Perfect Ten
The Top Ten Guiding Principles of Instructional Technology and Distance Education
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May 25, 2004

1. Instructional Technology is a modern, robust, and systematic field with its own autonomous areas of research, theory, and practice.

Throughout its development, Instructional Technology has progressed from recognition as an audiovisual communication or “tool technology,” to acknowledgement as a distinct field with its own established “research, theory and practice” incorporating both art and science (Seels & Richey, 1994, p. xv).

As defined by Seels & Richey (1994) and recognized as the official definition for the AECT, IT consists of five domains: design, development, utilization, management, and evaluation. These domains give IT its distinctiveness and substantiate its value and complexity. Each domain has its own individual components for further definition and guidance. All the domains of IT are synergistic and complement each other adding strength, advancement, and progress to the field.

Although IT is a field in itself, it cannot work alone nor will it remain as is. In order to endure, IT and pedagogy adapt and collaborate together to achieve effective instruction and learning. The research and theory related to Instructional Technology evolves and conforms based on technology and its progress.

2. Dynamic instruction depends on effective instructional design.

Effective instructional design demands full consideration and thoroughness with regards to each domain in the field. Considering each domain along with its sub-categories enhances efficient and successful learning. Because Instructional Technology is a systematic form of instruction, it weighs design strategies and characteristics, estimates the implementation, utilization, and management of the technology, and evaluates formative and summative results. This requires additional instructional preparation time given that IT is replicable, reliable, more permanent, and more organized.

Although technology will never replace teachers, it does complement and aid in more effective learning. Technology that supplements instruction provides the learner with a more concrete, sensory, and experiential learning association and promotes memorable and stimulating learning experiences.

The ASSURE Model is a valuable tool that provides systematic planning stages to aid the instructor when developing instructional media and technology. Following this model ensures quality instruction when using media and technology.
3. The use of visuals promotes long term memory storage.

Dale’s Cone of Experience demonstrates the pattern of learning based on the concrete-abstract continuum. More concrete learning instruction produces more effective and enduring learning recollection. However, because direct experiential learning is less feasible and more time consuming, the use of visuals as representations of experience replaces direct these learning experiences with more efficient means of achieving successful and memorable learning.

Using visuals follows design principles to encode the desired message, and achieve the proper decoding and interpretation of the visuals. The designer must consider text, visual composition, colors, contrast, and directionals to guide and instruct the learner; and use the utmost of creativity, imagination, and quality when preparing instruction with technology. All these factors, if carefully considered and crafted will contribute to a creative, suitable, and successful instructional design.

4. The constructivist approach stimulates active learning.

Constructivism stimulates active learning. Active learners use their mental faculties to interpret learning experiences and actively assemble knowledge based on their own perceptions. In this way, learners construct and adapt learning in a more distinctive, idiosyncratic, and meaningful context.

Constructivist learning requires more student participation and responsibility. The instructor is responsible for provoking this participation in learning by motivating the student to learn through discovering a relationship between the learning and the student’s own experiences in life. Through the learner’s active participation, constructivism fosters the transformation of instruction into exclusive and applicable personal knowledge.

5. The grocery truck does not determine the quality of the groceries.

Assuming that the grocery truck is in optimal working order, and that the driver is diligent and uses his senses keenly, the grocery truck simply transports the groceries from one place to another. This same principle applies to technology. As Clark (2001) has emphasized emphatically for the past two decades, “media are mere vehicles that deliver instruction but do not influence student achievement” (p. 2).

Although this simple statement has promoted endless controversy, the fact remains that the medium is not the message, the message is the message.

As we are winding down the academic semester, we have had to produce mediated lessons that educate our students in specific skills. The media we chose to complement our instruction consisted of different forms of audio and visual aids housed in diverse software applications. The media utilized was contingent upon software accessibility, and the hardware capabilities of our computers. Yet, the software and hardware we worked with did not determine the learning influence that our lesson produced.
In other words, most of us made do with, and made the most of, what we had available to us. What we produced – our final product – was complemented with the software and hardware we chose, yet the final product’s success relied solely on our model of design, its diversity, aesthetic composition, creative imagination, structural congruence and the overall richness of the lesson.

6. Instructional Technology and Design require responsible knowledge and implementation.

In order to design effective instruction, various matters must be considered. Priorities when planning and creating instructional resources must be established, and time limitations have to be considered. In addition, apt knowledge and skill with media hardware and software are vital. Comprehension of the subject matter is essential, and teamwork with all collaborators involved in the task will add to the success of the instruction.

When creating instructional resources, respect must be given for the intellectual property of others. The TEACH Act and the Copyright Law establish the parameters that educators must follow in order to display the intellectual property of others. All persons involved in the instructional design of a resource must follow copyright law criteria and respect the rights that protect individuals intellectually.

7. The quality of education is usually the same for both Face-to-Face and Distance Education.

Although the majority of students prefer direct F2F contact with the instructor and peers, there is no significant difference between the two in regards to the quality of education. In my case, total DE instruction seems targeted towards a more distinct audience such as us “older” folks, whereas the traditional F2F continues to prevail, at least for the time being, amongst our youth.

Even though the audiences are generally different between F2F and DE, added responsibility and self-direction are required with DE students. Unless they are intrinsically motivated to learn, students will not be as compelled to increasing stimulation on their own, and achieving practicable and fruitful learning. Failure to learn at a distance can be attributed to a student’s lack of motivation, improper time management, inconsistency, or general disinterest in the subject area. However, it can also be attributed to the educator and his/her failure to motivate, direct, and stimulate the student at a distance.

8. Effective Distance Education requires an effective distance educator.

Distance educators must be experts in a variety of media in order to educate their students. Proficiency in the computer, audio and video technology, telecommunications, the Internet, synchronous and asynchronous communications, and effectively compensating for the absence of instructor immediacy, are important factors that must be incorporated and integrated in achieving successful Distance Education. Since DE is more formalized and systematic, lessons must be planned, organized, standardized, mechanized, and complemented with technological tools, and the instructor must seriously acknowledge and utilize these factors when creating, educating, and communicating in a distance setting.
Not all educators can teach at a distance, and not all of them desire to do so. Some may not have the capability to teach at a distance in spite of their success at traditional F2F instruction. Although most distance educators are capable of teaching traditionally, many traditional teachers are not capable of teaching at a distance.

9. Instructional Design must be flexible and adaptable.

Because ID is replicable, reliable, more permanent, and more organized, it is also more flexible and adaptable. Because Instructional Design requires stringent design, development, utilization, management, and evaluation, the end product is more tangible and malleable. The designer has the capability of altering and adjusting the material based on the results it anticipates and produces.

This allows for a more stable and reliable instruction when complemented with media and technology. It also allows for more uniform and predictable learning results.

10. Students are the best indicators of success in instruction.

No matter the medium, methods of instruction design, theories of learning, or technological tools, the best indicator of success is and always will be the students. The core of instruction lies in the objective of influencing positive learning experiences in our students, and motivating and stimulating their eagerness to learn more.

The success of instruction with media and technology relies on the collaboration of all components related to instruction. This is achieved through responsible, organized, and diligent instructors who collaborate in union with their team to adjust instructional methods and develop, design, utilize, manage, and evaluate instructional media and technology consistently.
References
