

**Reflective Summary of the MSc Modules Year 1 2012-2013:****Reflective Summary of the Learning Theories:**

The grounding theories that stood out in relation to my own subject discipline in teaching and learning with technology throughout the Learning Theories Module were:

- Behaviourism such as Pavlov, Skinner, Thorndike, Whatson and Gagne.
- Cognitivism such as Piaget, Vygotsky and Burner.

The frameworks theories of both behaviourism and cognitism enticed me to explore and facilitate my educational role working with adult learners, from a diverse range of cultural and socio-economic backgrounds. I have tutored and lectured in this role for ten years. Providing the learners with the necessary theoretical and practical skills, knowledge and competence, to gain a comprehensive introductory foundation and understanding from FETAC Level 1-6 in Information Technology Skills. Under the umbrella of the guided disciplines of the City of Dublin Education and Training Board (CDETb) and Further Education Training Awards Council (FETAC).

On reviewing my own teaching and learning styles I realised that I had already embed these theories over the last ten years of teaching and learning into my professional practice. This in turn allowed me as an eLearning practitioner to reflect on how I teach, and how my students learn, through the use of interactive assistive technology in the computer labs. The interactive cognitive learning emphasises being based on and how the student's behaviour assists them in their learning.

(Jordan A. , 2008) (Jordan A, et al., 2008) argue that behaviourism can be applied to lower levels of learning and is not necessarily applied to university level. Teaching adults with intellectual and physical disabilities for seven years has shown how behaviourism and its key concepts have been part of my teaching, especially in how I need to consistently adapt to the students' needs and requirements. Being aware of this allowed what (Tennant, 1997) suggests is the balancing of their educational needs while delivering a certificate based framework. (Armitage, et al., 1999) argue that as learners try and adapt to a new classroom and teaching environment, the awareness of the students' requirements and structure, become evident very quickly. (Armitage, et al., 1999) Reinforcement of positive behaviour and forming an environment that is safe and conducive for learning is paramount in my classroom.

As a constructivist tutor, part of my role is to act as a guide to equip the students with the relevant opportunities to explore their capabilities of their present understanding in relation to their technological skills. By creating flexibility within the subject resources for learner outcomes, it encourages the students to develop their own exploratory research and incorporate it back into their own work. Student's prior knowledge can also be factored in to how the students will interpret information and process it in different ways. This in turn allows the student to play a more active role and take responsibility for their own learning within constructivist's technological learning environment.

**Reflective Summary of the Instructional Design and eAuthoring:**

The introduction to instructional design and eAuthoring was intriguing, as we were divided up into small groups and given limited resources to create and develop defend the egg as a class assignment. Lisa, Siobhan and I were put together as a group and worked out the problem solving skills needed to start from the end result to assist us in a starting point at the beginning. This proved to be an excellent strategy as the end result was we won the task of defending the egg, along with Ray's group. The egg was still in tacked after being dropped off the fire escape and you can see video evidence and a journal entry on my ePortfolio were I reflected on the task in more detail. The latter part of the class we were using topic words to expand our word vocabulary, a bit like using the online resource of a visual thesaurus think map.

(Vygotsky, 1978) Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) was discussed in class along with (VARK) and the four scales extrovert/introvert, nurturer/sensory, feeler/think and perceivers/judgers. Images were placed on the board as a visual representation of an empty bus and by using the (PMI) the plus, minus and interesting method we had to be creative and explore ways in which the empty bus could become (PMI).

Group work was the key elements to the success of the Instructional Design and eAuthoring Project as we all brought our key skills into the project and developed the resources to be presented to our peers. Working with Jennifer and Michael was a valuable learning experience and met up on a regular basis and also corresponded by email and chat live. Our project was based on ePortfolios and reflective journals which were being hosted on the online learning platform Blackboard Learn Plus.

Using the ADDIE model we went through each stage of analyse, design, develop, implement and evaluate to develop our resource. For our audience Jennifer suggested using the first year students from a practical woodworking class module called "Jointing Techniques and Furniture 1". Jennifer had already introduced reflective diaries into their practical coursework the previous week. This was the first time that the student's had been asked to write about their progress in a practical class. The rest of the group were happy to have a sample body to test our resource on.

On completion of our PowerPoint presentations Jennifer put them into Blackboard Learn Plus so that her students could gain access to them. An email was then sent to the students, directing them to Blackboard Learn Plus to access the resources. To allow for students with disabilities, as a group we made the decision to use Read Write Gold Version 9, as the students would have access to this resource through DIT disability service.

