The Interactive Instructional Designer:  
An instructional technology integration tool

Abstract: The Interactive Instructional Designer is a web-based tool that, by asking a series of questions regarding issues such as the audience, instructor skill level, support, and time commitments, presents an analysis of the strengths, weaknesses and next steps for web-based/web-enhanced course development.

Introduction

Integrating technology into the teaching environment is not a new topic. Universities are including technology in their academic plans, online course management systems are flourishing, and hundreds of articles are being written about distance learning and “going online.” Buzz-words aside, while innovators and technology-lovers are quick to jump into this realm of the digital experience, those teachers who may be more reluctant may be left with deceptive perceptions of the process of building web-based materials, both that it is too complex a process, or oversimplification. First-person narratives of the transitional experience may provide some insight, but can not predict the unique outcome of interaction of instructor personality/experience/perceptions with student perspectives with course content [3].

These instructors, although knowledgeable in their own field, may not have the skills to discern appropriate starting points or realistic goals for the development process. Many of them do not have skills in instructional design or technology. While formal training in this avenue is not crucial, the process of instructional design has proven beneficial for development of online-materials, both in sanity measures as well as quality of content. With budgets tightening at many institutions and the pressure to incorporate technology increasing, more faculty may be tempted to “wing it” through the development process [1].

Project Description

At the Ohio State University, we have created a “Planning Worksheet” [7]. This form acts as a starting point for a conversation of issues that most faculty do not consider when they get started. Interactions of their responses focus the conversation on issues like size of the course vs. amount of communication, instructor skill level vs. need for student support, and student access method vs. technology bells and whistles. From this information, we try to set realistic short-term and long-term goals to provide a safe structure for faculty who are later adopters of technology [5].

By moving this planning worksheet into an interactive electronic format, faculty can input their instructional goals, time constraints, and technology skills assessment, and have a generalized report produced that takes into account their specific needs. Key factors pertaining to web-based instructional design currently identified are:

- Types of Materials (static, dynamic)
- Size of course
- Instructor factors (experience with ISD and technology, openness to innovation/rationale for change)
- Student factors (technological skills, student motivation for taking course)
- Support structure for course (graduate students, departmental support outside of instructor)
- Degree of technology integration (percentage of time students spend online in the course, types of tools to be integrated into the course, completely online or web-enhanced) [2,3,4,6]

By constraining factors that influence the design of the course, possible results can be limited. For example, an instructor who self-identifies low technical skills, low interest in course upkeep and low support might receive a suggestion to re-evaluate the choice to base the course off of a discussion board which requires careful maintenance for success. An instructor with high technical experience, and high interest but few ideas for way to include technology may be given suggestions for next step integrations for including online office hours or using online assessment tools.

The Interactive Instructional Designer is currently online and available for examination at: http://www.telr.osu.edu/acd


