

# Designing Workshops

-Perspectives of Information Design-

Nobuyuki Ueda\*, Tomoyuki Sowa\*\*, Tsugio Fujita\*\*\*, David A. Richardson\*\*\*

\*Konan Women's University

6-2-23 Morikita-cho, Higashinada-ku, Kobe-shi, Hyogo 658-0001, Japan nobuyuki@konan-wu-ac.jp

\*\* Kobe University of Arts

8-1-1 Gakuennishi-machi, Nishi-ku., Kobe, Hyogo 651-2196 japan t-sowa@kobe-du.ac.jp

\*\*\* Bit Design Studio

5F Minamisenba SOHO bldg., 4-10-5 Minamisenba Chuo-ku Osaka 542-0081 japan fuj@bit-d.com  
dav@bit-d.com

**Abstract:** The purpose of this paper is to propose and discuss the needs of a model for workshop design. We developed a hypothesized model, applied, tested and evaluated it on workshops we designed and executed. Our purpose was to clarify if our model was workable. We were able to conclude the necessity of having a well-defined workshop model that is dynamic, interactive and reflective. We aim to examine our approach to workshop design in detail; using concrete data accumulated in the field and look into diverse possibilities of using our model in various learning environments.

**Keywords:** constructionist learning, Workshop<sup>3</sup>, flow of workshop, level of involvement, reflective experiences.

## 1. Introduction

Recently in Japan, it has become popular to hold various types of workshops in different styles in areas such as schools, museums, research centers and businesses. Yet very few experts in the field are discussing the design theory involved in actually designing and evaluating workshops themselves. The purpose of our paper is to propose a workshop design model through the process of examining the process of designing, executing and evaluating workshop activities. We see a workshop as a powerful learning environment, which nurtures constructionist learning (Kafai & Resnick 1996). We mean by constructionist learning that as people we learn by building our knowledge through negotiating with other people and environments using various media.

## 2. Method

We constructed a hypothesized workshop model, based on previous experience in the field of workshop and applied it to four workshops in four different areas, 1) Interface Design. The workshop was conducted through acting-out. Acting-out is a method of using your mind, imagination and body to express or understand a concept, an

