**REFLECTIONS**

**Module 1 Design with Learning in Mind**

In module 1 one of our discussion topics were: As you explain online learning to friends and family, what two “pros” or advantages do you always mention and why?  What disadvantages or challenges are also part of your conversation? There are common misconceptions and perceived constraints when talking about online learning, such as it being not as personal or engaging, or being too easy. I can say neither holds truth from my overall online experiences, most have been very engaging, and the instructors create a design with forums to allow professional and personal exchange of information, thoughts, and ideas. Online courses are just as demanding, if not more so than your traditional face-to-face. Self-regulation is an important part of doing well with online learning.

As the title of this module implies, designing is best when it is created from the learner’s perspective. The concept of instructional design is very unclear to many people. There are many technical and theoretical considerations to keep in mind; what it is *not* is just taking a course and adding a few bells and whistles to make it more engaging.

The readings assigned in this module provided great insight on how design is defined and how it is viewed from K-12 through higher education, with reference to micro and/or macro levels and for corporations whose thought process is based on seat time.

**Module 2 Mapping the Futures**

In module 2 I learned about writing “SMART” (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Timed) instructional objectives that follows the ABCD format (A. who should perform the task B. what the learner should do C. under what conditions, and D. how well it should be done) presented on YouTube.

Instructional objectives are important because they support the goals. This is vital part of the class because it serves the purpose of clarifying muddy areas. Learners’ expectations are important to know, just as the instructor’s expectations are; this provides discussion opportunities to look at perceptions and discuss any misconceptions and possible constraints.

“Mapping the Future” reinforces the importance of establishing short term and long term goals for the learner and facilitator, and then making changes according to the needs of the students in the class.

**Module 3 Designing for Assessment**

In module 3 one of the activities was to create an audio recording through the tool vocaroo designed for audio and video recordings. This was a very simple tool to learn how to use and it was a fun activity. The readings assigned to this module presented interesting information regarding assessments and feedback. I learned that general comments such as, “Great Job!” is not feedback, it does not state what was or was not accomplished given a specific set of measures. This is an important concept to understand in addition to the clarification presented about the makings of a good assessment. “Our aim must therefore be to provide better assessments and feedback by design…”

Developing a better understanding of the do’s and don’ts with assessments and feedback is crucial in the evaluation process. Feedback should be constructed in a way that provides an opportunity for the student to think about what s(he) did correctly, incorrectly, the rationale and even suggestions of how they could improve their work.

**Module 4 Active and Engaged Learning**

In module 4 one of the instructional activities asked to determine what type of activities was included in our curriculum design: absorb, do or connect type activities. This was an interesting to learn and apply because it promotes a variety of activities, which is always a good approach to teaching different types of learners.

The type or level of engagement varies with age. I teach adult learners, it is very important that adult learners see immediate relevancy of content to “real world” situations and how it can be applied in the profession they are pursing.

What I have learned in my teaching journey is that engaged learning must take place between teacher and student outside the classroom, as much as it does inside. You cannot “genuinely” connect to the students, nor can you connect the content with “real world” experiences, if you are not willing to share your world and allow them to share their world. I soon discovered that once I took the time to make what’s going on in my learner’s life a priority, they began to make what’s going on in the classroom a priority. One of my teaching responsibilities was at the end of every day, I would have to go over my attendance in all of my classes and call each student who was absent to check on them. That’s right, it was the teacher’s responsibility, not the registrars. I must admit, when this task was added to our things to do list in our *ha ha* spare time, I was strongly against it at first. Mainly because it was opposite to the expectations I set forth in class, which was for the students to contact me via email or voicemail in the event they are absent (explaining their reason for absence and letting me know when they plan to return to class). I felt like my tactics reinforced students taking responsibility, and better prepared them for what would be expected of them as working professionals in the “real world”. After a while I began to see how this task did help instructors become more aware of what’s going on with their students and it showed the students that we, as their instructors, cared that they missed class. I still had ambivalent feelings about calling students who were absent every day, but I remained positive and allowed this to be another opportunity for the type of active and engaged learning that takes place outside of the classroom.

**Module 5 Aligning Instructional Strategies**

In module 5 the focus was on creating learning guides and syllabi (traditional and graphic). Both documents are structured for understanding what will be covered and as a guide to keep you on task. Aligning instructional strategies is an important part of the teaching and learning process as well. In order to be successful and effective as an online instructor it requires the use a variety of strategies and activities that works together. Learning tools should be utilized to stimulate the learners and help them understand the information. The techniques used should promote individual critical and creative thinking if we are to consider them effective.

It was very valuable to have the opportunity to review the syllabus I use for my class to see whether or not there is alignment with instructional strategy. I think it is also a good time to make sure all students have access to and understand I think the key is this, recognize limitations early and strongly encourage students to bring this to your attention early on so that adjustments to the curriculum and activities can be made in advance. However because many students will not readily ask for help the best course of action would be is factor this in the curriculum while being developed and always present alternative assignments or ways of making adjustments to existing assignments and activities.

**Module 6 Designing Content**

In module 6 one of the most important methods of organizing content that discussed was chunking. When information is given in bite size pieces it’s simply easier to digest; and what’s being learned is better retained through this process. What I have learned from this section will help me better organize and develop curricula, instructional objectives, activities and competencies. Less is more, this saying can whole true with designing content as well by allocating less time on lecturing and more time with hands on task and activities that relate to the course material and promotes best teaching and learning practices.

When designing content is developed with details and flexibility it will take considerable time, however time well spent that will require little work when updates or individualization is needed.

**Module 7 Designing for Best Practices/ Module 8 Final Touches**

In module 7 Universal Design for Learners was a most interesting and very important topic to bring this course to an end. I learned how curriculum development must give all individuals equal opportunity to learn. There must be accessibility to information for all individuals. I think this is the most important lesson to learn; the best designs and best practices accommodate all learners.