**Alignment Principle**

***What is the alignment principle?***

Biggs ([1999](#_ENREF_1)) descriptively informs us that the aligned system of instruction is when the students are entrapped in a web of consistency which increases the chances that the learner will engage in beneficial learning activities. This web entraps the curriculum, teaching methods, learning environment and assessment procedures to ensure that there are no inconsistencies in pedagogical design. Mayes and Freitas ([2004](#_ENREF_2)) emphasize the need to ensure that pedagogical design focuses on what the learner is actually doing. This ensures that the learning and teaching are at the focus of design. Steeples, Jones, and Goodyear ([2002](#_ENREF_4)) state that tasks need to be clearly specified to ensure that the learner engages in productive activity.

***Do these ideas hold up in the context of your teaching/professional activity?***

In my teaching I have used three broad perspectives to understand learning and have adopted these to appropriate learning situations. I am challenged to ensure that alignment within each of these perspectives occurs.

Gagne’s behavioristic approach to learning is suitable to teaching mathematics to many students. Instruction is designed in such a way that students are able to succeed in small logical steps. ([Mayes, 2004](#_ENREF_2)) Lower ability mathematics students learn by doing and benefit from immediate feedback as it is motivational in the process. One problem with this type of teaching is that it can often remain teacher centered, however, I have found that with appropriate scaffolding, students do move to a more student centered learning in time.

I have had the most success with cognitive based learning as it emphasizes learning by doing. The recent online learning materials that I have begun developing focus on encouraging the learner to cognitively engage with the materials provided. ([Steeples, et al., 2002](#_ENREF_4)) I have found in my experience as a learner that this is the way that I learn the best as I often apply new knowledge my previous understanding gained from prior learning.

My teaching in the past few years has changed, perhaps as students have become more social and technology has offered greater options. The situative perspective on learning assumes that knowledge exists within a community of practice. McLoughlin and Lee ([2008](#_ENREF_3)) believe that learners should become active participants and co-producers of knowledge rather than passive consumers of content. Web 2.0 has provided the means for learning communities to exist both synchronously and asynchronously. I am interested in researching more and designing learning environments that incorporate communities of practice in the future.

***References***

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