USING THE COGNITIVE LOAD THEORY TO ASSIST IN THE DESIGN OF INSTRUCTION FOR THE UNIVERSITY LECTURE ROOM: SOME KEY LESSONS

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ABSTRACT

Stakeholders in higher education globally have become increasingly concerned as to whether products from universities and colleges are coming out with the knowledge, skills and competencies that prepare them for work and further education. Much research time have been devoted to exploring how students learn better and how instruction could be designed to facilitate this. This article offers a description of the cognitive load theory (CLT) and its relevance for instructional design and practice in the higher education environment. It attempts a summary of the salient aspects of the theory such as what cognitive load theory is, types of cognitive load, assumptions of CLT, instructional design and some useful ways CLT could be applied in the design of instruction and facilitates learning in the higher education environment. The paper takes the position that although CLT has recently been the subject of criticism for its lack of conceptual clarity (Schnotz & Kurshner, 2007) and methodological approaches (Gerjets, Scheiter, & Cierniak, 2009), it still holds immense relevance for teaching and learning in education. The fact that research is ongoing, especially its applicability in complex learning environments, should rather be a source of hope and encouragement to instructional developers and teachers who are increasingly looking for ways to improve learning at all levels, but particularly in higher education.

Keywords: Cognitive Load Theory, Schema, Instructional Design.