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9471: Instructional Systems Design
Skillset 1: Instructional Design Process
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Part 1: Reflection/Comparison of ISD Approaches

I had only been teaching two years when my department (business education) decided to be progressive and tackle technology courses within our curriculum. This was the late 90's. We decided to add both web design and desktop publishing to our repertoire of courses to offer for the following year. Somehow I "volunteered" to tackle desktop publishing. I knew little to nothing about desktop publishing having taught international business, business law, computer applications (such as Microsoft Office), etc. but I also was one of the newer and younger members of the department and very interested in new technology. I also knew it would get me new computers in my classroom.

What I remember most is that I had no idea where to start. I had never developed curriculum before. For the most part, the courses I had taught in my first few years had already been developed when I started teaching. I also don't remember how it was determined that Adobe PageMaker was the software to be used, but apparently the software had already been purchased. I remember buying some "how to" books and taking a class at MU during the summer to learn the software. I had no real plan. I also had no real concept of state or national standards. And since I had never developed curriculum before, I did the only thing I knew to do....I winged it! I knew very little of the terminology, little to nothing about "desktop publishing" or any publishing for that matter. I created projects from the books I purchased, a total violation of copyright law. Every now and then I'd create a test from the assignments we had completed, focusing more on the "how to" of the software, rather than anything substantial.

Since that time, the course has evolved into "graphic design and desktop publishing" and become a very popular course and I'm fortunate to have a fellow teacher to assist me in continuously refining the curriculum. State and national standards have been developed in this area. I have also had additional training, both in curriculum development and design and with graphic design. When I was fortunate to have another teacher assigned to teach another section of the class, we decided to spend time one summer revamping and updating the curriculum. I can't say that we went into this with the idea that we had to follow an instructional design approach, but I do know we started by looking at the state and national standards, identifying what we already included in our curriculum and which standards we felt needed to be added. Also at that time, we were spending a lot of mandatory inservice time looking at our assessments and aligning the "verbage" of the standards with the expectations of performance. Somehow over the years, we have managed to develop a very comprehensive quality graphic design/desktop publishing course, but had we been better prepared in actual curriculum development (or instructional design) we could have had that quality program much sooner.

So, "if I knew then what I know now", I would definitely utilize a more systematic approach to developing this course. The Backward Design model would very likely be the model of choice as I have some experience with it in recent years. First off, I would begin by researching state and national content standards to determine the main concepts and objectives of the course. If I was new to the content myself, I would definitely do a lot more research into the actual content: the best software to be used, what software was being used in industry, what industry identified as important in relation to content,

what principles of design should be taught, etc. This research would hopefully lead to a narrowing down of the most important objectives to be taught in the course and the basic curriculum.

Once the basis of the curriculum was determined, I would continue by identifying the types of assignments and projects that would best assess whether a student had mastered the objectives for the particular unit. Many of the assignments would be hands-on production type assignments utilizing the particular software for that unit. Since many of the projects are subjective in nature (follow good design principles and marketing concepts while still using the software effectively and efficiently), I would also spend time developing a rubric that would best determine quality projects from a design perspective. Unit tests would also be developed that consisted of both a written component, to assess knowledge of terminology, design principles, marketing concepts, etc. and a production component that would assess ability to use the software.

At this point, I would break each unit down further by actually creating assignments (that will serve as formative assessments) and projects (that will serve as summative assessments) to incorporate into daily lessons that would mimic real world examples while at the same time meet the specific objectives for each unit of study and also be of interest to students. Because the software changes often (about every other year), it is cost prohibitive to purchase a text book so all materials for each lesson would have to be developed and cross-referenced to the objectives. This is a very time-consuming endeavor but I have found there are many resources available via the Internet in the way of online tutorials, lesson plans, etc.

Once a unit was completed, then I would analyze the results from the various assessment instruments to determine whether students met the objectives. Based on those results, if necessary, I would need to re-teach areas of weakness or modify assessments and/or rubrics to better identify student achievement.

Part 2a: What does it mean to use a "systematic" instructional design process?

When I think of "systematic" and "process", I immediately think "plan". So a systematic design process would begin with a plan; a plan of action preferably developed in advance of an existing problem or for a new course being taught. A systematic approach is a way to handle a problem or situation (or curriculum development) in a methodical, orderly, and calculated fashion. Whether the instructional designer is using a method/plan such as ADDIE or Backward Design, for example, the design process would involve the creation of and follow-through of a plan. What a "systematic instructional design process is NOT, is what I did when given a new course to create when I had very little knowledge of the curriculum to begin with…wing it over the course of the school year!

For me, to most effectively use a systematic process, I would actually determine the model (or plan) that would best fit the task (in my case curriculum development). Once that model is determined, I would then follow the steps in that model, carefully planning and then implementing each step. This would then lead to the actual implementation of the daily lessons. Using this systematic approach would require a lot of time prior to the start of the course, but would actually allow for more time during the school year for analysis of student achievement.

Part 2b: How would I know if a systematic process is actually used?

In one word, evidence. After the fact, is there evidence to support that a systematic process was in place. In education, there are several ways that I can think of where there is evidence showing utilization of a systematic process in place. With curriculum development, the evidence should come in the form of a curriculum guide created during the creation and/or revision of the course (ideally). True curriculum guides should include (at least) a course description, district, state and national standards, specific measurable learning objectives, expectations of performance, sample assignments, assessments, rubrics, instructional materials and technology needed.

Over the past 4 to 5 years, our school has developed professional learning teams that develop "SMART" goals every year to address student achievement concerns. Teachers identify an area of urgent need (a problem) based on data, develop a goal to address that need that is **s**pecific, **m**easurable, **a**chievable, **r**elevant, and **t**imely (smart), create classroom strategies that lead to attainment of the goal, determine evidence that indicates the strategy is being implemented and that it is effective, then evaluate based on that evidence. This is a very systematic approach to a problem and is evident based documentation teachers complete at the beginning of the process and the results provided at the end of the process.