Trends and Issues in IDD

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Introduction

This paper is a self-reflection, written during the Fall of 2017 for IDD 600, the first

class in the M.S. program for Instructional Design and Development, at the University of

Alabama at Birmingham. Over the next several pages, I will explore how I came to be a

part of this program, where I see myself in relation to the field of IDD, and what I hope to

be doing in the future, after graduation. This paper is required early in the program to

help students set goals, planning the direction of their IDD journeys, early in the

process. In the future, it will be interesting to look back on this collection of thoughts,

hopes, and aspirations to see if my direction or goals have changed.

Part 1

Prior to this course what was your definition of Instructional Design and

Development?

I stumbled across Instructional Design by accident. Really, it was more like

Divine Intervention. For many years, I have been planning to "go back to work" when my

homeschooling days came to end. My previous career was in dental hygiene education,

teaching at a State University's professional school. I left higher education for 15 years

to stay home with my kids. While I was a military spouse, with all the moving and a few

deployments, re-entry to the profession of dental hygiene was nearly impossible. Then

once I began homeschooling my children, it was out of the question. I started blogging,

writing, teaching, and speaking about the Bible, for personal growth. One day, I was

researching the best way to create an online course and found Instructional Design. I

knew this career field was what I had been searching for all along. I applied for this program within weeks.

Then I had to explain to family, friends, and writing partners what I was planning to pursue. My explanations were really superficial because my knowledge of the field was so limited. I told everyone pretty what I had learned from Google, "Instructional Design is the profession that helps subject matter experts present their content in the best way, based on learning theory and using technology." Then, to answer the blank stares, I would add, "You know those online courses, like in colleges, or even through websites? Well, I'm going to help make those." That made sense to them, but I know this is definition is not even the tip of the iceberg.

What is your new personal definition of Instructional Design and Development?

At this point, having read close to 300 pages of *Trends and Issues in Instructional Design and Technology*, I have come to know more about the field of Instructional Design. I have written my own definition after studying many well-written and thorough definitions in the textbook and in the outside sources I used for Reading Evaluation #1 and Threaded Discussion #2.

My definition: Instructional design is the creation of a plan for instruction and learning that "draws on both theory and subject matter, often using technology as a vehicle" to increase and enhance knowledge construction in the student (Hylynka & Jacobsen, 2009). Designers utilize design systems, educational/learning/motivational/and social interdependence theories, measurable

outcomes, and constant feedback and evaluation, in attempting to approximate a real world, meaningful experience for the learner (Gagné, 1987, p. 7; Reiser & Dempsey, 2018, 26-27).

This definition takes into account the traditions, as well as current trends, in instructional design. In addition, this definition highlights the design aspect of instructional design and focuses on developing a meaningful and effective learning experience for the student. Particular attention should be paid to fostering active learning though the design of the instruction. "Design of any sort has the function of creating order. Instructional design at its best simply creates order in the sense of creating a rich environment where learning can take place" (Dempsey & Van Eck, 2017, p. 233). Active learning stimulates access of prior knowledge, imbues meaning, and increases learner self-confidence, self-reliance and motivation (Ghilay & Ghilay, 2015). Another way of saying this is that instructional designers create learning events and projects for students to stimulate significant learning, which is defined in terms of the change produced in the learner. Fink says, "No change, no learning. And significant change requires that there be some kind of lasting change that is important in terms of the learner's life (Litchfield, 2017, p. 186-189).

Part 2

Personal IDD Belief Statement

I believe that learning is what makes people come alive, that learning is about

making connections to the world and to other people by making meaning of acquired information and existing knowledge. I think that we are all constructivists by nature. "Constructivism enables learners to construct their own understanding and knowledge of the world by experiencing things and reflecting on the experiences" (Ruffi, 2015). In addition, I think that social construction of knowledge is also an intuitive process in humans (the learner is a participant in the sociocultural process of learning), but it must be built into the design of instruction (Hoadley & Van Haneghan, 2017, p. 69). I think that in order for significant learning to reliably occur in the classroom (online or traditional), it must be built into the program though the systematic design of learning activities (Litchfield, 2017, pp. 186-189).

