

Preface

This book describes the origins, metamorphosis and application of a holistic, eclectic framework for the design and development of educational spaces in which students are engaged and teachers excited. Known as *Design Alchemy*, the framework is effective and efficient, achieving program and course design goals without compromising quality and providing an integrated set of strategies and principles based on both theory and practice. Design Alchemy extends educational design traditions through defining a practical method by which designers can transform learning and teaching experiences. While primarily directed towards learning and teaching online in the higher education sector, the concepts of Design Alchemy are relevant for all sectors and delivery modes.

But why another book on educational design? Aren't there enough interpretations of instructional design, learning design and curriculum development to meet the needs of those involved in creating intentional teaching and learning experiences? My response is 'not yet'! Learning, teaching and design are dynamic, not static, elements, dependent on the complex and changing world in which they are applied. More importantly, over the past 35 years, I have encountered numerous computer-based products and practice-based strategies that claimed they would revolutionise educational practice, and yet they have not succeeded. Learners and teachers and designers continue to struggle with those very products and strategies, especially those engaged with online education. This book is therefore for all those who are curious learners, creative teachers and innovative designers. For readers new to the field, Design Alchemy provides a practical and effective means to create online learning and teaching environments that maximise the educational experience. For those more experienced, the concepts and suggestions inherent within Design Alchemy will not only confirm their personal practice but also provide triggers for thinking differently about design.

The book is divided into four parts, with each chapter title represented by a question, designed to focus attention on the ideas addressed in the narrative. Preceding Part I, the introductory chapter provides an overview of the reasons why the ancient art of alchemy provides a valuable metaphor for educational design. The first part then examines the **emergence** of the Design Alchemy

framework based on my own research and practice followed by an analysis of its **alignment** with key theories, models and practices and an assessment of paradoxes which can constrain rather than enhance design practice. Having established a rationale for Design Alchemy, the second part addresses the three major elements of the **framework**: *pedagogy* (the mix of theories which inform successful learning), *practice* (the five steps needed to complete a course design) and *assets* (the factors that impact on design strategy). To provide a focus on the **practice** of Design Alchemy, the third part presents a series of case studies, from program to course to activity, which demonstrate application of the method. The final part provides a **self-service** selection of resources designed to assist develop understanding of the practice of a design alchemist, including a manifesto of heuristics and ideas.

In conducting research for this book, I used, where accessible, the primary sources of key researchers and theorists in the field. However, as one of the recommended elements of Design Alchemy is to utilise open resources, I have also used reference points such as Wikipedia (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main_Page) as resources for definition, analysis and demonstration. Because this content is under a Creative Commons licence, it allows, with attribution, the option to both use and modify that content to support arguments within the narrative. With respect to language, this book is broadly about design for learning and teaching with computer-based technology, and where I use the word *technology* without qualification, it should be read to refer to computer-based and/or network hardware and software deployed to support learning and teaching.

My journey in learning, teaching and design has been long and varied, and I am eternally grateful for the many encounters and interactions I have experienced with colleagues, friends and other luminaries along the way. Although some of these exchanges have been with people I have only read or listened to, all in their own way have helped me form these ideas and encouraged me to bring them together and champion the role of the design alchemist, the person who will make learning engaging, teaching exciting and design rewarding. I would like to thank Allan Ellis, Barbara Grabowski, Belinda Tynan, Bob Spence, Clark Quinn, David Crosby, David Jonassen, David Merrill, Deborah Jones, Douglas Adams, Elena Kays, Stephen Alessi, Jackie Dobrovolny, Kay Tydeman, Laurie Gillespie, Tim Hand, Jan Herrington, Jim Klein, John Hedberg, Kate Sumner, Kit McSwiney, Michael Allen, Michael Spector, Neil Young, Stanley Trollip, Tim Spannaus, Tom Reeves and Tom Robbins.

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