# Teaching for flexible learnin: Learning to apply the technology (MOLTA)

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Teaching for flexible learning; Learning to apply the technology (MOLTA)
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1999, GSSE, 11 Malford Grove, Gilwern, Abergavenny, Monmouthshire, NP7 0RN
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## Introduction

The author of this short work tries to achieve a great deal. As his title suggests, he talks broadly about applying technology to flexible learning. Within this, he develops a Model of Learning and Teaching Activities (MOLTA) and shows how it might be applied.

The preparatory discussion, the model assembly, and the illustrative applications would be useful to any teachers assessing or reflecting on their teaching, in general, or on their use of technology in their teaching, specifically. This model is really the core of the book. The author suggests on page 28 that it may be used as "a tool for converting existing programmes to alternative modes of delivery, as a framework for the reevaluating of existing teaching and learning programs, and/or as a tool to assist in the development of new teaching and learning programmes."

The remaining chapters on the web, print, television, conferencing, and multimedia in teaching supply much basic information but seem subsidiary to the use of MOLTA.

## Sections

There are 10 chapters and 4 appendices in this work but for this review, they are grouped into four sections, i.e., chapter 1, chapters 2 through 4, chapters 5 through 10, and the four appendices.

First, chapter 1 discusses some of the changes in higher education and clarifies terms such as distance education, open learning, and flexible learning. It is generalized but brings out the importance of considering flexible learning as a reassessment of traditional teaching practices and not simply as an application of technology to teaching and learning. It provides a good foundation for the second and, in this reviewer's mind, the most important part of the book.

Second, in chapters 2 to 4 the author develops MOLTA and shows how it might be used. The author defines learning as "the interaction of new material or experience with existing thoughts or knowledge to produce an outcome or capability" (p. 12). In addition, he suggests teaching and learning consists of "provided materials, interactions and other things students do" (p.14). Finally, he outlines types of dialogue and their attributes. In this way, he sets the basis for a five-part model, MOLTA, consisting of the provision of materials, the interaction with materials, the interaction with teachers, the interaction between students, and the intra-action (the student's reflection within himself or herself). He then moves onto using MOLTA to analyse and compare learning environments, e.g., large with small lectures, face-to-face class with CD-ROM-based packages, face-to-face class with television broadcast. These examples illustrate how the author applies MOLTA.

Expanding on the use of MOLTA, the author elaborates its use in curriculum development in Chapter 4. Taking flexible learning as his approach, he sets MOLTA within a flowchart of the stages of development of a course or subject. While this flowchart is not as detailed as that outlined by Dick and Carey, it does give those readers

who like a scripted approach, insights into the application of MOLTA. In addition, the author discusses four aspects of the decision making process. These four aspects are student implications, mechanics of the subject, affordability, and what is available. This chapter just scratches the surface of the decision processes one grapples with when using educational technology. It does, however, provide the reader with much to keep in mind when he or she is starting on the road to incorporating technology into teaching.

For those interested in an overview of MOLTA with two examples, connect to the following URL:
http://ultibase.rmit.edu.au/Archives/calad1.html

Third, chapters 5 through 10 cover a wide array of technologies which might be used in teaching. Within these chapters there are a few comments couched in terms of MOLTA. This reviewer found much of the material in these chapters to be informative but not directly relevant to the development and use of MOLTA. For example, the chapter on television and video covers a grab-bag of topics, such as, production styles, script writing, makeup, story boarding, editing. The chapter on print is likewise a shotgun approach to the topic; many valuable items piled on top of each other with a snippet of MOLTA discussion. The chapters on audio conferences, video conferences and multimedia are much the same. A great deal of material treated quickly and mostly unrelated to MOLTA. The last chapter continues the broad discussion but moves to the future of learning, teaching and academic work. These chapters offer much material, no doubt, about which the author has thought a great deal. For the novice, they provide a list of topics to keep in mind but for an advanced user of technology, the treatment would be superficial.

Fourth, the last section of the book has four appendices. The glossary contains definitions for many of the terms used in the text. The value of these definitions, in many cases, is that they are more specific and succinct than the reader finds in the text. Appendix 2 provides a short list of HTML tags and code. The third appendix lists 11 useful web sites. The fourth appendix is the list of references.

## Editing?

The use of a good editor would have been worthwhile. There are many spelling mistakes combined with misleading page references, incomplete sentences and duplication. They detract from the worthiness of the ideas. The use of the boxes to highlight definitions or categories of terms and frame quotes is extensive but breaks up the flow and often does not contribute to the explanation. Does the reader really need all this distraction? To this reviewer, the editing is underdone and the use of boxed material overdone.

## Summary

The development of MOLTA is a useful endeavour. For the novice and perhaps the advanced user of educational technology, it presents a useful tool. The three chapters discussing MOLTA set out definitions, process, and application very clearly. Reading these chapters should produce much reflection in teachers using technology. However, the book suffers from a lack of a clear focus besides poor editing. Linking the later chapters more closely to MOLTA by providing more application specific details and MOLTA structured examples would assist those who like to use such models. Focusing more thorough analysis on the 'intra-action' segment of the model could suggest a range of learner outcomes and processes that users of MOLTA might use in assessing their choices. Models can be valuable in framing process. MOLTA presents a sound beginning while pointing to need for further elaboration.