I think that the human performance improvement movement has been traditionally relegated to the environments of business and industry, but the spirit of this thinking is the basis for what we want to do as instructional designers, independent of the arena in which we serve. "The vision of HPI is relatively simple: achieve, through people, increasingly successful accomplishments that are valued by all organizational stakeholders" (Stolovitch, 2017, p. 122). Instructional designers must meet the learning needs of the end-users to meet the needs of all the stakeholders.

As a final note: These days learners are pressed and squeezed by the frenetic pace of modern life, so the investment required for learning, in terms of time and money, can be painful and difficult. Therefore, the instructional designer has an ethical duty to maintain fluency in the relevant theories and in the best practices of the instructional design profession in order to serve the end-user well.

Your place in the field

My movement toward the field of instructional design represents an intrinsically motivated desire to make meaning, to build useful things, to be a difference-maker, engaging in purposeful work. For many years, I have been fascinated by the impact of of learning and experience in changing the individual. I am still building an understanding of the role of instructional design in education, business, healthcare, and the military. After working with a great group for the wiki project, I have an increased understanding of the tremendous importance of developing effective training in the military, but I don't think I will work within that arena.

I am drawn to instructional design in higher education and in healthcare education, probably because of my background in dental hygiene education. For example, I would be very interested in working at UAB School of Dentistry to develop courses within the dental curriculum or in the area of developing continuing education courses for dental practitioners and support staff. I think my experiences in the professional school setting and training in IDD will also transfer to medicine, nursing, and many other healthcare fields. In terms of CE development, I would also consider the possibility of working within the dental supply industry, in training sales staff for companies that sell instruments and new technologies to dental offices.

I think there are other opportunities in areas that have not been traditional instructional design settings. As a Christian writer, blogger and speaker, I have developed an abundance of content and written a several courses about the application

of biblical principles to life. Because I have attended writing conferences in this genre

over the past seven years, I have many contacts that, as Christian writers and teachers,

are essentially producing courses for learners. I think I could build an ID consulting

practice, which serves authors and speakers in the Christian Living arena, enabling

them to build online and face-to-face courses. In addition, I think that there could be a

market for similar services to churches that are developing their own content.

Initially, while my children are still living at home—for the first two to three years

after finishing the IDD program—I would prefer to work part-time, either locally or by

telecommuting. As an inexperienced designer, I know it could be difficult to find that sort

of flexible work situation, but I will try. I am seriously considering pursuing a PhD, but I

am not sure that will be in the budget for my family. I will definitely explore this

possibility more over the next two years, but would likely take a break from school for a

few years before beginning a program. If I did pursue a PhD, I might be interested in

focusing on the field of analytics and evaluation because that chapter in the textbook

was really interesting to me. I am also interested in application of Fink's model for

significant learning.

Part 3

What trends and issues do you feel had the most impact on our field up to this point?

First, technology has had immeasurable impact on the field of instructional

design and development. Obviously, technology has been integral to instruction as long

as there has been any sort of media device (textbook, blackboard, overhead projector, slide projector, etc.). Instructional technology began moving into education for first three-fourths of the twentieth century, beginning with visual and audio devices—overhead projectors, slide projectors, the radio, and records—and audiovisual devices like television and movies (Reiser, 2017, p.9). Another huge shift in education technology began in the 1980's and 90's with the introduction of the personal computer, email, and the World Wide Web. All of these were the beginning of a tech revolution in society and their impact was felt on campus soon after their introduction to the marketplace. Not long after that, instructors began using PowerPoint slides in lectures and students began using computers in the school and university libraries to carry out" research. In very little time, personal computers and printers replaced typewriters when students authored formal written assignments. "During the past fifteen years, rapid advances in computers and other digital technology, including the Internet, [video, satellite, CD-ROM and mobile devices] have led to rapidly increasing interest in and use of media for instructional purposes" (p.11). These technologies are not only impacting instructional design in new ways. Technology used to be seen as a method of presenting content, externally, but designers are now using technology as a mechanism to facilitate informal learning (Carliner, 2017, p. 147).

A plethora of psychological, learning, and communication theories have impacted instruction design, but three come to mind immediately. First, "behavioral learning theory [by B.F. Skinner] is empirically based which means that behavior is observed both before and after an intervention such as instruction has been implemented, and the

observed changes in performance are related to what occurred during the intervention" (Driscoll, 2017, p. 53). Behaviorism "contributed to the concepts of behavioral objectives" (p. 53). Behavioral objectives specified desired outcomes to learners and focused instruction on meeting defined goals, or outcomes. Today, these two impacts of behaviorism are still strongly felt in education.

