Consequently, it becomes increasingly important to attend to the resources that learners are provided with in their quest for knowledge. How and to what degree does the construction of learning situations facilitate for, or limit, learners in their work to design their own learning paths? Which resources are at hand to form new representations? And how is subject knowledge in different knowledge domains given form out of resources used in learning contexts?

As a parallel to the developments mentioned so far, we can also see that other arenas and practices outside the formal educational system increasingly are being acknowledged as sites for learning. Learning is framed in new and different ways, which is reflected by concepts like “life-long” or “informal” learning etc.

This, in turn, has led to a widening of what is, or at least could be, included in the concept of learning resources. It is not only the institutional framing, but the outcomes of usage that set the boundaries. Anything from computer games, films and other texts and artefacts from popular culture and everyday life to educational textbooks and other more traditional resources could be included here.

Due to these changes, new epistemologies are needed in order to be able to grasp how knowledge is formed and transformed in different social domains. The introduction of the concept of design within the educational realm is one way of approaching this need.

As current and future issues of the journal will show, the connection between design and learning can be accounted for in a number of (physical and virtual) ways. We will here only point to some of these in order to give an indication of how we have approached these matters during our initial work with the journal. Other views and approaches are most welcome.

To begin with, the concept of design encompasses two parallel aspects. On the one hand it is referred to as a process which has to do with the practice of establishing connections between form and content in productive work of some sort, within certain institutional frames and with specific aims. In that sense, design becomes more of a relational concept that comprises a combination of form and content, aesthetics and function. ‘To design’ is simultaneously to show how one conceives of, or understands, something. As the following account will imply, contributions from a number of disciplines and fields will be of value in the further development of this new field.

The choice to highlight the specific intersection between learning and design can be seen as a response to changes within the field of learning, partly related to current transformations of institutional patterns and communicative processes in society (Selander, in press). These changes are indicated in different ways, for example through the shift of focus from teaching to learning and the shift in emphasis from centrally imposed curricula to user constructed content. A change of roles can thus be perceived as learners also become producers, not merely consumers, of information. Corresponding to these aspects is a change in the distribution of both agency and responsibilities. Learners gain agency, but are also made increasingly responsible for their own learning processes. What emerges from this is the notion of design as an educational aim (ibid.).

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arners’ own design processes in their formation and transformation of knowledge during work within different modes and media. What can be said about learners’ own representations? How can learning be traced in a representation of some sort and what can be said about the specific configurations of the various resources used in relation to an understanding of a specific topic or subject? How does design choices at various stages of a process affect the meanings possible to make by those engaged in the process?

On the other hand we talk about the results of these processes, manifested in different ways – through the organization of classroom space, the design of learning resources and so on. What can be said about the design of resources, actions and circumstances in different learning environments and what does the specific design of them afford in terms of possibilities for the learner? How, in what way and by what means is knowledge given form?

To sum up, the notion of design is here used to embrace both designed environments and resources (such as texts, artefacts and other resources used by learners in their quest to make new meanings), circumstances that affect learning in a given situation, and aspects regarding the production of these resources and circumstances; and to approach learning as a transformative process influenced by and dependent on the merge between form and content. Simultaneously, the notion of design serves as an interface between different theoretical perspectives and fields of engagement. Common to them is an interest in questions regarding the relationship between designs (in a wide sense) and the conditions they afford for learners. The concept of “designs for learning” thus becomes a way to grasp and bring together a broad variety of processes, resources and approaches.

The different approaches presented in the articles of this issue serve to define different aspects of the field and give an indication of the richness found at the intersections that constitute it. Together they give an insight both into the differences that can be encompassed within this field, but also of some shared starting points that unify them.

*Designs for Learning* can be seen as a specific theoretical approach, as outlined by Staffan Selander in the first article. This perspective is built partly on the assumptions presented above, concerning the close relationship between form and meaning.

Bente Aamotsbakken contributes with a well-needed article about pedagogic texts, contextualized through reflections regarding concepts like “text”, “literacy”, “context” and “literacy culture”. Questions are raised concerning the nature of pedagogic texts and the use of texts in educational contexts. Are all texts used in a school context “pedagogical texts”?

In the third article Carey Jewitt presents a multimodal approach to questions concerning designs for learning, closely related to Selander’s account. She has previously contributed with a number of texts within this field – theoretically, empirically and methodologically. In her article here, she elaborates on these issues in relation to teachers’ multimodal design of learning materials for Interactive Whiteboards.

Christoph Wulf’s article on mimetic learning provides with an account of learning that reaches far beyond the restricted views that prevail in curricula and educational debate concerning what the notion of learning should be allowed to embrace.

In addition to the articles published in *Designs for Learning*, each issue will also include an interview with a person who is prominent within any of the fields that relate to the themes of the journal. The idea is to provide our readers with some further insights regarding interests and influences that form a background to the theoretical work of these persons. In this issue we make acquaintance with professor Christoph Wulf, who gives an account of his anthropological work within the field of learning.

**References**


