Chapter 7

Affect in Online Learning:
Outcomes, Emotions, and Affective States

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ABSTRACT
A learning design framework offered an integrated position on the learning objectives, tools, and social engagement in online learning. It was founded upon an integration of Bloom's taxonomy in the cognitive, affective, social, and sensori-motor domains of learning. This chapter builds upon this model, adding insight into the affective domain of learning. It negotiates and distinguishes the use of the term “affective” for multiple purposes that include links to learning outcomes, emotions, and affective states. A strengthening of the framework is outlined to show the potential relationships amongst the elements as students engage in online learning. Finally, an example of the use of learning objectives in the affective domain in planning is presented to illustrate its application in designing online courses.

BACKGROUND
In 2014, Fasso, Knight and Knight published a learning design framework that was designed to support multi-dimensional learning that focused on outcomes beyond merely the cognitive. It responded to calls in the literature for broader learning outcomes that include generic skills and attributes, and professional ethics and values.

As distance learning evolves, increasing numbers of students study online, for instance close to half of the students at a large national University in Australia study in online mode (CQUniversity, 2017). It was identified in the published framing paper (Fasso, Knight, & Knight, 2014) as critical that online distance learners develop a participatory perspective on learning. Furthermore, in a climate of change and challenge to societal and professional values, it was identified how critical the integration of learning objectives to support a rich learning environment is to the quality of learning outcomes for graduates. The framework, shown in Figure 1, supports holistic approaches to learning design in valuing an

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integration of cognitive, social, affective and sensorimotor domains (Dettmer, 2005; Fasso et al., 2014). The integration of these four domains, is designed as “a theory-oriented catalyst to induce thinking in different ways about curriculum, instruction, and assessment, and to provide a practical organizer that can be used in many aspects of teaching and learning” (Dettmer, 2005, p. 77).

The extended framework of Fasso et al. (2014) is designed to support participatory, collaborative, values-laden learning in online courses. It promotes the conceptualisation of effective use of online learning spaces so that the affordances of the web for learning are used to enrich learning engagement. It integrates the traditional learning management system (LMS), commonly in institutional use, with a range of other online tools specific to the content, activity type, pedagogy and knowledge that determines their selection.

Dettmer’s (2006) integrated taxonomy of learning domains, upon which this framework is founded, extends the cognitive domain into originality and creativity. As such, this supports thinking about learning design that includes genuinely creative, uniquely individual tasks. Maintaining a focus on the collaborative and individual learning environments supports course design decisions that includes a variety of approaches to social learning design. As a holistic approach, the integrated framework has been well-used by the authors in conceptualising online courses, particularly those with challenging or contentious content.

However, planning for optimal student participation has proved to be more difficult than anticipated. Students can often demonstrate a range of patterns of engagement in planned learning activities. Many students participate fully in processes designed to interrogate their values and beliefs. However, others approach learning at surface level, without apparent, genuine engagement in the activities or interrogation of the values of the teaching units. It was apparent to tutors that, although the framework is a very useful and simplified approach to reflecting on online learning design, greater attention to the affective domain and the processes of learning are required to appreciate how students engage in this learning activity.

Figure 1. Framework for online learning design
Fasso et al., 2014
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