Instructional Design vs Learning Design: Trends and Patterns in Scholarly Landscape

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The word instructional design has been widely used to depict a discipline that is concerned with understanding and improving the process of instruction (Reigeluth, 2013). Instructional design is sometimes interchangeably used to refer to different terms such as learning design. In the current era, Learning Design can be considered as an amalgamation of several contemporary design traditions actively used within current teaching, learning, training, and development professions. It comes from foundations in Instructional Design, and its variants of Instructions System Design, Instructional System Technology, Instructional Technology and Instructional Science. It has borrowed heavily from Experience Design, and has extended that mindfulness about user experience into a focus on Learning Experiences. The different terminologies have been evolving, and they have been influenced by constant developments in learning sciences and our collective approaches to how learning should be designed. However, there is still widespread confusion about what these terms entail (Maloney, 2016; Lieberman, 2018). From an epistemological perspective, it is crucial to understand the implications and true meanings of these various titles to be able to frame future practices and establish credibility.

In this study, 513 research articles and proceedings that include the specific keywords instructional design and learning design in their titles were analyzed using descriptive statistics (to offer a time trend analysis for these publications), text-mining (to analyze lexical relationships in the titles and abstracts of the sampled articles), and social network analysis (to investigate keyword patterns) approaches. The results of the social network analysis and text-mining demonstrated that in publications that have instructional design in their titles, certain themes emerged such as theory-driven approaches, technology-informed design, instructional design for higher education, and keyword patterns related to assessment and evaluation whereas in publications that have learning design in their titles resulted in themes such as design-thinking and user experience-driven approaches, online learning-informed designs, analytic approaches and engagement-based learning design. The results were discussed in the light of the emerging themes to provide an interpretation of how the use of these keywords have been evolving and offer a glimpse on the future directions in our field with specific emphasis on instructional design, learning design and other learning design-based practices.

References

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Introduction

Instructional design can be defined as systematic procedures that need to be planned in applying the knowledge of human learning (Gagne & Briggs, 1979). Learning Design is the name of the professional practice which is the next iteration in the evolution of the craft dedicated to creating, producing, evaluating and improving resources and experiences that help people and organizations learn more and perform better.

Objective

In this paper, the main goal is to provide an interpretation of the use of these terms, instructional design and learning design, and offer a glimpse on future directions (instructional design, learning design and other learning design-based practices) based on a bibliometric analysis of research articles and conference proceedings through data visualization approaches.

Methodology

This study adopts data mining and analytic approaches and uses social network analysis (SNA) (Hansen et al., 2011) and text-mining (Hearst, 2003) to map and visualize the research data.

The inclusion criteria were that the publications be indexed in the Scopus database, written in English, and have the search terms in their titles, and published in social sciences discipline.

- 326 (321 articles and 5 proceedings) were about instructional design (1966 - 2020)
- 157 (146 articles and 8 proceedings) were about learning design (1982 -2020)

Results/Findings

- A holistic visual map of the scholarly use of these terms over time
- Thematic grouping implications:
  - ID: The prevalence of theory-driven approaches including models, frameworks and strategies
    - This could also be related to the emphasis on "the instruction" or "how instruction should be" (Law, 2017; Wasson & Kirschner, 2020).
  - LD: A shifted focus from content to a focus of learning experience (Mor et al., 2015; Wasson & Kirschner, 2020) along with the increasing convergence of different yet related disciplines such as design thinking, learning experience design, newer approaches such as learning engineering and data analytics
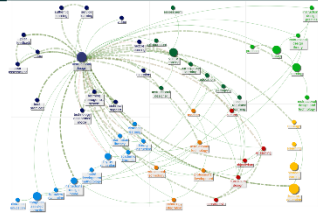
Conclusion

Rather than regarding these concepts as dichotomous, it should be noted that both instructional design and learning design could refer to a diverse set of practices within the same realm of learning and instruction. One main difference between ID and LD is that instructional design seems to derive heavily from methodologies, frameworks, and systematic procedures in the design process whereas in learning design, the "design" aspect is prioritized as learning can be designed in versatile ways, and the focus is more on the "experience" of the learners.
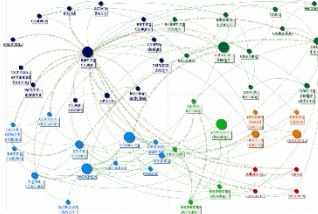
Figure 1. SNA of the keywords for Instructional design related papers

Figure 2. Lexically connected thematic map for instructional design related papers.

