Elaboration Theory

Elaboration theory is one of the cognitivist models for instructional design proposed by Charles Reigeluth and his associates in 1970s. Very well accepted, it was offering suggestions on how to organize different types of instruction.

The key principle is that the content should be organized starting from the simplest and then increasing order of complexity and that learner has to develop a concept in which new ideas will be meaningful and well accepted.

Elaboration theory suggests instruction should be organized in the following eight strategies:

- organizing structure (conceptual, procedural or theoretical)
- sequencing content in increasing order of complexity
- within-lesson sequencing (based on type of organizing structure: for theoretically organized instruction present ideas from simple to complex, for procedures present steps in their order of appearance, for conceptually organized instructions start from more familiar and general concepts). Sequencing content within a lesson can according to elaboration theory be:
    - topical (topic is studied in depth before moving to the next one)
    - spiral (firstly all topics are briefly introduced before going into details about each of them)
- summarizers (to review content)
- synthesizers (to enable easier meaningful integration of new knowledge)
- analogies (to enable easier relation to prior knowledge)
- cognitive strategy activators (images, diagrams or simply directions to mentally represent learned content)
- learner control (suggest learners to exercise control over instructional strategies and content)

Critics

Bibliography

Wilson, Brent, and Peggy Cole. "A critical review of elaboration theory." Educational Technology Research an Development 40, no. 3 (9, 1992): 63-79.