

Instructional Approaches

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Instructional Models

Models represent the broadest level of instructional practices and present a philosophical orientation to instruction. Models are used to select and to structure teaching strategies, methods, skills, and student activities for a particular instructional emphasis. Instructional models are related to theories about how we learn. Some examples include: behaviorism, cognitivism, constructivism, and connectivism. Various learning theories fit within these general categories, i.e., adult learning theory, transformative learning, social interaction, motivation theory, etc.

Instructional Strategies

Within each model several strategies can be used. Strategies determine the approach a teacher may take to achieve learning objectives. Strategies can be classed as direct, indirect, interactive, experiential, or independent.

1) The **direct instruction** strategy is highly teacher-directed and is among the most commonly used. This strategy includes methods such as lecture, didactic questioning, explicit teaching, practice and drill, and demonstrations. The direct instruction strategy is effective for providing information or developing step-by-step skills. This strategy also works well for introducing other teaching methods, or actively involving students in knowledge construction.

2) Inquiry, induction, problem solving, decision making, and discovery are terms that are sometimes used interchangeably to describe **indirect instruction**. In contrast to the direct instruction strategy, indirect instruction is mainly student-centred, although the two strategies can complement each other. Examples of indirect instruction methods include reflective discussion, concept formation, concept attainment, cloze procedure, problem solving, and guided inquiry.

3) **Interactive instruction** relies heavily on discussion and sharing among participants. The interactive instruction strategy allows for a range of groupings and interactive methods. These may include total class discussions, small group discussions or projects, or student pairs or triads working on assignments together.

4) **Experiential learning** is inductive, learner centred, and activity oriented. The emphasis in experiential learning is on the process of learning and not on the product. Personalized reflection about an experience and the formulation of plans to apply learnings to other contexts are critical factors in effective experiential learning. Experiential learning greatly increases understanding and retention in comparison to methods that solely involve listening, reading, or even viewing

(McNeil & Wiles, 1990). Students are usually more motivated when they actively participate and teach one another by describing what they are doing.

5) **Independent study** refers to the range of instructional methods which are purposefully provided to foster the development of individual student initiative, self-reliance, and self-improvement. Independent study can also include learning in partnership with another individual or as part of a small group. It is important that the instructor make sure that learners have the necessary skills in order to accomplish the task. Independent study is very flexible. It can be used as the major instructional strategy with the whole class, in combination with other strategies, or it can be used with one or more individuals while another strategy is used with the rest of the class.

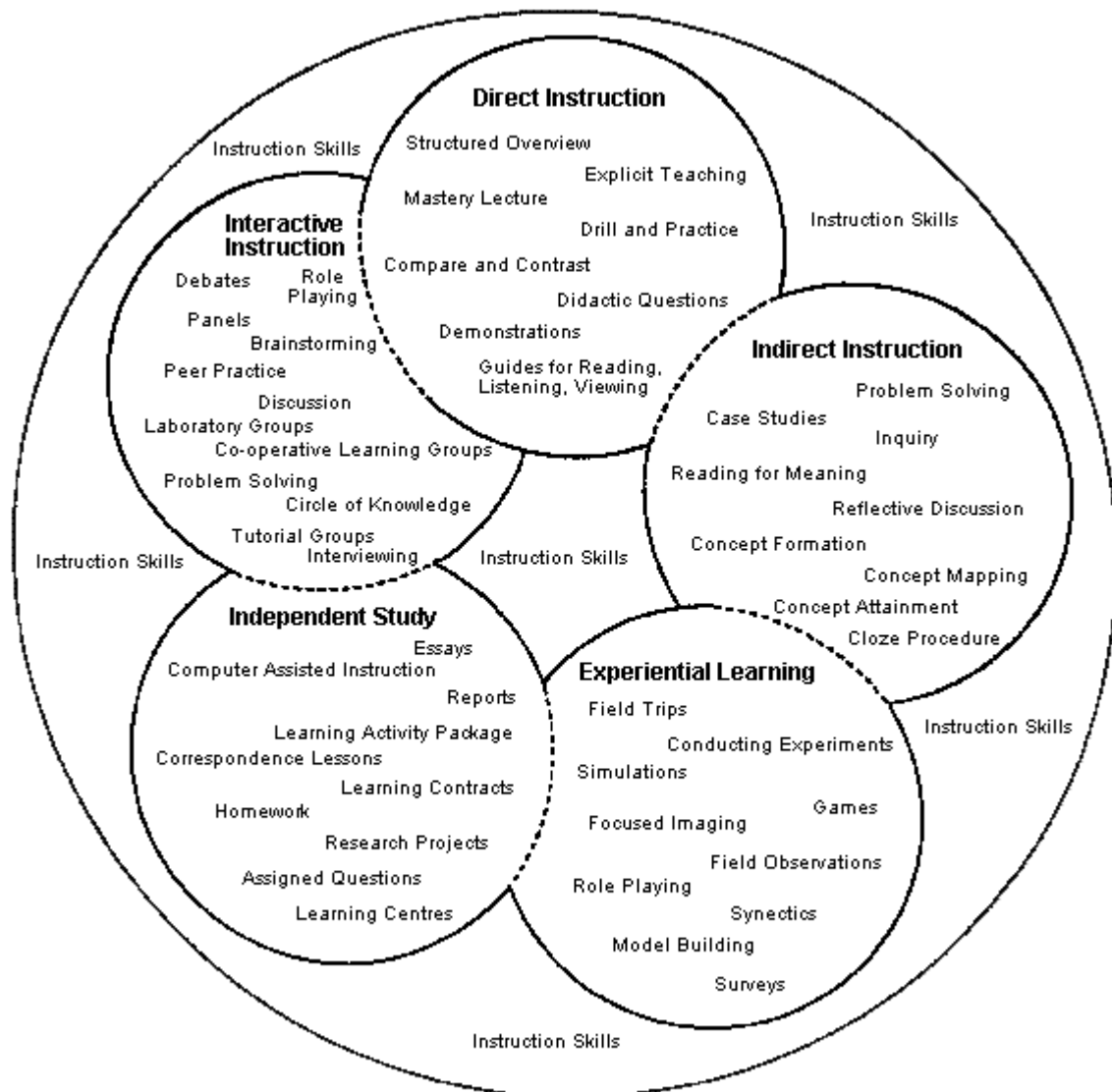


Figure 5. Instructional Strategies

Learner Involvement

Capable instructors are aware of the principle of active learner participation. "Given the choice between two techniques, choose the one involving the learners in the most active participation" (Knowles, 1980, p. 240). Below is a sample of techniques categorized according to participant involvement (Cafarella, 2002)

Levels of Learner Involvement		
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Low Involvement	Medium Involvement	High Involvement
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Lecture	Group discussion	Role play
Panel discussion	Behavior modeling	Debates
Demonstration	Observation	Case studies
Computer-based drills	Reflective practice--	Simulations
Computer-based	blogs, journals	WebQuests
tutorials	Asynchronous online	Internet searches
Socratic dialogue	forums	Concept mapping
Tutorials	E-mail and listservs	Trial and error