

Curriculum Instructional Design: Making Sense of your Lesson Layouts

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Scope and Sequence

The **Scope** is the amount and range of content taught at any given level or specified segment of the curriculum. This outlines the depth and breadth of coverage. It gives a sense of the extent of content covered and how much learners should be able to master in the areas being defined by the curriculum design. Scope often relies upon learning context, available time, and resources as well as an understanding of learner prior knowledge and abilities.

The **Sequence** is the order of the content to be presented and on the larger scale what subjects or concepts are fundamental to learner mastery of more advanced concepts presented in the curriculum as learners move through the curriculum over time. The sequence of the curriculum closely ties to and needs to be aligned with instructional design and pedagogical issues of the subject area and teaching style. Scope and Sequence work together to specify the map for the curriculum. It should be left to the teacher to navigate this map and provide a sound lesson for each objective. Too much control at the higher levels removed from instructional contact and issues of practice may leave little room for creativity and professional growth at the instructional level.

Articulation

Beyond the basic ideas of scope and sequence, there are other concerns that the curriculum should consider as the map is created related to how to situate specific parts of the learning experience in the larger context of the learner's life and academic career.

Articulation is the relationship between two or more elements of curriculum that occur simultaneously or sequentially.

Coordination

Coordination or horizontal articulation is a correlation of the experiences a learner has in one subject area with another. It is important to realize that instruction and the curriculum that specifies does not occur in a vacuum and so all the experiences of the learner at a given time need to be considered.

Continuity

Continuity or "vertical articulation" is the way topics are presented clearly. It is important for content to be presented in an order that facilitates the relation of subsequent learning with its predecessor.

Identifying necessary prerequisites so foundational knowledge is taught at appropriate times and leveraged in future lessons effectively in the instructional design, this is particularly important in course sequences and mapping of the programmatic curriculum where students need to be aware of the material that is assumed to have been mastered before entering a course taught by different instructors or even at different institutions.

Many times Articulation and Coordination are used similarly at different levels of design so that within a single year or a set of subject courses in a sequence, the term coordination is used while when discussing the connection of curriculum for entire programs or institutions the idea of articulation is more common.

For example, I might use the term coordination when I am working with math across the curriculum to design a link between math and physics while the word articulation is more suited for the discussion of how transfer credit is assigned for courses completed at a community college to be accepted in completion of a 4-year degree program.

Alignment

As these terms are brought together and made into a map of the curriculum, alignment must be considered. **Alignment** is the process of clearly connecting and interplay of elements to allow progression to occur by learners while ensuring that guidance from standard or other oversight groups or the wisdom of the discipline is maintained within the program. It must exist at all levels of the curriculum. Some fundamental ideas and essential questions may require longer periods of study than outlined in a scope or sequence. In addition, aspects of the curriculum may need to draw on several parts of learning as they are applied in order to attain a larger goal and thus alignment considers these needs in the map of how content is organized and delivered.

Coherence

One other aspect to consider when developing a curriculum is to be sure that the experiences intended for learners created a clear picture of learning and work together to be an effective whole both within the specified topics and along with the other parts of the learning process specified in all of the above concerns. This is termed **Coherence** which encompasses the idea that all the parts of the curriculum must fit together and make sense for the learners in the situation so that learner mastery is facilitated and attained.

The goal of creating a coherent curriculum asks the curriculum maker to be aware of how the curriculum being developed connects to all the aspects required to attain the specified objectives. This is particularly important when developing the instructional design for the content for larger curriculum projects that have many components that are interconnected. In addition, the methods of instruction often differ and so the need for coherence is enhanced. For example, in a spiral curriculum certain concepts and skills are taught every year, but in an upward spiral of difficulty while in a linear course sequence such as US history I and II, the foundation from the first course is continued into the second but the interface bridges two academic years that must mesh so important concepts or historical events are not left untaught.

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