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Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a challenging principle to understand. The National Center on Universal Design for Learning break UDL down into three primary principles for understanding the underlying framework. The first principle focuses on how UDL “provides multiple means of representation” (“Learn the Basics of UDL”). Representation is the focus what is being learned. The second principle is that of action and expression. This is the focus of how learning occurs. And finally the third principle is the means of engagement, or the why to learning. UDL is “evident when teachers design instruction that accommodates a wide range of students’ preferences and abilities (King-Sears, 2009). Not only does UDL provide flexibility, but it also is useful for learners with diverse and varied abilities. In addition to providing flexibility and equitable use, UDL also describes the “varied ways to present and practice curriculum content, including the use of illustrations, tactile experiences, visible contrasts of essential content from supporting details, and precise and clear language” (King-Sears, 2009). The information presented is clear whether it supports the learner visual verbally, or even in a technological manner. UDL emphasizes the connection made between the learner and the information. In addition to supporting learners through various means, UDL emphasizes simplicity. The “content is presented in ways that are straightforward and considerate of students’ background knowledge, language skills, and concentration levels” (King-Sears, 2009). It makes learning accessible to all, making it truly universal. The following assignment and module creation exemplifies the numerous theories and criteria that instructional designers must use in creating specific parameters. The following module uses parameters as designed by Sherry Kollman.

Applying Effective Design Overview

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Abstract

This paper discusses the process and product of designing courses/modules that engage all learners through the use of media. A unit plan was designed, the components of the unit was created, a lesson was screencasted with a scripted lesson and a reflection was written about the entire process of designing a module using solid design principles of effective visual design and production.

Applying Effective Design Overview

Robert Kozma had an innovative understanding of technology and media and how it related to teaching and learning. Kozma understood how teaching and learning had evolved from the changes in technology from the past to the present. As I look at the learners of today, I see the evolution of today's digital natives and how technology has aided them in their teaching and learning experience. Kozma concluded that the capabilities of media can support cognitive development, when properly matched with a learning goal (1994, p. 11).

The job of an instructional designer requires technology to be perceived as a tool that is much more than a mere engagement tool. Kozma states that learning is more than a passive response to the delivery of instruction. He reminds us that learning is dynamic, forming, and a “cognitive and social process” where learners categorize information in order to create new learning as they interact with their environment and integrate new knowledge with prior knowledge in their memories (Kozma, 1994, p. 9).

Abnormal Psychology Unit Plan

This unit is designed for a hybrid course in a school that is still developing its technology curriculum and use. The course is titled Psychology II and is a college prep elective for juniors and seniors. Due to the fact that many of the students have little to no technology experience in the academic setting, this hybrid course is designed to not only introduce college bound students to technology in the academic setting, but it is also designed to prepare these late bloomers of education technology to utilize and engage technology to better understand materials and support learning.

The course has been running as a hybrid course for three years and while students have commented on the challenge and difficulty of the course, students have also reported that the course has helped them to be successful in college. The course has a website via Weebly and students are expected to create their own education portfolios where they complete their assignments and participate in discussions with their peers. While it would be ideal to host the course on a Learning Management System (LMS), the school is in the process of deciding on an LMS, therefore the switch has not been made just yet.

In teaching students with little to no technology skills in the academic realm, it was essential that my focus was to maintain a balance and to model the use of technology. My philosophy about technology use is similar to that of Anita Dighe (2003) when she stated “Technology does not necessarily drive education. That role belongs to the learning needs of students. With multimedia, the process of learning can become more goal oriented, more participatory, flexible in time and space, unaffected by distances and tailored to individual learning styles, and increase collaboration between teachers and students. Multimedia enables learning to become fun and friendly, without fear of inadequacies or failure.” While one of my objectives in teaching this course is to better prepare my students to be College and Career Ready by way of implementing more technology, the content and curriculum is still the central focus of the course.