Second, instructional design would not exist, as we know it, without systems theory. In the 1070's, new models of design were developed for systematically designing instruction, "several of which became 'standards' in the field" (Reiser, 2017, p.15). One of the chief characteristics of instructional design is its systematic approach. By definition, "instructional design is a *system* of procedures for developing education and training materials in a consistent and reliable fashion" (Branch, 2017, p. 23, *italics added*). What is important about systems theory in instructional design is that students and practitioners are able to implement these principles, giving them the ability to create reliable and useful products. These systems-based models allow designers to adopt the current "best practices" in the field, without having to invent them.

Third, constructivist approaches created a paradigm shift in education. Rather than filling a learner with outside knowledge, constructivism asserts, "learning is more a matter of going from the inside out. The learner actively imposes organization and meaning on the surrounding environment and constructs knowledge in the process" (Driscoll, 2017, p. 56) Constructivism moves the focus of education from the instructor to the learner. Learner-centered "constructivism…deals with individuality, learner autonomy, and discovery learning. It has shifted emphasis from teaching to learning,

and it individualizes and contextualizes learners' knowledge construction and learning experiences (Rufii, 2015).

What trends and issues do you see that will shape the field in the next 10 years? How?

Social constructivism is behind many of the recent changes in learning design for education and training. I believe that the application of this theory will continue to impact the field for the foreseeable future. "Social constructivism…suggests we make meaning within social contexts. Social experiences provide opportunities to share our divergent views of the external world and to construct our knowledge as we interact with others" (Lim & Hall, 2015). "Social constructivism refers to the Vygotskian version of constructivism that includes collaboration with others as a key component…At its core, the philosophy behind a social constructivist course is that knowledge is created when shared" (Phillips, Sheffield, Moore, & Robinson, 2016).

Another trend is changing the face of education. Online collaborative tools like threaded discussions, educational wikis, and other applications (some free, some subscription) are used in both traditional and online classes from elementary school through graduate school and in the workplace. Wikis are used for group or collaborative authoring, building courseware, developing and documenting work on papers or research projects for peer review, tracking and streamlining group projects, reviewing classes and teachers, and building critical skills for similar application in the workplace (Robinson, M., 2006, p. 108; Duffy, Peter and Bruns, Axel, 2006). Threaded Discussions and other group discussion applications like Facebook are increasing

student engagement and providing opportunities for deeper reflection and feedback than traditional classroom discussions (Camus, Hurt, Larson, & Prevost, 2016). Other applications like Google Drive, Skype, I-Chat, and Adobe Connect, to name just a few, create opportunity for group authorship, collaborative, and team communication in both business and education (Tracey & Morrison, 2017, 153).

"The most consistent impact on e-learning since the turn of the century has been the strength of community and the use of social learning technologies for purposeful learning activities" (Dempsey & Van Eck, p, 232). The individual and group work developed using online collaborative tools is transforming how people learn in many ways. For example, these types of learning tools are contributing to the shift from instructor-centered teaching to student-centered learning (Bold, 2006, p. 12). In this way, the use of the technological platform is a reflection of the theories of constructivism (knowledge is developed internally, by learners, as they encounter and solve real world problems) and social constructivism where collaboration is integral for the group construction of knowledge (Reiser & Dempsey, 2017, pp. 72-73). Brown explains "knowledge has two dimensions, the explicit and tacit. The explicit dimension deals with concepts…[whereas] tacit knowledge is best displayed in terms of performance and skills" (Brown, J. S., 2010, p. 15). Both explicit and tacit knowledge increase when learners collaborate in a constructivist "community of practice," dealing with real problems. (Brown, J. S., 2010, p. 15). The real world applications serve to connect knowledge to situations where the purpose is clear—this is both situated cognition and anchored instruction (Reiser & Dempsey, 2017, p. 70).

