

# From an Interactive Learning Program to a Gerontagogical Process Model

Lessons from the Development Cycles of an Action  
Research Project

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# Starting Point: The Core Problem

In institutional elderly care, learning is often difficult not because of a lack of interest, but because of the fragility of cognitive, organisational, and participatory conditions.

- very old participants
- heterogeneous cognitive conditions
- attention fluctuation and fatigue
- institutional routines

## Implication

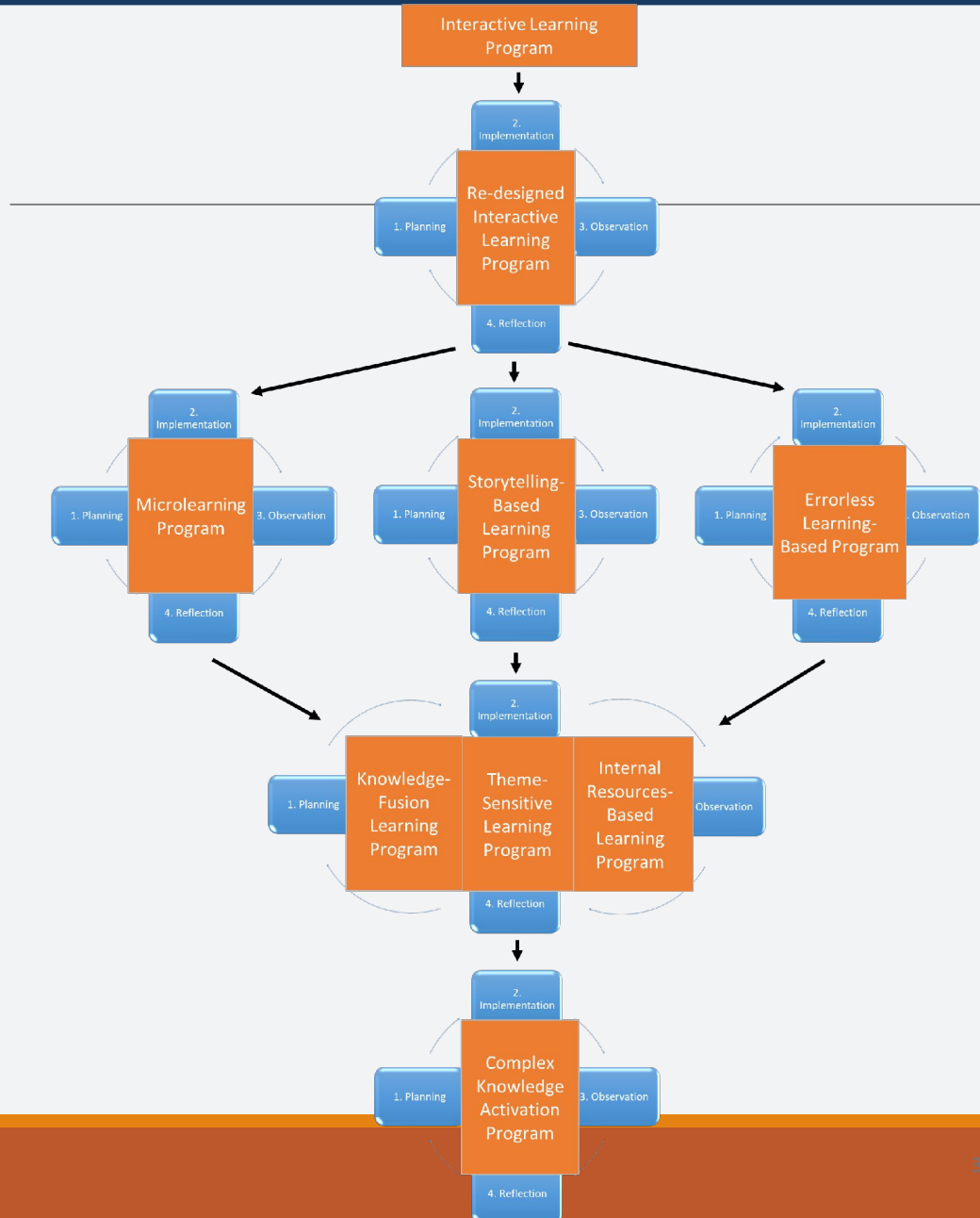
The organisation of learning becomes at least as important as its content.

**Initial interpretation**  
The key issue is not only what is taught...



...but how the learning process can be made accessible, safe, and sustainable.

# The Overall Development Trajectory



The trajectory indicates a movement from a redesigned interactive learning program toward multiple differentiated pathways and, by the fifth cycle, toward the coordination of previously developed solutions.

## Key point

The fifth cycle did not mark a completely new beginning. It functioned as an integrative turning point, in which earlier innovations were refined and coordinated.

The fifth cycle is best understood as a phase of integration and stabilisation.

# Why Is the Fifth Cycle So Important?

## Earlier cycles

- emergence of new program types
- didactic differentiation
- experimentation with different emphases



## Fifth cycle

- refinement
- coordination
- stabilisation
- institutional applicability

The focus shifted from innovation itself to the further development of instructional organisation.

# Focus of the Present Analysis

Research question

Which didactic and instructional patterns became stabilised in the fifth development cycle?

Rhythm & load

Activation & consolidation

Differentiated engagement

Visual supports

Narrative connection

Topic dynamics

*The fifth-cycle focus areas that structure the present analysis*

# Research Context, Data Sources, and Analytical Logic

## Context

- institutional elderly care
- 6-month fifth cycle
- 52 learning sessions
- very old, heterogeneous participants
- 8 therapeutic staff members

## Data sources

6

group reflective interviews

70

reflections

52

structured observation sheets

*Primary source: researcher memos from reflective interviews*

*Secondary source: structured observations*

## Analytical logic

Reflections

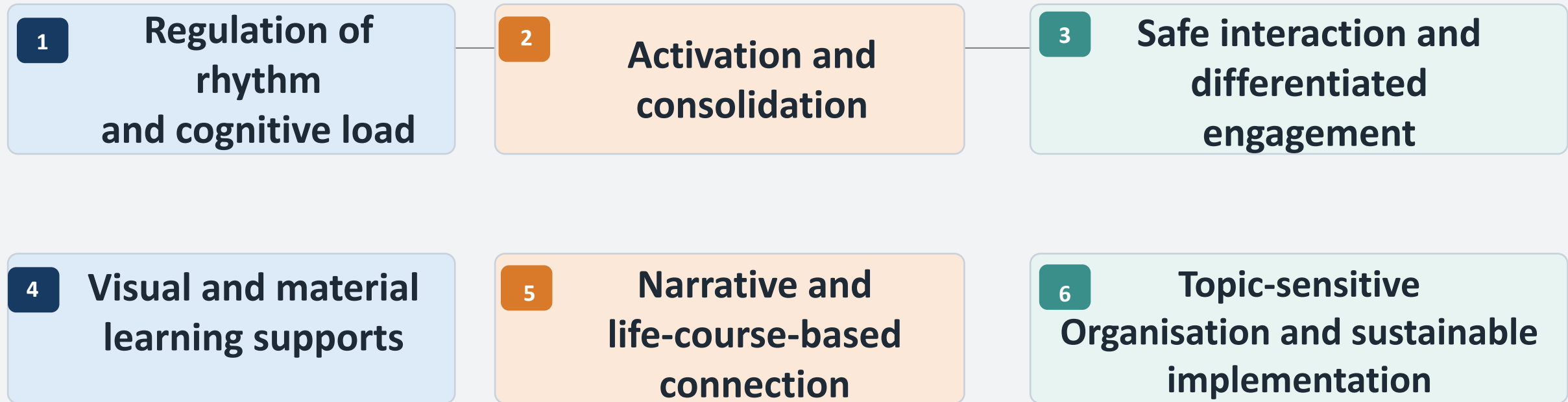
Observations

Integrated interpretation

**Mutually complementary views of recurring patterns**

**The reflective material and the observations were interpreted together to identify stabilising patterns.**

# Main Thematic Areas Identified



In the remainder of the presentation, activation-consolidation and differentiated engagement are highlighted most strongly.

# Regulation of Rhythm and Cognitive Load

## Reflective findings

- overly fast pace
- long verbal phases
- difficulty condensing content
- need for smaller units and shifts in rhythm

## Observational pattern

- high initial interest
- attention fluctuation
- longer verbal phases reduced sustainability
- visual shifts and targeted prompts helped re-engagement

## Interpretation

**Rhythm functioned not as a background condition, but as an organising factor of the learning process.**

**Smaller units and deliberate rhythm shifts supported processability and sustained engagement.**

# Activation and Consolidation

## Reflective findings

- information delivery alone was not enough
- sessions became a “complete whole” when active processing and retention were added
- playful repetition became increasingly accepted

## Observational pattern

- positive emotional reactions during interactive phases
- laughter, joy, and visible engagement
- activity often remained strong at the end of sessions

## Key conclusion

**Consolidation did not only support retention; it also helped create closure, competence, and a positive shared experience.**

**A sense of a “complete whole” emerged through activation and consolidation.**

# Safe Interaction and Differentiated Engagement

## Reflective findings

- overly open questions could create uncertainty
- structured questioning supported participation
- adapted access points were needed for more vulnerable participants

## Observational pattern

- spontaneous questioning was less frequent
- directed responses were more stable
- responses were often relevant, but varied in form
- group atmosphere remained supportive

## Key conclusion

**Differentiation did not mean separating participants, but enabling multiple valid forms of entering the same shared learning space.**

**Structured interaction supported safer participation in heterogeneous groups.**

# The Emerging Gerontagogical Process Model

The model can be described not in terms of program types, but in terms of functional learning units and horizontal regulatory principles.

**MACRO LEVEL - the learning units as a chain of didactic functions**

aim & outcome

orientation

new content

activation

consolidation

closure

**MICRO LEVEL - methodological tools for implementation**

narrative entry

visual prompt

guided questioning

retention tasks

**META LEVEL - horizontal regulatory principles**

rhythm & load management

differentiated engagement

sustainable, topic-sensitive organisation

visual learning support

# Contribution

## Theoretical contribution

- strengthens gerontology as a didactic field
- interprets learnability as an organisational and regulatory issue
- connects instructional structure with participation, well-being, and meaning-making

## Practical contribution

- a clearer learning sequence
- safer interaction
- differentiated engagement
- sustainable institutional applicability

**The study suggests that later-life learning in institutional contexts can be analysed and organised as a pedagogical process, not only as activity provision.**

# Closing Thought

**In very old and heterogeneous groups, the success of learning depends less on the novelty of content than on whether the learning process is organised in an accessible, regulated, and closable way.**

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**Thank you for your attention!**