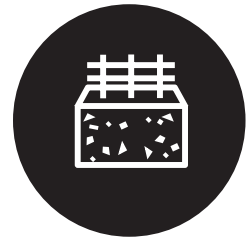
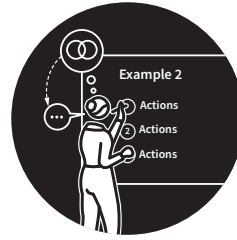




Tom Sherrington



SIDE LINES

SCAFFOLDING



Jerome Bruner

Bruner introduced the concept of scaffolding in the context of early child development. Its aim is for the child to achieve something that would be not possible were it not for the assistance. Gradually the scaffold should be withdrawn.

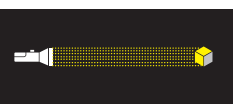


ZOOM IN, ZOOM OUT



Alan Watts

Philosophy professor Watts talked metaphorically about being in a dark room and using either a torch or a floodlight. A torch illuminates objects in sharp relief but as you move, they disappear from sight, losing your point of reference. With a floodlight the whole room is lit up but in low resolution. A parallel with the idea of Big Picture (floodlight), Small Picture (torch).



WORKED EXs & BACKWARD FADING

The dangers to avoid are:

- Insufficient number of examples (students get stuck at the surface details.)
- Not making students think hard enough about the examples (ie just watching).
- Moving from example to example too quickly (info is too transient that way).

Achieving full understanding from the examples means students can work without teacher *cues* and identify similar principles elsewhere themselves.

DELIBERATE VOCAB. DEVELOPMENT

Little is gained by pursuing the guessing game — “*does anyone know...?*” Tell students what the word means, how it is pronounced, provide plentiful examples of its use and give them opportunities to say the word themselves — repeatedly.

Much like learning sports, novices need to not only see/hear a model (to use as a standard against which to compare their efforts), but also to practise (developed with choral repetition), and opportunities to apply their learning.

BIG PICTURE, SMALL PICTURE

Always a teacher conundrum: do you start with the overall picture, or with a detail that might hook interest? There’s no correct option but, generally, giving the big picture first enables the setting up of future connections. Whole-part relationships are recognised as being critical to deeper understanding.

Alternatively, a timeline also helps form connections between the larger theme and the individual event, as well as between other such episodes.

When introducing a scientist, musician or artist, a chronology of the discipline’s progress, featuring its most famous practitioners, helps students develop a sense of their significance.

ABSTRACT IDEAS & CONCRETE EXs

The aim is for students to associate ideas across a range of examples — and be able to explain why an example represents a particular principle. For that to happen requires thinking that goes deeper than surface details. One way of developing this level of understanding is to provide some non-examples. By doing so, students can identify the boundary around a concept that defines it.

LIVE MODELLING

Almost the epitome of teaching, live modelling is not easy. But that’s not a reason to *hide* behind a deck of Powerpoint slides. Instead, put yourself on the line by modelling live. After all, it’s what you ask of students, so they’ll respect this option.

As you demonstrate, narrate both what you are doing and thinking. The latter gives you an opportunity to make explicit how you move from *messy* thinking to an organised grasp of the topic. A visualiser is a great help for this. Of course, this takes time, so pick your moments as not all topics will be able to be covered in this intense fashion.

SCAFFOLDING

Scaffolding “*lifts you to a height you couldn’t reach by yourself*” explains Tom. Such support can take many forms: tools, resources, lists, step-by-step guides, word-diagrams, activities and so on.

What is critical to bear in mind is to design in the fading process — and the fact that it is a process, a continuum. It is not a binary issue, of scaffold or not. The art is in fading aligned with a student’s rate of learning.

It’s positive to frame scaffolding as giving all students the satisfaction of success, with all the motivation that that creates.