

10. Conclusion

MAIS FATAYER

Not just another textbook

In writing this book our primary aim was to provide a practical resource for the use of learning designers in higher education. We concentrated in particular on:

- Addressing the existing gap by providing an open textbook that focuses on diversity in learning design within the Australasian region.
- Different conceptual frameworks for learning designers for designing diverse learning environments, considering the challenges prevalent in higher education.
- Providing practical examples, evidence-based solutions, and draw from educational theory to shape socially just learning experiences.

The process of creating this book was intrinsically rewarding. By choosing to produce an open textbook, we implicitly convey our commitment to ongoing development. The shared characteristics between designing for learning and authoring open textbooks are their iterative, collaborative, and diverse nature. Although this is the first edition of the book, we envision its potential for growth, both within its chapters and beyond, utilising the **5Rs**.

A glimpse of each chapter

In each chapter, we aimed to explore the implications of the

conceptual approach presented for fostering inclusivity and diversity in learning design, and provide practical examples and guidelines that learning designers can immediately apply to their work.

Making socially just pedagogy a reality

In this chapter, Keith and Camille emphasise the importance of inclusivity, going beyond just accessibility. They argue that it's vital to create an inclusive learning environment by actively involving students in the learning process, rather than focusing solely on individuals or specific groups. They suggest that learning designers should consider incorporating students as active partners in the learning ecosystem to facilitate genuine inclusivity and diversity. To do so, they introduce a framework that combines **Fraser's three dimensions of social justice** with **Universal Design for Learning (UDL)** principles and **David Wiley's 5 Rs of Open Education**. While Keith and Camille acknowledge the complexity of these three layers, they stress the importance of an ongoing and iterative approach to developing inclusive and socially just learning. Practical examples are provided to demonstrate how this approach can be put into practice, with a focus on authentic learning and student involvement in alignment with the framework.

Designing inclusive learning experience through open educational practices

Moving forward, Mais delves into **Open Educational Practices (OEP)** as a catalyst for designing inclusive and socially just learning environments. In her chapter she presents practical approaches for the adoption of OEP in higher education,

offering insights from Australia and other places around the world. The chapter emphasises that learning designers must embrace OEP in the design processes, and develop an understanding of open education fundamentals. Further, the chapter highlights the benefits of OEP in empowering academics to update biased curricula, offer opportunities to decolonise education and foster inclusivity amidst disruptions.

Negotiating the assumptions and identity tensions surrounding third space academics/professionals

The next chapter in this sequence, delve deeper into the professional identity of a learning designer. Through the lens of Bhabha's concept of ambivalence, the notion of liminal space and reflecting on her own experience, Puva P Arumugam, the author of this chapter, sheds light on the challenges and tensions confronted by **third space practitioners** in higher education. These challenges Puva find them arising in the context of contrasting expectations and assumptions held by traditional institutional and discipline academics. Key tensions include the struggle to define the role of learning designers (LD) within the academic framework versus their professional identity, which is influenced by cultural factors. Additionally, this chapter explores the polymathic nature of third space practitioners' roles, a concept presented by Manoharan (2020). Being polymathic involves transcending singular specialisation and operating with a multifaceted expertise. Third space practitioners, due to their involvement in diverse teaching and learning projects, often possess in-depth knowledge across multiple domains of specialisation. This chapter provides a dynamic and interactive experience, with Puva's voice serving as a guide through the multifaceted realm of learning

designers. It delves into their professional identity and the diverse array of skills they contribute to tertiary education.

Indigenous-led learning design: Reimagining the teaching team

Chapter 5 of this book highlights the remarkable collaboration between academic subject matter experts, learning design team, instructional designer and Centre for the Advancement of Indigenous Knowledges (CAIK) scholars to design and develop the microcredential, Supervising Indigenous Higher Degree Research. This exceptional partnership fostered mutual understanding and a high degree of collegial respect. Reflecting on the collaboration, Katrina, Shaun, Susan, highlighted three key factors emerged as driving forces: trust, iterative discussions, and the combined skills of scholars and learning designers. The authors further illustrate their design decisions they made during the process by offering concrete examples from the subject. These examples showcase their commitment to presenting content knowledge in compelling format, their attention to cultural sensitivity, and their skills in creating online learning experiences that enhance student engagement and the learning outcomes.

This chapter exemplifies the guiding principle of 'Nothing about us without us' as the team actively engaged in co-designing the subject with consultations from the Director of CAIK. Furthermore, the team wholeheartedly embraced the responsibility of preserving and sharing crucial cultural knowledge, however, their crucial design decisions are thoughtfully shared, with the intention of aiding fellow learning designers undertaking similar projects.

Designing for Equity in Learning

In this chapter, John took us back to his personal learning experience in such an interesting and insightful way to then introduce a range of innovative pedagogical strategies aimed at fostering inclusive and engaging educational environments. The strategies discussed – Notice and Wonder, the 4Hs of Belonging Centred Math Instruction, Ingenious Influencers, and the collaborative online platform Virtual Math Teams (VMT) – collectively offer practical avenues for educators and learning designers to enhance teaching practices. Throughout the chapter, John offers engaging examples that illustrate the instructional steps for implementing activities. He follows these with real-life situations from the classroom, demonstrating how these activities promote inclusivity.

