# Philosophy of Teaching and Learning Statement

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My journey to becoming an instructional designer was a long and winding one with several side trips to learn other skills. I studied graphic design, and years later I earned a BA in Communication before enrolling in the SNHU MS in Instructional Design Technology program. Amazingly, the hungry-for-learning person I have become hated school as a child, and could never have imagined herself earning a Master's degree in the field of Education. Perversely, the number one reason I am so passionate about good instructional design is because of those childhood experiences that eroded my sense of self-efficacy. Good learning experiences are crucial in directing a child's future, and because of my own negative experiences, I want to personally ensure that good learning experiences exist. After some review of what I've learned about learning theory, teaching and technology, I've come up with a synthesis of my beliefs. I believe that:

- Technology should be used as a tool to engage learners through relevant, interactive, experiential learning experiences and activities.
- The needs of the learners should be the first priority in making learning experiences relevant and enjoyable.
- All learning theories have applicability to specific learning situations.
- Scaffolding, experiential learning and metacognition are necessary to deep learning.

As I looked through my coursework for the Masters of Science in Instructional Design Technology program at SNHU, I took notes on the elements, concepts, and projects that had the most significant impact on my learning experiences. Below, I have rated them with number 1 being the most impactful to me:

1. Theories of Learning: I found learning theory to be quite fascinating. This experience opened the door to a new understanding of learning. It's crucial for an instructional designer to understand learning theory.

2. Learning Design I: I learned how to create a needs assessment. This is significant because it is applicable to a good many projects. Now, when I'm looking at a project, the first thing I do is to ask if I have all of the information about the learners or if a needs assessment should be performed. I also learned how to create a project plan guided by the course objectives and the learner needs, closely planning and designing every step of the course in order to meet the learning objectives.

3. Learning Design II: I learned about learner-centered learning design, Merrill's First Principles of Instruction, Kolb's Four-Stage Experiential Learning Cycle, Knowles' Theory of Andragogy, authentic learning course strategy, competency-based education, learner centered course strategy and auditory and visual presentation modes for learning content. This course definitely wins the prize for providing me with the most tools for my instructional design toolbox.

4. Learning Design III: I was able to learn Curriculum Mapping and to use it in a course design. My choice for the subject was an Ethnobotany/Anthropology course that focuses on the healing practices of global traditional indigenous peoples and the plants they use in their practices. In this course, I used what I learned about course design and worked on a subject that I find extremely interesting.

5. Decision Making in Multimedia Design and Production: My final project for this course was a Cultural Awareness Training project plan for employees of a major medical center. The plan employs a rational, analytical style of decision making, a general decision–making process, and learner-centered instruction. The learning theories that support this project are Knowles' Theory of Andragogy, and Kolb's Experiential Learning.

My first experience with IDT occurred several years before I decided to study the discipline formally. I had gone to work in the education and training department at a major children's research hospital in the Midwest and my understanding of the field grew along with my exposure to the discipline. During my first few weeks on the job, I experienced my first eLearning module when I was required to complete some required online employee training. As time went on, I witnessed the use of a "cookie cutter" approach to designing online learning. The preferred method for training delivery had become the go-to model for every single online training that was developed and it was clear that the changing needs of the learners were not considered. Eventually my team tested the pilot of a newer version of an employee training module. I was the copy and graphics editor for that project and later I was called upon to do some animation, video and audio editing for educational projects. As time passed and I worked with the ID's on other projects, I became fascinated with the idea of designing instruction.

Recently I experienced a thought-provoking experience during which I mentally redesigned a course I was taking. The facilitator sat in a chair back in a corner of the room teaching from handwritten notes contained in a spiral-bound notebook. At times he seemed to lose his place and become confused. As I watched him struggle, I thought about how I would have designed the course. I'd place the instructor so that he was presenting from a position where

everyone could see and hear him. I'm a big fan of digital technology, so I would have the instructor using a laptop and projector to present the information. As the evening wore on, I thought about how we encode information through sensory learning. I began to plan how I could design and deliver this course using a slide show and multimedia technology. My pulse raced as I thought about how I would create interactive and experiential elements that would add value to the existing social learning situation. Suddenly I realized something important. I was thinking like an Instructional Designer. It felt exciting and fulfilling!

As a big fan of learning technology, my interests are in the areas of eLearning, gamification, and interactive, multimedia eTextbooks. Technology is an integral part of everyday life in today's global society, and the use of learning technology is an essential component of citizenship in a digital world. The integration of technology into every aspect of society is no longer constrained to highly developed countries. The Pew Research Center's Jacob Poushter (2016) explained that "As the world becomes increasingly interconnected,…technology adoption remains one of the defining factors in human progress…while people in advanced economies still use the internet more and own more high-tech gadgets, the rest of the emerging world is catching up." Learning technology is not only accessed through the use of desktop and laptop computers, but the use of mobile devices for learning is expanding rapidly. Poushter (2016) made it clear that, "…overwhelming majorities in almost every nation surveyed report owning some form of mobile device, even if they are not considered "smartphones." Additionally, Lai, Yang, Chen, Ho, and Chan (2007) explained the significance of mobile technology use in learning, "…mobile technologies 'afford' a rapid access interface for note taking, such as photo taking and sound and video recording. These notes can serve to aid in retention when out of the learning environment."