Educational use of online sharing platforms is actually changing both learning and technology. In the past, technology was used to facilitate learning. Today, new technologies continue to facilitate learning activities, but now the learning activities are also changing the face of technology (Reiser & Dempsey, 2017, p. 69). This dynamic relationship between technology and learning points to Pea's concept of distributed knowledge. He explains that learners develop intelligence when "interacting with [cognitive tools] distributed across minds, persons, and the symbolic and physical environments, both natural and artificial" (1993, p. 47-48). Pea defines cognitive tools as any practice or medium (including the use of computer, online, and social technologies) "that helps transcend the limitations of the mind, such as memory, in activities of thinking, learning, and problem solving" (Gebre, E., Saroyan, A., & Bracewell, R., 2014, p. 9). Cognitive tools create the opportunity to transcend traditional educational limitations by "allowing learners to externalize their internal representations" and to participate in the construction of both technology and learning (Gebre, E., Saroyan, A., & Bracewell, R., 2014, p.10).

Part 4

What areas of the field do you feel the most confident in your knowledge and skill set at this point?

One area where I am gaining confidence is in using APA style. The first week of class, I spent an inordinate amount of time looking up formatting for the layout of documents and the proper way to cite in a paragraph and on the reference page. Now

many of those tasks are familiar. A second area where I am more familiar is with the educational approaches of constructivism and social construction, which run through many of the chapters like a thread running through fabric. We've seen these two methodologies again and again in various contexts and have participated in activities that were created using these concepts, so I think most of us are getting very comfortable with the ideas of constructivism and social construction Finally, I am gaining confidence in my professional writing. I have considered myself a writer in one or another for many years, but I have not used this skill in a professional sense in over 15 years. I am experiencing self-efficacy and enjoyment in creating our written assignments, like this one. I have always enjoyed a more technical type of writing, as opposed to creative writing. I have written non-fiction and have had a blog for eight years, but now there is a purpose added to my writing that I am really happy about it.

What areas of the field do you feel the most challenged in your knowledge and skill set at this point?

Reading research is difficult for me. I have completed a graduate level qualitative statistics course and have studied quantitative statistics as well, but I have never fully understood the various tests and methodologies for testing. Reading that section of most research articles is like listening to Charlie Brown's teacher—unintelligible. In the same way, I had some difficulty understanding parts of the chapter on evaluation and analytics, though I am very intrigued with the practice of evaluation and its importance to instructional design. Hopefully, as I grow academically and professionally, I will learn to decipher this kind of writing more easily because it is essential to overall scholarly

literacy and would be a considerable strength for me as a designer. In the same sense, some of the lofty theories are hard to grasp (like Pea and his "distributed knowledge"). In addition, there are so many theories and methods! I am trying to think of a good way to retain the things I am learning this semester, but there are so many that it just feels like only a few will stick. I am old-school, so I am considering making some flashcards!

Besides attending classes, what is your personal growth plan to become a confident, competent, active member of the field of instructional design?

For this semester, all I can do is class. Because we moved here last summer, my family is still adjusting to many new activities and people. My husband is at a new job and my kids are in traditional school for the first time this semester. I had hoped to attend local meetings for the Association for Talent Development, but that might not happen until next semester. I think I will join that organization in January. In addition, if a student organization develops, I will gladly participate in this as well. Of course, as the groundwork is laid for a student organization, the founding members must remember that, although we are all local to Birmingham this semester, we are supposed to be a fully online program, so the student organization should be created in such a way that allows for off-site participation (it seems to me that some of the most vocal advocates do not take this necessity into consideration). I plan to fit one or two national or regional conferences into the next two years and will plan to attend those kinds of events regularly after graduation, as well. As a student, I hope to participate in research that will enable me to publish and to present at a conference, such as the Mid-South

Educational Research Association (MSERA). If my professional situation allows, I would really enjoy continuing to write and present at conferences after graduation.

Closing

As this is my first class, in my first semester, in a new program, friends and family have asked me many times how I feel about my choice. I tell them that it is a lot of work, more than I expected, and that some weeks I don't think I can get it all done. Then I tell them that I love it, so much. I am very grateful to God for directing me, to my family for supporting me and to the IDD program and UAB graduate school for allowing me to go back to school for something so wonderful and exciting. I am also grateful that Dr. Hodges has been so encouraging—it really makes all the difference to people embarking on such a momentous journey. I am intrigued by all that I am learning, and my only apprehension arises from seeing how much I still have to learn. I wish I knew more, right now. Of course, construction of the knowledge that I so deeply desire, takes time. There is no substitute for putting your time in and doing the work that it takes to grow into a professional. I am looking forward to all the experiences that will enrich me and show me new ways to look at education and the world. I am excited to join a profession that requires purposeful connections between knowledge and action and necessitates collaboration and teamwork.

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