Designing for cultural responsiveness

Chapter 7 is another lively chapter written with a personal touch by Nhung Nguyen. Nhung emphasizes that culturally responsive design in education entails deeply valuing and celebrating students' diverse cultural heritage, knowledge, skills and languages. By fostering interactions, collaborations, and multiple perspectives, this approach intertwines educational design with students' unique cultural perspectives, frames of reference, language, and communication styles, ultimately nurturing both academic growth and strong interpersonal relationships.

The importance of culturally responsive design is underscored by several key factors: Learners' Engagement and Educational Performance, globalisation and the Decolonial Movement.

The process of implementing culturally responsive design

involves laying the groundwork by promoting self-awareness, understanding the learners, and engaging with communities. Furthermore, it requires empowering learners through representation, implementing culturally sensitive assessment and feedback, promoting active engagement and participation, and adopting a multilingual approach to enhance the educational experience.

Working with students with lived experience of disability to enhance inclusive and accessible learning

In chapter 8, Katie and Rhiannon call for university staff particularly learning designers to pursue the requisite knowledge and skills for crafting accessible learning environments. They firmly believe that Ableism serves as a primary barrier, contributing to low participation and completion rates, increased student debt among disabled students, insufficient resourcing for accessibility accommodations, and frequent reports of stigmatisation and discrimination.

They posit that University staff, including learning design teams, play a pivotal role in providing accessible learning environments. Despite acknowledging the intersection between the accessibility and learning design teams, Katie and Rhiannon highlight that both teams need to be working hand in hand to support academics and guide them in creating inclusive learning environments.

While recognising the challenge of upskilling academic staff in accessibility, Katie and Rhiannon stress the imperative of engaging students in developing effective services, as they can provide unique perspectives and collaborate on solutions.

Emphasising their approach to designing for accessibility, they underscore the danger of excluding students with disabilities from the learning experience design. They advocate strongly for a **co-design** approach, positioning students with disabilities as active partners in the design process, as these students can reveal shortcomings that designers may be unaware of.

This is a call for learning designers to acknowledge the crucial role of students with lived experience in shaping an inclusive learning environment and fostering socially just education. Katie and Rhiannon follow with practical examples, echoing the call made by Keith and Camille in Chapter 2 that designing with accessibility in mind means designing for everyone. Additionally, they present a project focused on developing resources that shape practices, providing guidelines for learning designers to implement accessibility practices effectively.

Baking a cake: Engaging staff in inclusive learning design

In Chapter 9, Bruna sheds light on a pressing issue in learning design—the tendency to relegate **accessibility** to an afterthought. She stresses that this neglect leads to significant challenges—impracticality and increased costs. Using a baking analogy, Bruna asserts that accessibility is as vital to learning design as baking powder is to a cake, yet it's often treated as a discretionary embellishment, akin to cake decoration.

Strategically positioned after Chapter 8, this chapter offers valuable insights for learning designers. Through personal vignettes, Bruna underscores the importance of considering accessibility and inclusivity throughout the learning design process. The chapter not only imparts practical advice but also

provides checklists guiding designers from initial stages to feedback. Bruna introduces a structured approach by outlining four stages of the learning design process—what, how, who, and why. Weaving in the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework, consistently emphasised throughout the book, she reinforces UDL's pivotal role in creating inclusive and accessible learning environments. Throughout the narrative, Bruna engages readers, prompting reflection on their experiences as learning designers. Thought-provoking questions encourage a reevaluation of design decisions, processes, stakeholder communication, and overall outcome quality.

This chapter issues a call to action, compelling us to reassess our approach to learning design. It prompts deliberate consideration of inclusivity as an integral, non-negotiable element rather than an optional feature. This introspection is crucial for steering the learning design process toward a genuinely inclusive process.

Where to go from here

As the authors of this open textbook, we maintain an open-minded stance towards receiving and responding to feedback. We view feedback as a catalyst for initiating constructive conversations that, ideally, result in the sharing of knowledge and the creation of new insights for our learning design community.

In this collaborative project, all chapters of our book are accessible for viewing and comments through Hypothesis. This streamlined approach allows for the prompt receipt of constructive feedback without the need to directly contact the authors. Upon receiving notifications regarding the feedback, authors will diligently review and thoughtfully incorporate any

necessary updates into the respective chapters, ensuring a dynamic and responsive learning resource.

Final message to the learning design community

As learning designers, we stand at the forefront of influencing the learning process. The framework and the practical approaches presented in this book provide an exciting opportunity for us to initiate change. While we can certainly begin implementing the practical solutions suggested, it's crucial to delve deeper and understand how these strategies function in real-world educational settings. We must consider whether these approaches are equally effective for both diverse and more homogeneous groups of learners. Are there instances where customisation or alternative strategies might be more appropriate for specific cohorts for example, where the learners are from diverse ethnicities, races or religious backgrounds? By critically examining the practical impact of these ideas, we can tailor our approaches to ensure that our efforts lead to greater inclusivity in learning, irrespective of the learner's background or characteristics.

About the author



Dr Mais Fatayer
UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY
SYDNEY
<https://www.uts.edu.au>

Mais Fatayer is an educational technology specialist, learning designer with extensive experience in higher education and open education advocate. As of the publication of this book, she was the Learner Experience Design Manager at the University of Technology Sydney (UTS). Mais specialises in creating engaging learning materials and leading transformative projects and initiative in learning design and open education. She has received the 2023 UTS Vice Chancellor's Professional Staff Excellence Award and the 2018 Blackboard Catalyst Award for Student Success. Her PhD research focused on developing a sustainable open educational resources development model.