Figure 3. SNA of the keywords for learning design-related papers

Figure 4. Lexically connected thematic map for learning design related papers.

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QR Code for visuals

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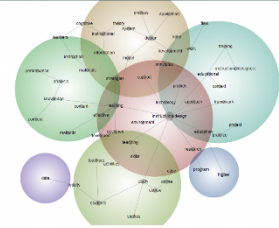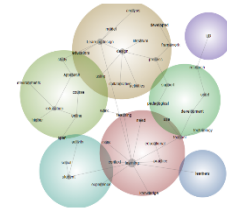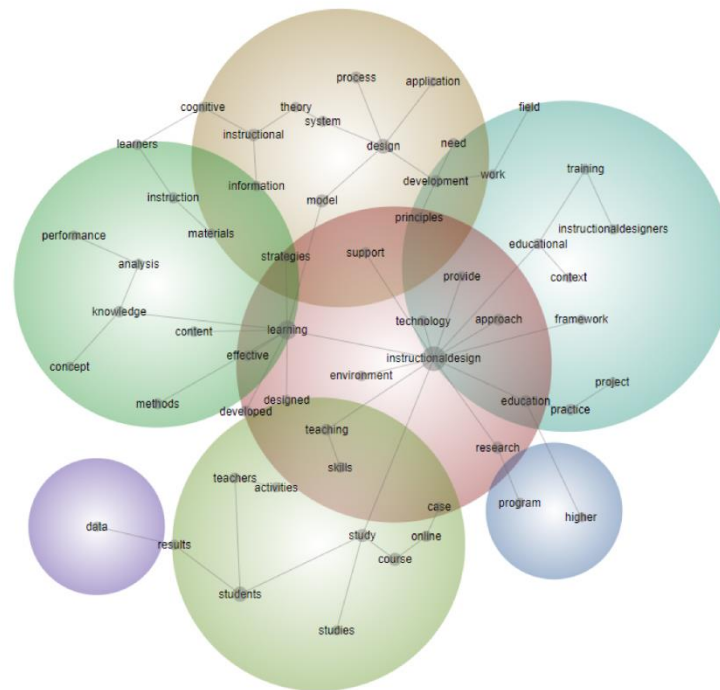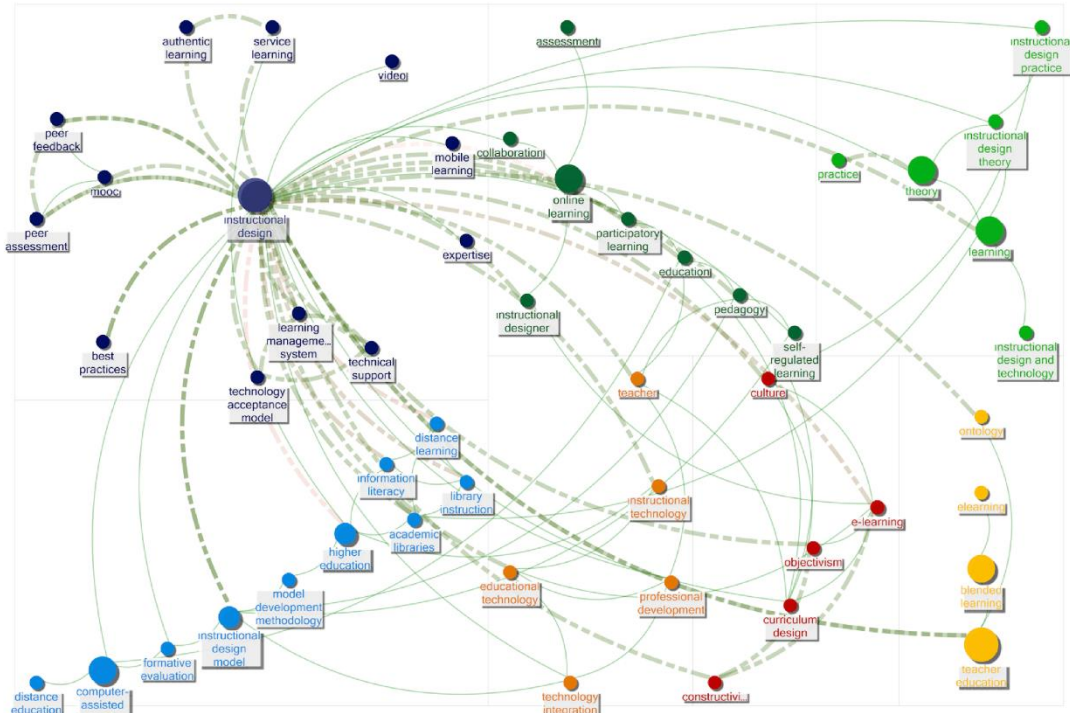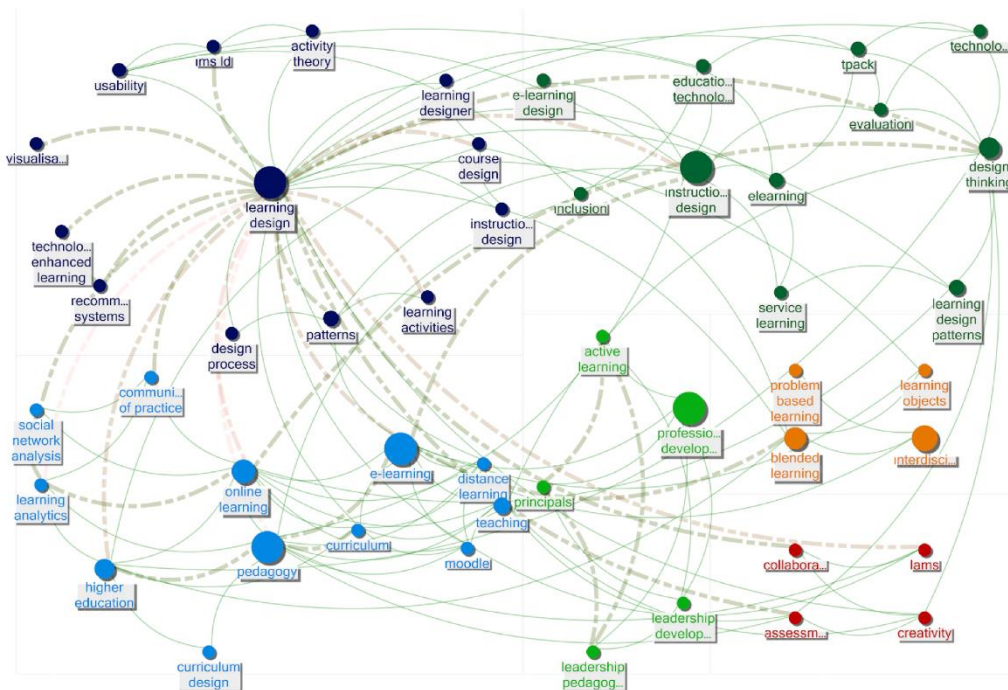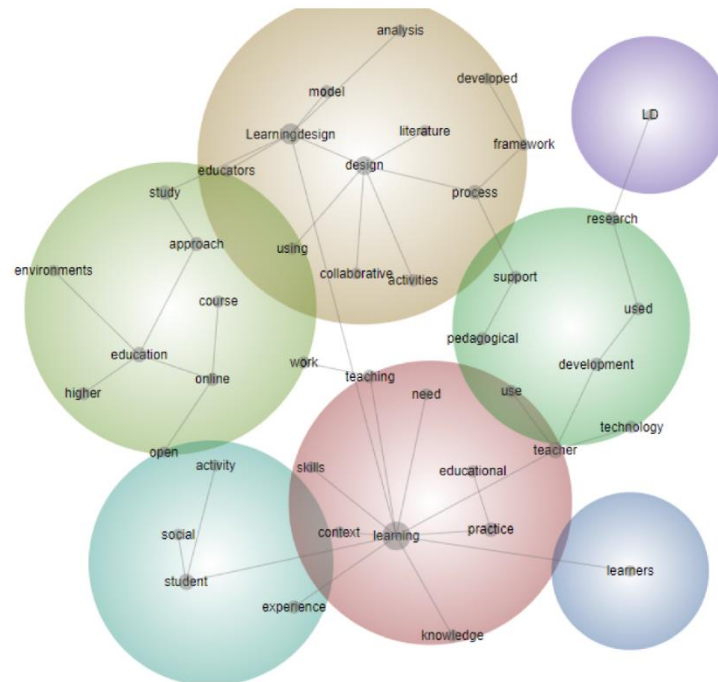Figure 4. Lexically connected thematic map for learning design related papers.