
FROM TEACHING TO DESIGNING EFFECTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

Rethinking learning design gains increasing significance, once we consider the key characteristics of Millennials, such as their need for excitement, their digital and fast-paced lives, their quest for practicality and interactivity, as well as their aspiration for creating meaning through their education and future careers. This seminar captures the essence of the situation and presents some ideas for effective design of content (curriculum), delivery (pedagogy) and evaluation of learning (examination).

The objective of this training course is to familiarize the educators with design thinking tools and techniques that they can apply to create effective learning environments. Adapting a design thinking lens, we conceptualize the course as a service, the educator as the service designer, and the students as the customers of the service. We will then examine several hands-on thinking tools and reflection mechanisms that can help us as educators in creating meaningful and engaging experiences for the students and ourselves in the context of the course.

PART 1: FROM TEACHING TO DESIGNING LEARNING

The first part of this training course content helps explore responses to the following questions:

- What are the characteristics of effective learning environments?
- How can we transition from teaching to designing learning?
- Why is peer instruction important? How can we motivate the students to engage in peer instruction?
- Why does gamification matter? How can we develop simple and effective games to create a fun and profound learning experience?
- How can we design a self-organizing learning environment?
- Why are creating inter-disciplinary connections crucial? How can we create meaningful connections between course materials and everyday life activities, in addition to other courses or disciplines?
- What alternative modes of performance evaluation exist? How can these create more value compared to conventional examinations?
- What insights from systems thinking can enable us in designing better learning environments and becoming better learners?

PART 2: DESIGN THINKING FOR EDUCATORS

In the second part of this training course, we will explore responses to the following questions:

- What is contextual inquiry and how can it help educators in gathering rich design data from their courses?
- What is “design insight” and how is it related “unmet needs” or “unarticulated desires” of the learners?
- Why should design be viewed as creating “significance” and “meaning” both for the learners and the educators?
- Where do “design ideas” come from? How can we tap into our creative potentialities when it comes to designing new courses and improving existing ones?
- How can we relate technical design aspects of a course and the perceptions and emotions of the learners?
- How can metaphors and analogies be used as creativity boosters for effective learning?
- What are “personas”, “archetypes”, and “human conditions”? and how can these concepts be utilized in designing learning?

THE SEVEN UNIQUENESS FACTORS

1. Arash has 20 years of experience, teaching courses in a variety of disciplines such as Engineering, Management and Informatics, at Bachelor's, Master's and Doctoral programs. This means in the training course, he evokes examples from variety of fields incorporating the nuances across the programs.
2. In addition to the discipline-specific courses, Arash specializes in offering inter-disciplinary courses such as Systems Thinking and Design Thinking. The principles, tools and the techniques offered in the Designing Learning for Millennials training course are grounded in these two fields where Arash is internationally acknowledged as an expert.
3. Arash has taught courses at universities and academic institutions in different continents across the world, and to students with various cultural backgrounds, age groups, experience, and motivation levels. The diversity he has experienced has helped him in formulating ideas for learning design that can be effective in various educational settings.
4. Students from the universities where Arash works, have voted him as the Best Faculty, multiple times in the recent years. Students constantly refer to his courses, as transformative, engaging, challenging, informative and practical. This is an important accomplishment, specially in the high quality and high standard education system of Switzerland.
5. Arash has studied different disciplines in some of the world's best Academic Institutions. He completed his Ph.D. in Management of Technology at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Lausanne (EPFL), holds a Master of Science in System Dynamics from Worcester Polytechnic Institute (summa cum laude), and studies Depth Psychology at the Carl Gustave Jung Institute in Zurich, Switzerland. In his opinion, an educator is a lifelong learner.
6. Apart from his academic qualifications and teaching activities, Arash has worked as an engineer, a consultant and a researcher and can draw from his experiences out of academia to create meaningful examples and analogies that are accessible for those faculty members with an orientation towards a more hands-on approach to education.
7. The training course Designing Learning for Millennials has been offered in Switzerland for the faculty members of several universities. The response from the participants has been overwhelmingly positive, resulting in inviting Arash back for more in-depth follow up sessions. The training course has been constantly revised and improved to remain rigorous, relevant and practical and has evolved to become what educators consider as a unique opportunity for creating effective learning environments.