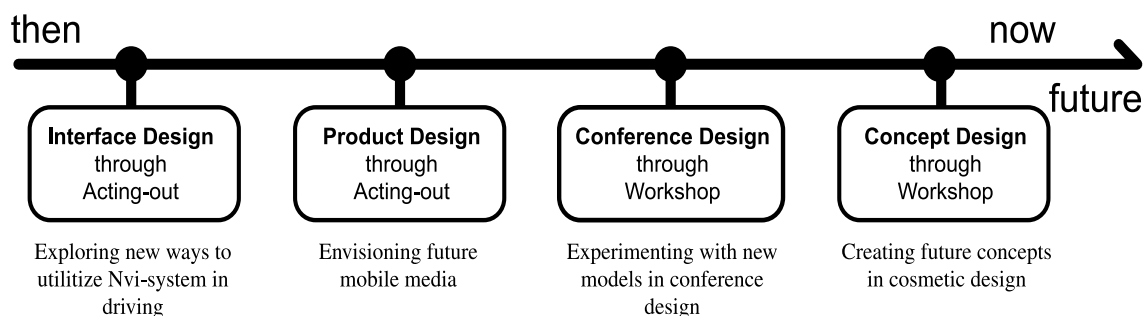


Figure 1. Four workshops designed & executed

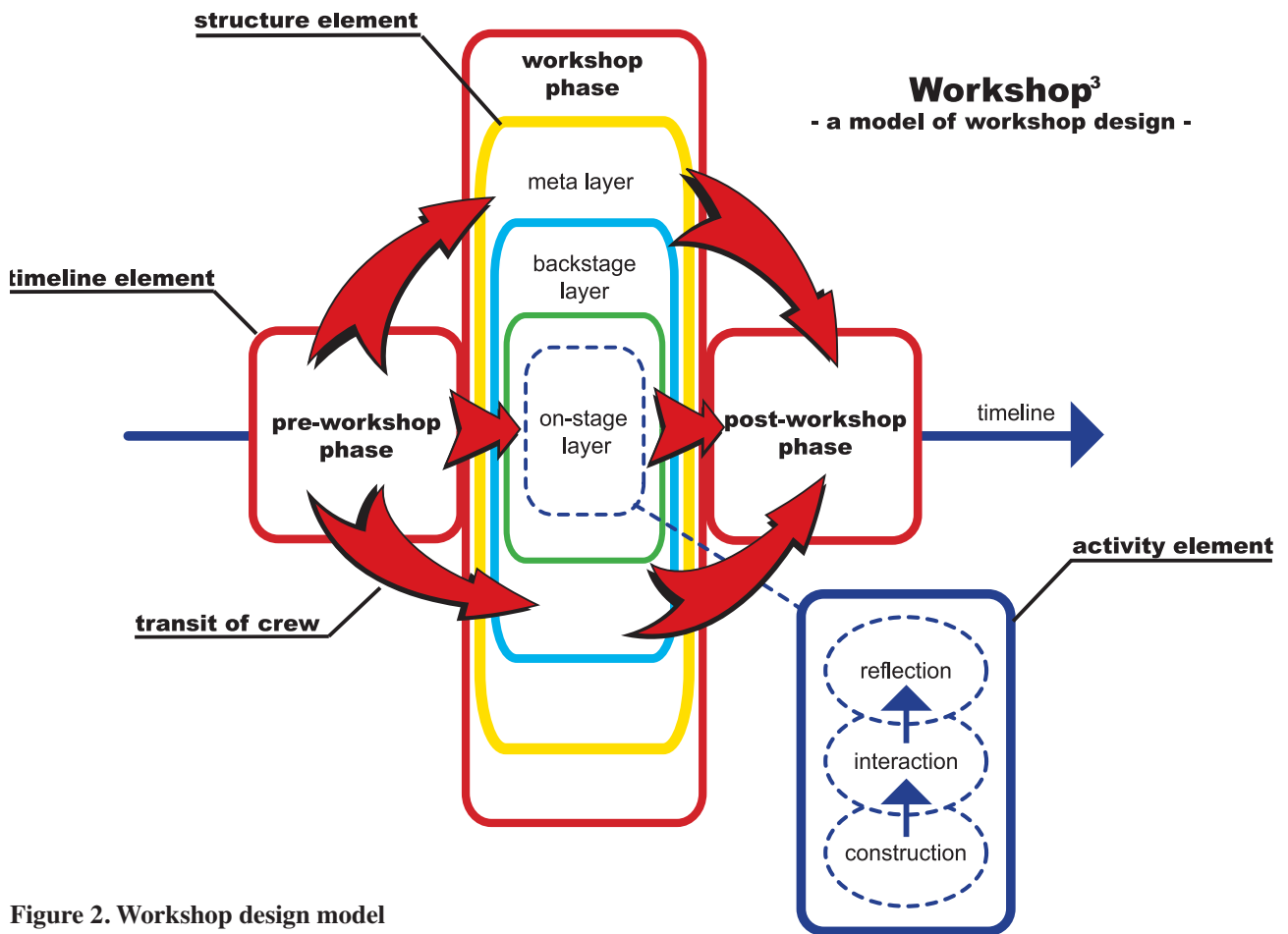


Figure 2. Workshop design model

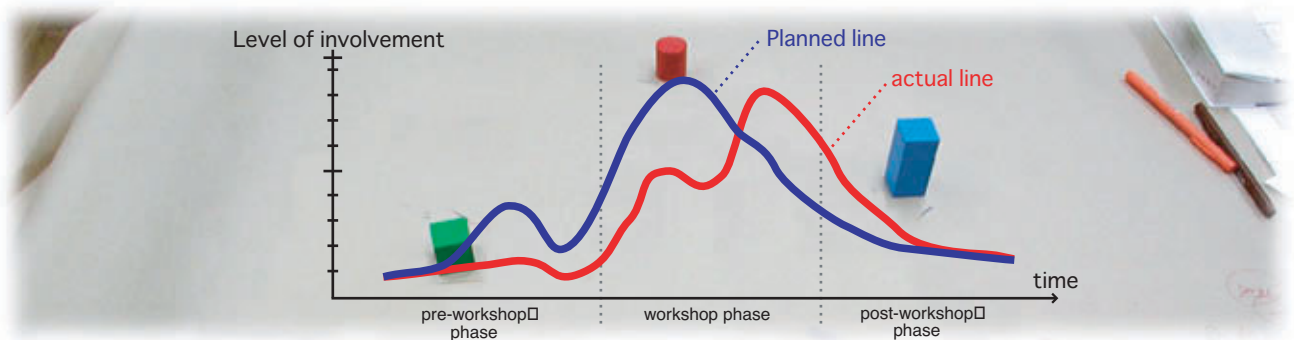


Figure 3. Flow of workshop

idea or something abstract, 2) Product Design, again through acting-out, 3) Conference Design, through workshop and 4) Concept Design, also through workshop. See figure 1.

