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Title: Constructing undergraduate psychology curricula: Promoting authentic learning and assessment in the teaching of psychology.
Author: Joseph A. Mayo (2010)
Place of Publication: Washington, DC: American Psychological Association
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Engaging students in the context of higher education has become quite topical, resulting in a plethora of significant research. The pressures to produce students that attain a range of graduate attributes are contingent on sound curriculum development, the method of delivery and authentic assessment practices. Consequently a key issue for educators is enacting change to many of the older pedagogies to better accommodate the increasing numbers of students and role of digital technologies. Joseph Mayo's book is timely in delivering a book grounded in a comprehensive, but concise review of the literature, applying the concepts from the literature to the examples of engaging learning tasks that demonstrate tested learning tasks with authentic assessment strategies.

Joseph Mayo's book is a valuable resource that draws on constructivist theory to align learning outcomes with 'real world' (authentic) experience. The author defines the goal of the book as a pedagogical device that promotes active and enduring learning within a constructivist educational context. Additionally Mayo tries to address three broad issues for American educators in psychology; align course content with American Psychological Association (APA) approved *guidelines for the Undergraduate Major in Psychology*, integrate instructional strategies with authentic learning and assessment, and assess student mastery of course content. He then links these concerns to the five learning goals discussed in the APA Guidelines (knowledge base of psychology, research methods, critical thinking skills, application of psychology, and values).

The result is a pragmatic book that invites the reader to engage in an active process of scholarly teaching and learning practices. The book is intended to be an advisory teaching resource for a broad audience of psychology educators (high school to undergraduate) that permits flexibility regarding the specific context of the educator. The value of the book to the reader therefore, is not as a prescriptive model of teaching practice, but rather as a source of practical classroom applications that can be developed and integrated within their own unique philosophy of teaching.

The book is structured into four parts. Part I documents a historical overview of curriculum reform from the early 1900's to the present. Chapter 1 is an interesting albeit very concise overview of curriculum development of psychology in America. The chapter concludes with a developmental model succinctly presented as a series of tables that outline a 'developmentally

coherent model for undergraduate psychology curricula' (p.20). These tables articulate a model of curriculum development that draw on the five learning goals developed by the APA task force, integrating the three levels of student proficiency across the course trajectory (basic, developing and advanced). Integrated within the tables is the application of the cognitive domain in Bloom's revised taxonomy of educational objectives that link the six ascending levels of thinking to the three progressive levels of student proficiency in the model. The tables provide a very useful model that can be applied to many educational settings, meeting the needs of diversity in the student body and faculty objectives.

Part II examines the philosophy and educational perspective of constructivism and its implications for authentic teaching, learning and assessment. This section of the book briefly reviewed many of the seminal authors in the area of constructivism as it relates to education. Chapter 2 provides enough detail for the discerning reader to understand the fundamental concepts of constructivist approaches to teaching in psychology. Chapter 3 draws from the authors own 'class-tested constructivist stance' (p. 41) and builds an organizational framework based on the Five E's (engage, explore, explain, elaborate, and evaluate) instructional model. In doing so, the author draws from a smorgasbord of theoretical approaches that align with a constructivist approach to teaching and the Five E's (for example, Socratic teaching, Piaget's view on cognitive constructivism, Vygotsky's perspective on social constructivism, Kelly's personal construct theory, Roger's experiential learning, Bruner's scaffolding, Bandura's social learning theory, Lave's situational learning theory, Gagne's application of behaviourism and cognitive perspectives, the use of authentic assessment etc)

Part III, referred to as the 'heart and soul' by the author, consists of five chapters dealing with case-based instruction, the use of narrative psychology to integrate learners life experiences with application of course content, the use of diagrammatic devices (concept maps, and repertory grids) to link students pre-existing knowledge with new knowledge the use of analogies in designing and implementing learning assignments, and co-operative learning for small groups, large groups and class. Within each of these chapters, the author commences with a theoretical overview of the applications showcased and a sound rationale for each of the learning tasks. The author then exhibits a range of authentic learning assessments with the specific learning outcomes for each task and linking to the five learning goals they address in the undergraduate psychology major. For example Chapter 4 exhibits applying authentic assessment to a fictional case study, a fictional case narrative, real-life case studies, a life-change log and a 'live' research case analysis. Each authentic assessment outlines the levels of student proficiency (from basic to advanced), the course in which the assessment occurs (for example, introductory psychology, psychology of adjustment, research methods etc), the instructional context, the purpose of the assignment, instructional methodology, learning goals and outcomes, and the learning task and grading rubric.

Part IV explores future directions and challenges by uncovering the connections between constructivism and technologies and future career directions in psychology and curriculum

development. In Chapter 9 Mayo reviews traditional constructivist literature to discern technology's role in constructivist learning. He reviews the concept of *constructionism*, a term coined by Seymour Papert (a student of Piaget's) to introduce a hybrid learning approach that integrates student-centered learning with the use of new web-based technologies as a conduit to learning. Chapter 10 concludes with a review of the current state of education in psychology and future directions in education in Psychology. Mayo reviews recommendations made at the sixth annual Educational Leadership Conference sponsored by the APA in 2007. Of particular interest to the global audience is the role of psychology in the education of other professions, the role of psychology in multi-disciplinary research, and internationalizing the curriculum. Of more interest to American readers is the discussion on 2 –and-4 year curricula, particularly the notion of level playing fields for those students enrolled in 2-year colleges. The chapter ends with a discussion on new directions for educational reform, concluding with the recommended principles for quality undergraduate education in psychology.

Despite the book being predominantly focused on the development of the American curriculum, the model of curriculum development could readily be adapted to a global audience.