

Chapter 20

Instructional Design Considerations, Challenges, and Best Practices on Cross–Cultural Adult Web–Based Learning Experiences in Higher Education

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ABSTRACT

This chapter is about instructional design (ID), an area of instruction that is rooted on following a strategic development of customized teaching methodologies. It explores various facets of ID, with the aim of providing readers with an in-depth understanding of what ID entails. The topics discussed within this chapter include 1) exploring the considerations needed when engaging in ID, 2) challenges in ID, and 3) best practices (BP) in ID. All these are important in enabling interested parties to formulate teaching methods that befit their respective adult learners globally. To provide a holistic synopsis of the discussion, the author also compares and contrasts the past and present as it relates to the chapter's specific topic and the main theme of the book. The discourse concludes with highlighting research recommendations for ID and its implications into the future.

INTRODUCTION

The general perspective of the chapter is a discussion on ID and what it embodies. The premise is that ID is not a stand-alone concept, rather a compounded aspect of education. In employing ID as a form of instruction, an in-depth understanding of all its underlying accompaniments will enable all parties appreciate ID in its full context. As a result, it will create a form of instruction that stands to add value to all cross-cultural adult web-based learners (CCAWBL). Adult learners are said to be more critical learners, prone to make inquisitions and demand value for their money when investing in web-based

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learning (WBL), than any other audience. Therefore, the instructional designers should be thorough in designing programs that are progressive, adaptable and trendy.

After-all with technology, one can only be receptive to the constantly changing innovations and advanced state of the art devices in the market, delivered to all end users. As the paper explores these avenues, the inclusion of the perspectives of others globally via literature review, where ID is concerned, is key. The benefit of these varied perspectives enables readers conceptualize and appreciate how others approach, design and use ID. It gives us the opportunity to fine tune, our own thinking and re-create teaching methodologies that ensure greater advancement in ID. Additionally, it gives us bench marking platforms, or even the chance to disagree with or review formats used, because the feedback and/or outcome is negative.

For example, ID patterns that do not encourage practical engagement or are not user friendly have a higher potential of failing than otherwise. Reason being that end users do not want to be wrapped up in complex processes when trying to learn, they would rather be as self-reliant as is humanly possible while learning. In other words, it should be a platform for providing education advancement with minimal stressful experiences.

That said, the main objective of this chapter is to (a) Elaborate on the ID considerations needed to formulate a successful form of instruction. Decisions must be well thought out because the purpose of ID is to add value to its end users, based on a need analysis for one. For example, an important consideration is content type, the deliverables should be challenging, engaging, applicable and appropriate for the CCAWBL. Considerations as to whether information technology is accepted by its intended users is also very vital.

According to Eason (1996), “without acceptance, discretionary users will seek alternatives, while even dedicated users will likely manifest dissatisfaction and perform in an inefficient manner, negating many, if not all, the presumed benefits of recent technology” (p.77). (b) Before, during and after ID, challenges should consistently be identified and modified promptly. Delays can cause adult learner withdrawal from the program, disruptions, loss of revenue among other acute challenges. Some challenges are unique to certain geographical locations and all these must be factored in. (c) The adherence to BPs while developing and using ID is a must. It indicates a commitment to providing a service that will provide desirable outcomes.

BACKGROUND

Theoretical Perspectives

After an extensive research work analysis, a myriad of definitions has been uncovered including varied discussions on the topic. I will first provide broad definitions of key words on ID or phrases that tie into the topic of discussion. ID for one is defined as “a systematic process that is employed to develop education and training programs in a consistent and reliable fashion.” (Reiser & Dempsey, 2007, p. 2). It is involved in transforming a wide variety of instruction data into measurable teaching material targeted for specific learners. Where it is delivered via varied pathways such as e-learning, prints, instructor led lectures, hybrid learning, podcasts and audio-video lines. Reiser and Dempsey (2007), further define ID as follows:

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