

## FOREWORD

2024 should, by all evidence, be the culmination of a century of development of practices and policies around the planification and the design of the class and learning experience. Constructivism indeed has showed us, nearly a century ago now, that students needed to be at the center of learning, in the driver's seat. And it has also established that this delicate equilibrium required much planning. Since then, many other teaching philosophies have emphasized the need for planning, alignment, design, and intentionality in the preparation of the learning experience.

We could therefore assume that, a century on, we have, as a society and as a profession, become acutely prepared and equipped for the planning of learning. This is not the case, and there are many reasons why, in fact, at the beginning of this 21st century, we can say that we have never been more resistant to theories of planning and design in learning, or more reticent to embrace change.

One of the factors that has shaped the last two decades has been the development of neoliberal approaches to education which, in turn, have prioritized values in learning that have less to do with pedagogy and more to do with business practices. These values have been efficiency, productivity, cost reduction, management of a large client base, and the development of visibility and marketing. These values have themselves led to the development of practices in schools and in post-secondary sector that are less akin to teaching than they are to just the effective management of organizations. It is therefore ironic that, while we can continue to preach, teach, and showcase constructivist practices in teacher training, as well as student-centered

design, inclusive design, notions of alignment in teaching, and overall diverse methods and justifications for the delicate and precise planning of learning, there is actually less of this observed in the field than there has ever been before in history.

Neoliberalism is not the only reason for the push back that is currently being witnessed away from learning planning and design. The profession, as a whole, has become averse to risk-taking and, as a result, is focused instead on rather dry and narrow quantitative indicators around tangible ‘products’, rather than on the organic and delicate practice of engaging learners to step out of their comfort zone. Such quantitative summative snapshots are invested in demonstrating trends and variations that support notions of market effectiveness, parent-customer choice, and free market stratification of educational establishments in a landscape of heightened competition. The act of maintaining learning as a spark, or a moment of magic, where the learner is put in winning conditions through delicate, precise, and thorough planning, to be able to experience a unique awareness of their competencies, is now often shunned. For the benefit of identifying and showcasing quantifiable end results to what is now mostly seen as a ‘production process’, such as positive improvements in standardized testing, seemingly observable trends in the efficiency of systems, and an approach to quality assurance that has more to do with manufacturing than it has to do with the emergence of young lives, the magical act of pedagogical development and learning design is often sacrificed.

A third reason can be observed which also explains the recent push away from planning, design, and alignment in

teaching. It is important for scholars to adopt a sociological perspective to examine the profession of teaching as a whole, in order to fully grasp some of the pressures currently applied on pre- and in-service teachers, in terms of characteristics, profiles, preferences, and determining qualities. The profession in the last two decades has become increasingly defined by its level of precariousness in employment, its fears for the future, its angst regarding change, and its lack of sustainability. A recently published survey, for example, highlights the fact that one in six British Columbia teachers, in Canada, is considering leaving the profession (Little and Prasad, 2024). This is characteristic of trends observed globally across the world in the post-COVID pandemic landscape. The profession, as a whole as a result, is more focused on its ambivalence about its own future than it is about positive and transformative notions such as embracing risk, seeking creativity, designing for innovation, and battling for pedagogical reform. These should ideally be the critical values that serve as an engine for the development of effective planning, constructivist design, inclusive redesign, and transformative alignment of teaching with student-centered outcomes firmly in mind, but it is challenging for educators to focus on these values when they frequently are preoccupied about the viability of their career.

This book therefore comes at a crucial time and will serve as a call to action for the profession as a whole and for leaders more specifically within individual institutional contexts, in relation to the changes that are rapidly and pressingly required in systems' approach to planning for authentic learning. It will be important for the profession to be confronted with books such as this one that will reignite the fire, the passion, and the fascination with the transformative

and creative planning of learning, with aligning teaching and assessment in a transformative manner, and with designing inclusively. A recent training program for in-service teachers within community, on the east coast of the US, has decided to focus on the design of gaming – rather than on the classroom itself - in its professional development offerings to teachers. The argument being that If teachers learn how to create and design games effectively, they will become creative, transformative, and engaging planners of teaching. This lesson is heavy in repercussions and implications, and it is my opinion that this book will similarly serve as a spark to encourage teachers and educators to re-engage with the act of planning and the task of creatively crafting learning experiences, with the same enthusiasm and energy as they would experience designing fun and surprising games.

**Frederic Fovet** *PhD*

School of Education, Thompson Rivers University, Canada.

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