Curriculum and Instructional Design: The Interface

Posted on: 30 Apr 2020 May 6, 2020   Written by: <u>James Lipuma, PhD., Cristo Leon, MBA.</u>   Categorized in: <u>Curriculum and Instructional Design</u>, <u>Education</u>

Introduction

Institutions and their departments create strategic plans. Federal and state agencies develop curriculum frameworks. Educators create courses with modules and activities. Often Education systems have a break between the upper level of curriculum planning and the lower level of curriculum implementation. This interface is not always treated as a place for collaboration. Groups of experts attain a consensus about a plan for educational content and outcomes. The instructors and subject experts must develop the courses that enact that plan for a wide range of diverse learners. Also, they must consider resources such as texts and research materials that provide insights into how content should be broken into units and modules of instruction.   All of this asks educators to plan an experience that engages learners on a path towards the overarching vision.

Layers of Curriculum

Typically as one works on larger more complex curriculum projects the details of the lower-level pieces are not specified in the same document. A large curriculum framework gives guidance to those who need to implement the curriculum. Then this framework leads to different curriculum materials more closely connected to the instructional design that meets the needs of the particular learners. Several levels of curriculum documents may exist simultaneously providing a plan for the different levels of design.

University as an example

For example, a university will have a strategic plan the gives guidance for departments (or entire college units) to develop an academic plan.   Programs follow this plan as courses sequence are developed. Finally, courses have a syllabus that outlines the curriculum for the semester. Courses are broken into modules and activities with given timeframes and experiences. These experiences contain learning objects at the lowest level of instructional design.

Often a variety of groups develop different curricular elements. These groups have a range of experiences and attitudes.

Designers must align a statement of the vision and mission; goals and objectives; strategies and tactics; and metrics of success when working with institutions. Similarly, the designer must align goals, objectives, rationale, outcomes, and assessments. When working with courses and designing learning objects).

Curriculum vs Instructional Design Levels

However, there is an alignment and connection at all levels related to the conception of the aspirational, longer-term ideals and the operational planning to accomplish that end. It is useful to look at the two extremes. The most focused application of these planning terms is where instruction is experienced by the learners in context this application yields learning object intended to be used to attain a specific learning objective with an outcome that may be clearly assessed.

At the other end of the spectrum is planning and development of materials for entire institutions or educational systems. The strategic planning provides the attitudes and desires of the stakeholders so that the process will yield a clear, aligned set of curriculum materials that specifies the shared vision and desired paths forward for the leaders and those charged with putting the plan into effect.

Example: Learning Objects

Usually, the instructor controls the instructional design. However, they do not always consider the larger strategic plan or curriculum implementation. Individual instructors with their pedagogical content knowledge have greater control over instructional design. That design does not always attain the goals and objectives of a larger strategic plan. Nonetheless, each instructor should create coherent units and modules within the course for learners to succeed.

Example: Task Descriptions

For example, a clear task description design will typically provide the following

- Task overview
- Assigned activities
- Description of objectives tied to expected outcomes
- Methods of assessment
- Outline of expected deliverables
- Grading breakdown

The designer should know all of these elements for a specific task. However, how these are delivered and discussed with learners may vary. Each educator has different styles and situations that inform his or her design. Once specified, the lesson plan and relevant assessments can be developed and put in place. Then the instruction can occur supported with resources and learning materials.

At the larger levels of curriculum-making, mapping is an effective tool to understand the relationships and paths of learners. It demonstrates the interconnection of goals. I can highlight where and how knowledge will be assessed. Also, it reveals opportunities for the use of evaluation data to improve the educational process. These two concepts go hand-in-hand in order to attain an effective curriculum leading to learner mastery.

Building towards coherence

In the end, we seek a clearer picture of the educational system. No two learners have the same experience because of the situation, changes despite the efforts to keep the content, teaching, and context as stable as possible. This is the nature of the art and science of education. The plan only exists up until the point it is enacted. Then it must be adjusted. Nonetheless, having that plan is key to understanding how it is part of an integrated whole.

Designers must appreciate the many levels of CID. This allows shared vision to meet outcomes and evaluations. Interconnected nested sets of goals and objectives comprise educational plans. The larger systems gain connection and coherence when we draw on the PCK of practitioners. CID presents a continuum rather than seeing curriculum plans separate from instructional designers separate. Collaborative CID enables an align, effective design.

Citation

If you want to cite this blog article, please use the following:

Lipuma, J., & Leon, C. (2020, April 30). Curriculum and Instructional Design: The Interface. *James Lipuma´s Blog*. https://www.jameslipuma.com/curriculum-and-instructional-design-the-interface/