In aligning with the College and Career Readiness goals, the learners are guided to discover, explore and practice. There is little direct instruction outside of the introduction or overview of the unit or lesson. For instance, learners are given resources like the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders or case studies, to explore findings and come to

understandings created by the learner. They are then invited to share their learnings with other learners to build upon their original thought and understanding. Students post discussions and respond to peers to better understand the material. The goal of the hybrid course and this unit design is to incorporate the four stages of Kolb's (1985) learning style inventory: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation.

Creating this unit required much intentionality as my focus was my audience. I do not want to overwhelm learners with the web-based learning environment and want to model and use the web-based learning environment to create a richer learning environment where the technology adds to their learning rather than hinders them. The goal is to prove that "Students in web-based learning environments have the potential to heighten their learning experiences because they can think before writing, reflect over longer time horizons, edit their responses, and polish their thoughts before subjecting them to the scrutiny of their peers and instructors" (Sims & Stork, 2007).

The course blueprint can be accessed by going to <http://bit.ly/2qjKLo3>. As the course and the students continue in the development of utilizing technology in their learning environment, the course will likely change over time to be more online than traditional. The unit is outlined to begin with more of a traditional environment at the beginning of the unit and have students grow into competent users of the web-based model by the end of the unit. The project based model of the course aligns well with this approach as students not only work to demonstrate their understanding of the content by working to hit the learning objectives, but they are also working to demonstrate their knowledge and proficiency of using technology to buttress their academic goals.

Lesson Screencast

The lesson was created on emaze, an online presentation software. It was then recorded using Camtasia, a recording software created by the geniuses at TechSmith. Wanting to ensure a fluid presentation and delivery, a script was created. Being extremely intentional about every aspect of my design, I like to use blueprints, organizers, and scripts to ensure I have met the standards and guidelines to my liking. The script used for this particular screencast can be found at <http://bit.ly/2pw1ITw> and the screencast lesson can be found at <http://bit.ly/2qqAPZa>.

The process of creating videos is exciting, but it can also be daunting and overwhelming. This particular assignment was incredibly challenging for me, because this is not just an assignment for me. This assignment pushed me to finally begin creating a site for my Psychology I and Psychology II course. I have been wanting to do this, but felt that neither myself or my students were quite ready to move towards using so much technology. As I reflect on the 2015-2016 school year and prepare for the 2016-2017 school year, I am trying to use the knowledge gained in my courses to create and implement designs that will ensure that my students receive curricular instruction while I am gone for my maternity leave.

The most challenging aspect of this lesson design process for me was that I was trying to do too much all at once. I got lost in all the intricate details and started to get overwhelmed. I walked away from the assignment and decided that I needed to finish the assignment, then make a schedule to follow for the remainder of my build, and reminded myself that I did not need to complete everything all at once. The challenges endured through this real world assignment reminded me that learners can also potentially get overwhelmed if the design is not simple. When determining my instructional strategy, I wanted to use instructional aids in an intentional

manner that would guide learners to have practical application that supports their learning. Wanting to use instructional learning aids as a tool to maintain engagement and guide learners to build usable schemas in the skill set as encouraged by Kollman and Hardré (2013, p. 9), I thought about inserting YouTube videos to help students see and comprehend the different types of anxiety covered in the lesson. In following the design principles and features of learning aids as outlined by Kollman and Hardré (2013, p. 9), I wanted to make sure that the layout was consistent and that the graphics used were used to enhance meaning and understanding. Kollman and Hardré (2013, p. 6) also advised that “A well-designed ILA should serve as a reference tool after the lesson has been completed” and the learning objective for the learner presented at the beginning explained that students would need to refer to this presentation as a model for their own presentations.

Another challenge I faced when creating videos is the need for it to be flawless. Even though Hughes (2009, p. 2) tells us to “dispel the notion that your video lectures must be perfect”, I have a very difficult time doing so. I often spend hours recording, re-recording, editing, and perfecting the recordings that it takes so much time and energy to produce one lecture. Hughes (2009) advised that we “pause between slides (or at other natural breaks) so there is a place to break in to without disrupting the flow of the video”. This tip along with watching Camtasia tutorials and getting more comfortable with editing videos saved me some time and my hope is that my video production time will go down as I improve my skills and become more and more comfortable with recording videos.