The evaluation process of our choice was the LORI model "Learning Object Review Instrument. As part of the review process we soon realised that there was sections of our resource that was missing such as student motivation. Our resource had very little of these activities. When we were developing our resource, as a group we focused too much time looking at the learning outcomes, and how the students would see the benefits of using reflective journals, rather than how it was going to be delivered. We included more activity in our resource by including links to YouTube. The overall project was successful and to date

the resources and still being utilised. On reflection of the instructional design and eAuthoring module, I realised that as an eLearning practitioner I had the skills and knowledge to share and contribute to my fellow cohort, which in turn improved my confidence in my first semester on the MSc. I was also reviewing my lesson plans and teaching resources and evaluating what I had learned and implementing in to my own teaching and learning styles.

### **Reflective Summary of my Professional Development:**

My alternative route to professional development, has been completely different from most other tutors and academic lecturers, and on reflection, I think I have gained more practical and hands on experience which has been beneficial to my teaching and learning styles. My educational journey from a young age had been mapped out, unbeknown to me coming from a disadvantaged area where there would not have been talk about going on to further education and more talk about getting a part-time job from the age of twelve. The prospects of college for my further had never been discussed and went on to work part time in the local supermarket throughout the duration of secondary school.

Upon leaving secondary school I moved away from home and started on a new journey of becoming a young mother to my two sons. Looking back from a mothers perspective I realised the value of education and how important it would be for me to be able to educate my own children, so I went to college part time. This inspired me to progress into adult education and gain the foundation skills to gain employment.

Through teaching in community adult education and working in disadvantaged areas, I acquired valuable teaching and learning skills that had stood to me to the present day, even though I did not have a third level degree. I went for an interview in DIT and was an academic lecturer for three years on the (MSAP) Mature Student Access Programme. The experience that I attained throughout the tree years permitted me to apply for the MSc in Applied eLearning. While preparing for my interview for Professional Development, self-doubt and feelings of not being good enough had impeded my confidence. The interview process itself made me feel at ease and gave me the reassurance that I needed that I was on track and ready for the next stage of the MSc. The artefact that I had brought along to present on the day was a presentation, which embraced the students that I have had the privilege to teach over the years and how they have influenced my teaching and learning. The gift of sharing knowledge as a two way process, taking down the barriers and social stigmas that society place upon each other, to see beyond labels and allow the student as a person to embrace education and acquire new skills and abilities has been a privilege.

### **Reflective Summary of Creative and Critical Thinking**

The creative and critical thinking module was designed as group projects, which were hosted on an online learning platform in Wikispaces. The MSc and the MA were amalgamated together into seven groups, and each group was made up of four students.

As part of our Assessment as a group, we had to include the following:

1. Visual Appeal, structure, Presentation
2. Creativity

## 3. Critical &amp; Analytic Approach

## 4. Theoretical Underpinning

And as individuals create and submit an individual contribution sheet.

The exciting part of the module for me was using new resources that I had not interacted with prior to the module such as Pinterest and Wikispaces. Creating infographics and sourcing resources suitable to facilitate the infographic was challenging and yet exciting to explore and develop our own infographic. Each week adding creative ideas to the discussion boards and peer review for collaboration, demonstrated how cognitive skills assist this part of the module. Using Edward De Bono Six thinking Hats as a guide for peer review, each group was given a hat colour and asked to peer review other groups work. The feedback that we all received was invaluable and crucial to the development of our projects evaluation and progression.

Our group project was based on Digital Literacy, but prior to this the topic, our developmental journey had taken us on multiple paths in which we were not all united as a group. On a critical view point not all group work goes according to plan, and by factoring in the groups individual work schedules and sharing contact details and corresponding via email on commencement of the project, this in turn can reduce problems and stress that arise in group projects.

The group dynamic's changed and we decided to incorporate our own individual strengths and skills to progress our project in the right direction. The Digital Literacy project and took shape and developed into a project resource to meet the assessment criteria.

I incorporated some of the resources that I had used in the creative and critical thinking module into my teaching and learning practice and developed them further as part of my eLearning Project on the MSc. Infographics evolved into interactive infographics to encompass visual, verbal, video mnemonic's to assist in improving student's retention. It also gave me motivation to research more creative web tools and resources to further develop additional resources in other areas of my professional practice.

## Bibliography

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