are performed by different persons (learners, teachers) in the context of a unit of learning. Crucial in any learning process are the activities that learners undertake: reading, thinking, discussing, exploring, problem solving, etc. These activities can refer to different learning

objects that are used during the performance of the activities (e.g. books, articles, software programmes, pictures), that are used to collaborate and to communicate in the teaching-learning process. The learning activities that are needed to obtain some learning objectives are in most cases carefully sequenced according to some pedagogical principles. This sequence of learning activities that learners undertake to attain some learning objectives, including the resources and support mechanisms required to help learners to complete these activities, is called a learning design. Learning designs may be at the level of a subject, or subject components. A learning design can be considered the framework that supports student learning experiences.

### **How is learning design different from instructional design?**

A lesson plan is a teacher's detailed description of the course of instruction or "Learning Trajectory" for a lesson. "Instructional Design" in fact, was the standards at the time, and we also used this nomenclature when we first began helping educators create courseware. But we quickly made the jump to "Learning Design".

Until not so long ago, the term "Instructional Design" perfectly captured the discipline. But in today's screen-centered world, learning has become a more complex collaboration between the instructor, the learner, and the medium. As learning resources, tools, and delivery methods evolve in our industry, so must our language to accurately describe the creation process.

This language shift seems slight and perhaps a tad pedantic, but we, along with a growing number of educators, believe it is an important distinction that keeps our work grounded and centered around what matters: the learners. While "instruction" focuses on the teacher, what they do, and how they convey material, "learning" focuses on the learner, what they do, and how they acquire knowledge. This distinction has been a force reminding us that our focus is on helping people learn, not just on delivering instructional materials.

### **Focusing on Learner-Centered Design**

Learner-centered design is the process of building learning experiences by focusing on learner challenges and building fitting solutions by working through an iterative process.

For most educators, you really can't discuss instructional design without quickly switching to the more specific topic of learner-centered design. The

driving belief is that focusing instructional design projects on the needs, desires, and hopes of learners ensures that the project is successful.

### **Qualities of good Learning Design**

1. The learning design should have specification of the teaching and learning process, along with the conditions under which it occurs and the activities performed by the teachers and learners in order to achieve the required learning objectives.
2. Template for a learning activity should have description of the sequence, tasks, resources, and supports.
3. Learning design must have critical components in the context of a unit of learning that learners undertake for reading, thinking, discussing, exploring, problem solving, etc.
4. Sequential learning objectives are needed according to some pedagogical principles.
5. Sequence of learning activities of learning design should clearly include the resources and support mechanisms to attain some learning objectives.
6. The learning design also need to describe the sequence of events and specifies at what stage particular resources and supports are available.
7. It should have expected cognitive outcomes for students.
8. Good learning design should also include a time line.

### **Important of Learning Design**

1. The framework of learning designs consists of a learning strategy, learning resources, and support mechanisms to provide guidance and feedback to learners.
2. It acts as a means of eliciting designs from academics in a format that can be tested and reviewed by others involved in the design process, i.e. a common vocabulary and understanding of learning activities.
3. A learning design represents and documents teaching and learning practice using some rotational form so that it can serve as a description, model or template that can be adaptable or reused by a teacher to suit his/her context. Means it provides a method by which designs can be reused, as opposed to just sharing content.
4. It can guide individuals through the process of creating new learning activities.
5. It can highlight policy implications for staff development, resource allocation, quality, etc.

6. It has the potential to aid learners and tutors in complex activities by guiding them through the activity sequence.
7. The use of learning design knowledge to design education.
8. It is the student-centered plan for implementation of learning tasks.

## Steps of Learning Design

Learning Design	
Step	Process and Purpose
1. <b>Introduce the topic</b>	<b>Attend</b> – Help the student focus on what is important using the sensory and short term memories
2. <b>Present the objective</b>	<b>Attend and organize</b> – Remind students what they already know (the prerequisites), tell them what they have to learn, and explain why they have to learn the material
3. <b>Present the material</b> 4. <b>Show correct performance</b>	<b>Organize and encode</b> – Integrate new information with existing knowledge and use social interaction
5. <b>Provide practice</b> 6. <b>Give feedback</b>	<b>Organize, encode, and store</b> – Use active learning techniques such as problem-solving, social interaction, and case studies that let students find their own strategies for learning and remembering
7. <b>Assess student performance</b>	<b>Retrieve</b> – Use situation-based tests and real-life examples to prompt students to pull knowledge and information from their long-term memory
8. <b>Provide reviews and summaries</b>	<b>Store and Retrieve</b> – Move information back and forth between the short- and long-term memory for more effective storage and retrieval

## The 7Cs are grouped into four categories:

1. **Vision**
  - a. **Conceptualise** (What are you designing and why, who are you designing for?)
2. **Activities**
  - a. **Capture** (in terms of capturing resources to be used and activities around Learner Generated Content)
  - b. **Communicate** (mechanisms to foster communication)
  - c. **Collaborate** (mechanisms to foster collaboration)
  - d. **Consider** (activities to promote reflection and enable assessment)
3. **Synthesis**
  - a. **Combine** (combining the activities to give a holistic overview of the design and associated learning pathways)

#### 4. Implementation

- a. **Consolidate** (in terms of running the design in a real learning context, evaluating, refining and sharing the design).

Each C has a set of Conceptual Learning Designs (CLDs) associated with it.

It looks like a useful model for learning design. The presentation below gives some more information.