One thing I really like about recording lessons for learners, is that learners are developing the language use and context by hearing how language is used by the facilitator. Yacovelli (2012)

that facilitators must “approach the online learning’s language and tone from two different perspectives: target learners’ knowledge and target learners’ demographics.” By being able to hear the language and how the language is used, learners can get a sense of understanding behind the jargon and the technicalities of terms used. This is especially important when teaching about mental disorders and illness as learners should pick up the professional way of talking about such sensitive topics and to do so while not perpetuating the stigmas associated with the topic.

Another thing I have learned through my courses, is to not overteach lessons. Even though Yacovelli (2012) shares that “research suggests [online modules should be] between 15 and 30 minutes”, it seems that shorter is better. This has taught me to chunk my lessons better so that the lessons are much more manageable for the learner and that I keep my focus on not overteaching, but rather focus on the learning objectives and making the learning fit the objectives of the lesson.

I am excited to continue working on this site and the lessons to ensure that the learners are receiving the instructions necessary to be successful in the course. The principles provided in the readings in the course has definitely helped me to see things from an instructional designers perspective. I am learning that being an instructional designer requires one to be able to wear various hats and see from multiple perspectives whether that is from the angle of the learners, the teachers, the designers, the administrators, or even the parents.

Conclusion

Albert Einstein once stated, “If we knew what it was we were doing, it would not be called research, would it?” This is one of my favorite quotes that shares my perspective of

learning, trying, growing, failing, and succeeding. When I started my academic journey to pursue a Master of Education in Instructional Design and Technology, I had some knowledge of technology and some knowledge of instructional design, but never under the same umbrella. As a teacher, I create instructional media all the time, but I was never trained on how to create until this course on Design of Instructional Media. These courses for the Master of Education Program of Instructional Design and Technology have allowed me to learn through research and practice to ultimately be a better teacher.

The Design of Instructional Media Course was extremely beneficial in the way it provided practical application that could be applied instantly. In addition to the practical application of knowledge, this course helped connect me to resources to continue my learning. This course allowed me to evaluate my prior knowledge and figure out the direction I needed to head while providing me resources with how to continue my growth after the course ends. The course also allowed me to learn what was important to me as an instructor. Since I was never trained to create material, I never really took the time to assess why I did what I did when I created lessons. The modules in this course really helped me understand my design sense and what was important to me, which proved to be valuable for me determine my skill set and where I needed to grow in my journey.

I have already noticed how much more intentional I have become in creating material for my courses. The checklists seem to be ingrained in me and I am noticing how I started to naturally think about the checklist when editing the materials I have created. I still have much to learn and much to grow and I am excited to use the e-learning community to continue my journey. I have printed off Sherry Kollman's checklist and have kept one in my design folder so that I am continually mindful of these points. I like Kollman's checklist because it is simple and to the point. It offers a clear explanation of the features, principles, along with a guide to follow. This checklist is something I can easily share with my colleagues and team to ensure consistency of design mindset. In addition to Kollman's checklist, I also have found Richard Mayer's Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning to be extremely valuable.

Mayer's theory is important for instructional designers and educators alike as it offers an understanding of how learners have two separate channels for processing information, yet both are equally important. Mayer's theory also reminds us that learning is an active process where learners filter, select, organize, and integrate information. As I look at some of the lessons I have created, I realize now that I oftentimes forget that humans can only process a finite amount of information as explained by Mayer. When using these materials in a traditional face-to-face course, I can stop it and continue it on another day; however, when thinking of how the lesson

might be integrated to an online course or a hybrid course, I can see how the materials can seem daunting as it offers so much information. When creating materials for an online or hybrid course, I need to break it down and chunk my lessons into smaller, more accessible segments for the learners.

I still have much to learn and I intend to continue to tap into the e-learning communities to grow as a learner and to put these learnings into practice. I am also excited to continue learning from the courses left in my program. The research continues for me, as I am still learning and figuring out what I am doing. Einstein kept researching until the day he died. I see the same future for myself.

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