

Developments in Economics Education
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Enhancing student learning through programme coherence

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Martin Diedrich

Frankfurt School of Finance & Management (Germany)

m.diedrich@fs.de

previously:

Keele University, BPP Business School, Imperial College London

This session

- Motivation
- Types of coherence
- Managing the process

Examples

Three “designed” programmes

- MSc Finance: based on spreadsheet modelling
- BSc Business Economics: all by “case”
- Executive Master’s: reflective diary as core

Key:

- Unique feature that “drives” the programme
- Systematic implementation

Counter examples

Lack of coherence

- Same basic topic covered in modules A, B, C
- Learning skill developed in A but not used in B or C

Pedantic implementation

- Exciting eccentric course killed by formal template
- Tedium of “always the same”
- Too much handholding kills student independence

Why it matters

Programme coherence:

- enhanced student learning
- clearer programme goals
- informed student choice between programmes
- increased career relevance
- more fun to teach!
- helps with accreditation & QA

A glance at pedagogy ...

*Every experience influences in some degree
the objective conditions under which further
experiences are had.*

John Dewey

Experience & Education (1938)

Dimensions of coherence

Academic content & tools

- Sequence of topics / tools
- Right amount of overlap

Everything “has a role” and helps the student grow

Methods & Materials

- right mix of assessment methods
- materials: varied but not chaotic
- common structure for all sessions

Types of coherence

Tightly integrated but broad

- top-down design
- wide range of tools, topics, assessment

Loosely coupled, organic

- using existing courses & materials
- prevent clashes, encourage convergence

Single-focus

- small range of tools
- very fast development of materials

Examples

Harvard MBA

- ❑ “case driven”
- ❑ common lecture format ...
- ❑ ... yet strong personalities as teachers

Finance MSc with CFA Level-II Qualification

- ❑ “in depth” academic modules
- ❑ plus very detailed external syllabus
- ❑ make both complement each other

Question: examples in your institution?

Counter example

Pick & Mix Module Structure

- ❑ programme branding : “student choice”
- ❑ prevents sequential development
- ❑ prevents deeper learning

There is a role for isolated “pick & mix” modules, but only as part of an overall programme goal.

Managing the process

Functions

- Design
- Coordinate & encourage
- Listen

Responsibilities

- Curriculum Committee
- “Active crew” in the current term
- Programme Director

Question: responsibilities in your institution?

Concrete example

“Use common notation across modules ?”

- needs to be part of the design deliberations
- module leaders must share their materials
- excessive uniformity kills independence
- Someone needs to listen to student concerns

On a personal note ...

Martin

at DEE 07,

Cambridge 2007

DEE as an opportunity
jointly to reflect on our work

*Thank you to the Econ Network
and the organisers!*



Thank you

Martin Diedrich

Programme Director

Frankfurt School of Finance & Management, Germany

www.frankfurt-school.de

m.diedrich@fs.de