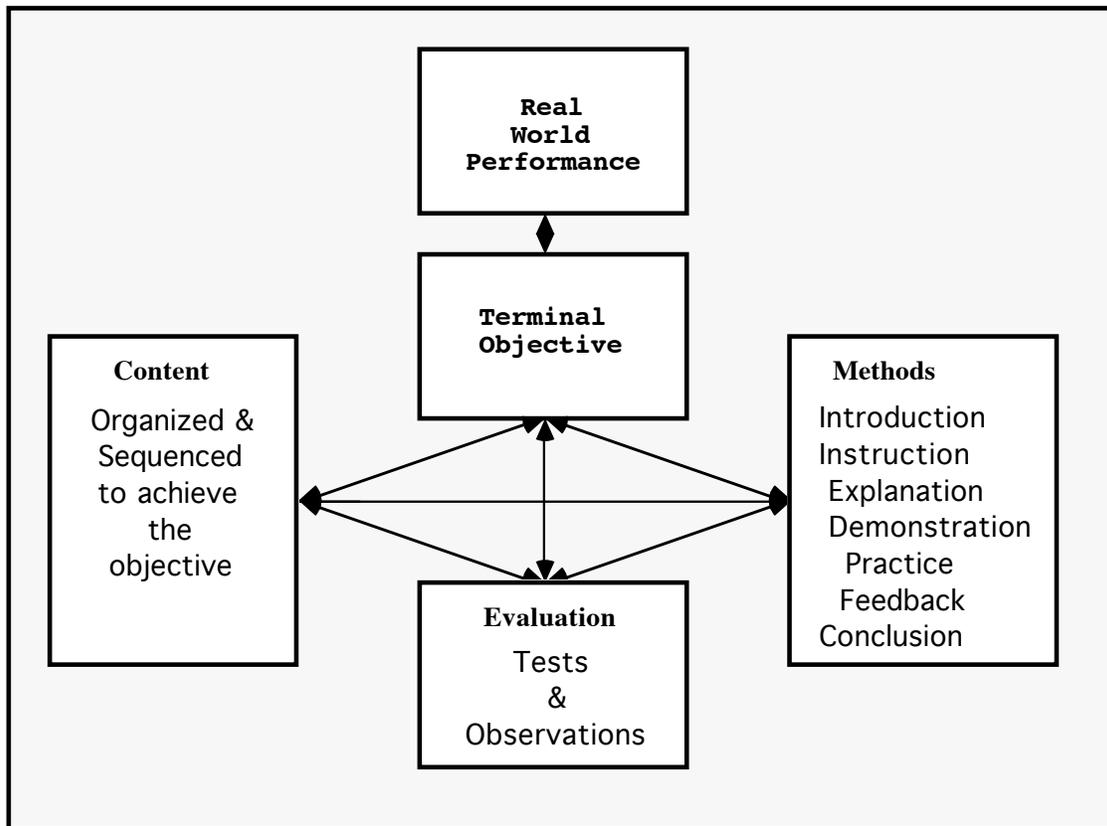




The Secret of instructional Design



The secret of instructional design: All instructional elements are consistent and are oriented toward real-world understanding and performance.



I call the thinking that underlies the structure of instruction the Secret of Instructional Design. It is based on the work of Ralph Tyler, a curriculum specialist from the 1940's. The idea is simple: there are certain components we need in effective instruction, and each component has to be consistent with the others and directed toward real-world understanding and performance.

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Tyler, R.W., Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1950.

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Here is an explanation of the thinking I do as I plan instruction using the Secret of Instructional Design. I keep in mind that for an instructional system to produce learning, all the system elements have to be coordinated.

Goal

Thus, I start by thinking of the focal element, the **goal**, the desired **real world performance**: the thoughts and actions of graduates, in the context of their roles in life. I ask myself, “Where, when, and how will learners use the knowledge or skill learned after the instructional segment?”

I derive the real world performance from what I think is important, the high priority problems I notice. That’s how philosophy in general and philosophy of education in particular plays its part in the process.

Test

Second, I think of the **tests** and I ask myself, “What would be the best representation of those real world performances that I could possibly call for within the conditions of the instruction? What are the best test questions, assignments, tasks, projects that show that the learners are well on their way to real world performance?” I write samples of those test questions and project instructions.

Objective

Next, I shift to the terminal **objectives**, the final outcomes of the course. To form objectives, I describe the tests. I state conditions, behaviors and standards of each type of test. I tell students what the tests will be like as specifically as possible without violating the validity of the exams.

Content

Third, because I know the real world goals, the tests and the objectives, I can decide on the **content**. I choose skills and ideas that students must learn to do well on the test, and thereby meet the objective, and be ready for the real world. I organize and sequence that essential content.

Method Introduction

Fourth, I plan the **method** – the way I intend to design and deliver the instruction. I think about an **introduction**: how to motivate and orient students. I ask myself, “What are the main ideas? Where will they use these ideas? What are the payoffs for use? What are the objectives? What will the test be like? What ideas do students know that they must recall to learn? What is the schedule of instructional events?”

Method Core & Conclusion

Then I plan for the instructional core - the way students will acquire **information and experience demonstrations**. I also plan the most crucial element of the core, the **practice** – the exercises that students will perform to retain, understand and apply the information. I create practice so that each individual performs the same thinking and the same sort of action under similar conditions, and up to the same standard as on the test and in the real world. I also consider how I will provide **feedback**. Finally, I think about how I will conclude the segment – how I will summarize, reorient and motivate the students.

The secret behind the Secret of design is that the order of development is not crucial. I may first think of some critical content and then I may think of the real world performance and the objective. What matters most is that all elements are eventually coordinated.