The global use of learning technology, supported by learning theory, indicates that the implementation of gamification and interactive eTextbooks into higher education is a logical step to keep pace with up-to-date learning delivery in a digital world. In addition to basic features that promote personal learning, such as the ability to highlight text and take notes, eTextbooks offer a high level of interactivity through the use of interactive self-tests, multimedia and social learning features. Doering, Pereira, and Kuechler (2012) described interactivity in e-textbooks, "…a student can click on any word that is not understood… and be taken to an immediate definition of the word…items as music, sound effects, animation, pictures, hyperlinks, and supplementary material can be embedded into e-textbooks that provide a more diverse and richer learning opportunity." Doering et all (2012) further explained that "…e-books can create monetary advantages. They have a longer shelf life and can be updated electronically and be redistributed."

Kolb's Theory of Experiential Learning embraces the concepts of scaffolding and relevance in eTexbooks, and states that "Effective learning is seen when a person progresses through a cycle of four stages: of (1) having a concrete experience followed by (2) observation of and reflection on that experience which leads to (3) the formation of abstract concepts (analysis) and generalizations (conclusions) which are then (4) used to test hypothesis in future situations, resulting in new experiences." (McLeod, 2013).

Many institutions have already embraced technology to deliver interactive learning. Stanford School of Medicine (2016) enthusiastically explains that, "Interactive learning actively engages the students in wrestling with the material. It reinvigorates the classroom for both students and faculty. Lectures are changed into discussions, and students and teachers become partners in the journey of knowledge acquisition." Further research into eTextbook formats that retain interactive elements in both PC and Mac operating systems across multiple mobile device

platforms, produced results that far exceed the capabilities of a PDF format. Some devices do not support interactive digital elements, however, the new format of Fixed Layout EPUB (FXL) currently available within the newest version of Adobe InDesign is the more cross platform accessible answer to a Mac-based iBooks based interactive eTextbook learning solution. Blatner (2014) explained that "You can use the newest version of InDesign to make highly interactive FXL files (with hyperlinks, video, buttons, animations, slide shows, and so on…you can view it on Mac and Windows and iOS and Android, as long as you have modern EPUB3 reader software…Apple's iBooks, Adobe's Digital Editions software, Kobo apps, and the Readium Chrome extension, are all free options for reading FXL files."

Accessibility is certainly a crucial component of the decision to introduce interactive eTextbook technology into the learning environment. The advent of the Fixed Layout EPUB3 format overcomes the hurdle in delivering digital content to devices with multiple platforms and operating systems. In addition, to accessibility, a key next step in the integration of eTextbooks into curriculum is for faculty to make decisions about how the eTextbooks will be used. This step will help to determine the value they could add to students' learning experiences and discover how this technology can be used within a particular curriculum.

Instructor buy-in and engagement is a crucial component of introducing eTextbooks into a learning environment. Without instructor participation, the value of an interactive eTextbook could be reduced to an option instead of a vital learning tool. When students witness instructor participation, the experience can transform from a mere digital tool into an inclusive method of immersive, interactive learning delivery. In order to realistically promote the use of interactive eTextbooks into curriculum, instructors must be proficient both in using the interactive and multimedia functions, and in actively using features that allow annotations for students that guide

and promote social learning within the text. The adoption of interactive, multimedia eTextbook technology not only places the learning institution into the position of offering a contemporary method of instruction delivery, but ensures an updated use of digital technology crucial to students' learning success in today's global society.

As I look back on the order of what I learned in my formal coursework in the SNHU MS IDT program, it's clear that the curriculum was designed purposefully and thoughtfully. Learning scaffolding was used to present information in the order needed for the learner to be able to build upon former learning. The learner's needs in an online learning program were carefully considered. The curriculum delivered lectures that were transformed into discussions through carefully crafted discussion board prompts, and both students and teachers were partners as we explored the world of instructional design.

In our digital world, technology plays a crucial role in learning. The effective use of technology in this course enabled me to learn how to design instruction that can be delivered in a brick and mortar classroom, online, or in a hybrid situation using technology. I feel fortunate to be living in a time when I can use technology to both design engaging learning content and to deliver and enable learning. I am humbled with gratitude at my opportunities and thrilled at the role I will play in the future of learning. To me there could not be a more impactful profession on a society than that of an instructional designer.

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