### 2.1 The Model - Workshop<sup>3</sup>

We used our model which is comprised of three elements, 1) timeline, 2) structure and 3) activity. Each element has also three elements and thus we call our model Workshop<sup>3</sup>, as shown in figure 2.

The timeline element is made up of three phases. The three phases of the workshop are, 1) pre-workshop phase, 2) workshop phase and 3) post-workshop phase. The purpose of the pre-workshop phase is to plan and design each workshop, and come to an understanding of a common goal. We as the design team plan the structure and schedule while taking into consideration current workshop issues in the field. The workshop phase is held in locations with spiritual and enlightening atmospheres. In the final post-workshop phase crew come together and share, discuss data and experiences gathered from the workshop.

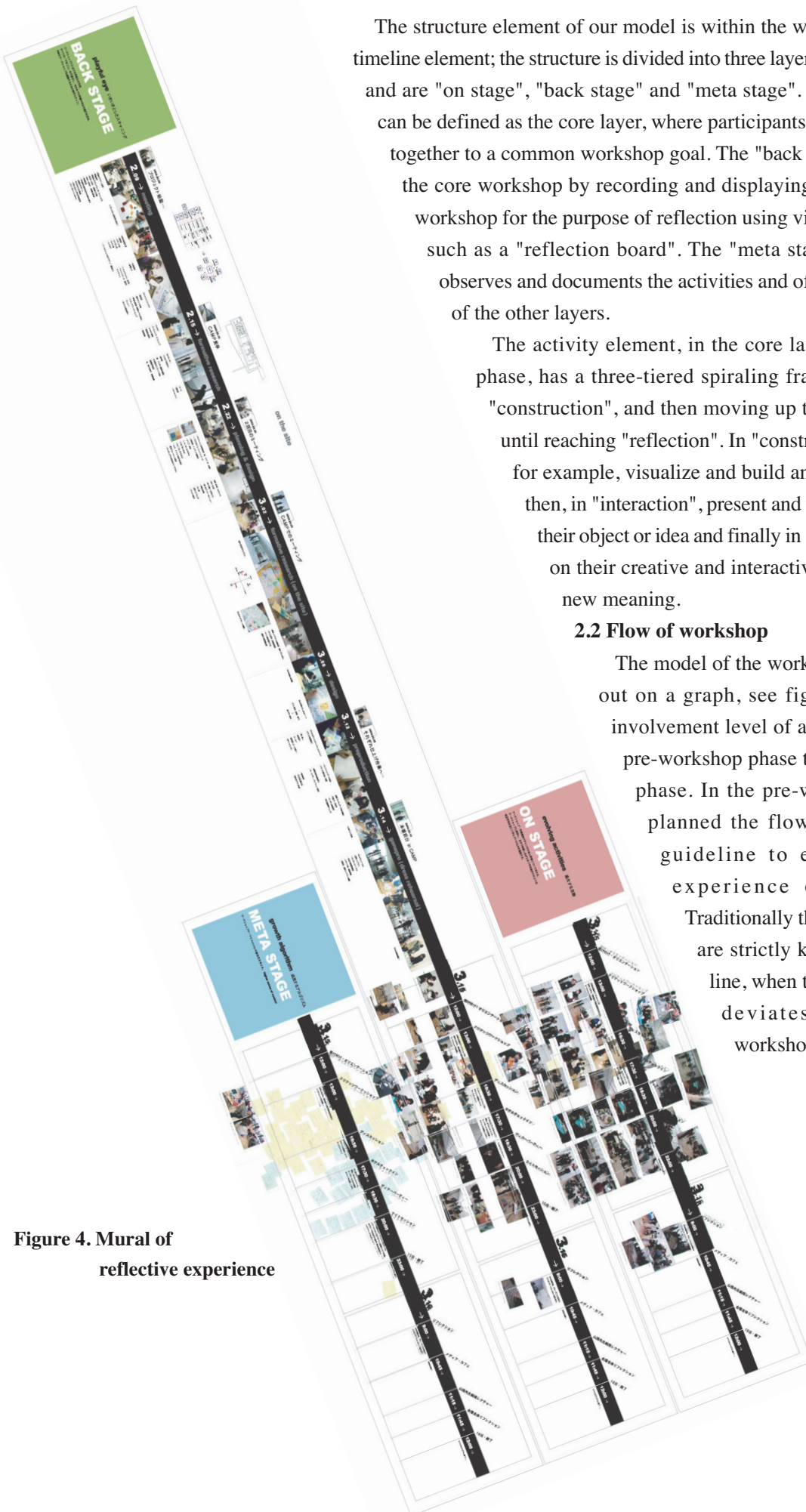
The structure element of our model is within the workshop phase of the timeline element; the structure is divided into three layers, one within another, and are "on stage", "back stage" and "meta stage". The "on stage" layer can be defined as the core layer, where participants and facilitators work together to a common workshop goal. The "back stage" layer supports the core workshop by recording and displaying the activities of the workshop for the purpose of reflection using video and other media, such as a "reflection board". The "meta stage", the outer layer observes and documents the activities and offers feedback to both of the other layers.

