

Chapter 11

A Curriculum Development and Quality Assessment Model Based on the Formation of Professional Identity

Michael D. Hamlin

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8349-5509>

Touro University Worldwide, USA

ABSTRACT

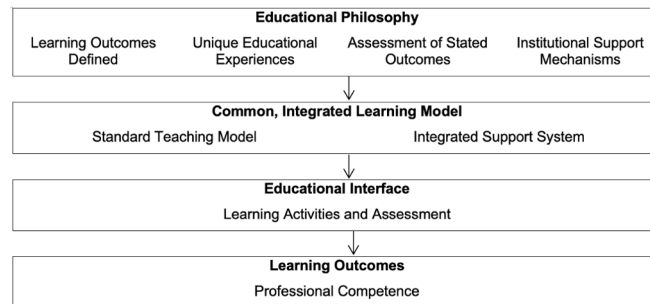
Educators are increasingly urged to improve quality control mechanisms. Improving quality involves more than simply increasing the variety of options for assessments. It calls for a new model of curriculum design focused on the formation of professional competencies students will need in the workplace along with the integration of theory-based learning activities and assessments supported by instructional technologies. This chapter will present a framework that educators can use to guide the integration of learning activities, assessments, and instructional technologies in a manner that guides students in the development of professional competencies for success in the workplace and also provides a stream of quality control data that can be used to measure both educational and organizational effectiveness.

INTRODUCTION

Academic degree programs are typically developed with the goal of teaching a specific body of knowledge at a specified level based on the degree offered. An investigation across institutions of course catalog descriptions for a specific degree such as a bachelor's degree in business will show a remarkable degree of consistency in terms of courses chosen and topics covered. The topics or courses in the program correspond to the expertise of the faculty who are hired to teach these standard courses. Degree programs are typically designed with the goal of covering a specified amount of material which is structured in increasing difficulty or complexity to help students master a set of defined concepts and processes considered to represent the knowledge necessary to practice in the field. However, curricula are typically

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Figure 1. Learning and quality assessment model



developed incrementally with new topics or courses added when new ideas or techniques gain currency in the field. Older ideas or techniques may be deleted but usually not without a fight from those faculty members who claim ownership over them. This approach to curriculum design will not always produce students with the proper knowledge and skill sets needed in the workplace.

This purpose of this chapter is to describe a model of curriculum design that has as its aim the formation of professional identity in students. To achieve this purpose this chapter will address the following questions:

- What are the pedagogical elements that are essential to the development of professional identity in students?
- How are these elements best combined to guide the development of a learning model and curriculum centered on the development of professional identity?
- What research can we draw on from the learning sciences to provide guidance for the development of a learning model that will produce professional competence?

The goal of this chapter is to describe a different model of curriculum design that is based on the formation of professional competence in students. In keeping with the quality assurance theme of this book, a design framework will be described that educators can use to: (1) guide the design of a department or degree-wide pedagogy that integrates learning activities, assessments, and instructional technologies that provides learning affordances for students; and (2) a continuous stream of quality control data that can be used by administrators for measuring both student success and institutional effectiveness.

The three levels of the framework are: (1) A school-wide or departmental definition of educational philosophy that incorporates the meaning of the degree defined in terms of the desired learner characteristics, a theoretically based learning model and a specification of professional competence, related to the degree; (2) Instantiation of the educational philosophy in a common, integrated learning model; and, (3) Creation of an educational interface to deliver pedagogies designed to develop professional competence in students.

Figure 1 provides an overview of the three levels of the Learning and Quality Assessment Model.

Decisions must be made for each degree offered about the content of the classes such that professional identity and competence is developed in each student by teaching methods informed by a common pedagogy used across the curriculum. Orientation classes introduce the students to the learning model and the goals of instruction. Core classes contribute to the development of the professional knowledge,

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