The activity element, in the core layer of the workshop phase, has a three-tiered spiraling framework, starting at "construction", and then moving up through "interaction" until reaching "reflection". In "construction", participants, for example, visualize and build an object or idea. They then, in "interaction", present and talk with others about their object or idea and finally in "reflection" look back on their creative and interactive processes and find new meaning.

## 2.2 Flow of workshop

The model of the workshop can be mapped out on a graph, see figure 3, showing the involvement level of all members from the pre-workshop phase to the post-workshop phase. In the pre-workshop stages we planned the flow of workshop as a guideline to enhance the total experience of all involved. Traditionally the flow of workshops are strictly kept to a pre-planned line, when the involvement level deviates from the plan, workshop crew will intervene

Figure 4. Mural of reflective experience



and take control, leading to the workshop being led by crew members. But, we have a more emergent approach. We also planned, but we allowed the natural flow of the workshop to take its own course and documented it for later reflection. In the post-workshop stages we analyzed and compared the difference between our planned line and actual line, with an aim to discover why there was a difference. Using this data we were able to design smoother and more naturally flowing further workshops.

### 2.3 Crew of workshop

We divided our design team into three teams 1) the "on stage" crew, 2) the "back stage" crew and 3) the "meta stage" crew. The On Stage crew facilitated

and interacted with the participants offering them opportunities of discovery in evolving activities. The Back stage crew documented, supported and offered playful and pleasurable experiences and was delegated into three units 1) Media - Video shooting, visual graphics, documenting and real-time web design, 2) Space - layout of workshop environment, equipment set up and 3) Cafe - planning food entertainment and beverage breaks. The Meta stage crew's duty was to direct and co-ordinate the workshop, whilst also examining the model of the workshop.



Figure 5. Reflection board

### 3. Results and Discussion

Using our model we have designed and executed four workshops to date. One in interface design, one in product design, one in conference design and another in concept design. We used our workshop<sup>3</sup> model in the workshops and gathered four patterns of result data from documentation such as a "mural of experience" showing the history of the workshop; one such mural is shown in figure 4, and from "reflection boards", figure 5, showing keywords, key-points and such like. This data comes from participants' reflecting on their involvement and experiences of the workshop. Using this data we are able to discuss in detail our approach to workshop design.

### 4. Conclusion

We found out that our hypothesized model worked well in various styles of workshop in different areas. Through our trials, we proved the need to have a dynamic, interactive and reflective model in order to share the common goal of the workshop with team members. We were able to realise the key to workshop design is the reflective experiences of participants, and then by evaluating, analyzing and feeding that data back into future workshops we can develop an ever-improving model. By having a model, we were able to discuss the model through application and from reflective data and discussion we could refine the model. So, through this process of constantly refining the model by application and testing, reflection and discussion, we can deepen and share our understanding of workshop design.

#### Special thanks to:

members in the design team; Yuuka Sato, Narue Yoshida, Yuko Kusano, Yoshie Yoshida, Kazunori Kusuki, Takashi Kawaguchi, Nobuki Ueda, Yukiko Ichikawa.

#### References

-Katai, Y.B. & Resnick, M. (1996).

Constructionism in practice: Designing, thinking, and learning in a digital world. NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates