Instructional Design Trends

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In a rapidly changing world it is not unexpected that the way in which education is delivered would also be rapidly changing. This paper examines some of the current trends in education and the effect of these trends on instructional design.

Trends

The foremost trend in education currently is the expansion of distance learning through online education platforms. Online learning, traditionally only available for adult learners, is now making inroads into the K-12 environment. Many school districts are offering online learning options to parents and students. One reason for the expansion of online learning is the fact that employers are releasing their long held bias as to the value of online degrees. “Online educational degrees have up until now been largely regarded as not as valuable on the job market as traditional degrees. As the number online students reaches critical mass, this perception will change” (Summers, 2012).

Due to improvements in the delivery of online education a trend towards hybrid courses is emerging. Hybrid courses offer students “blended classes that feature some online education and some face to face teacher interaction” (Summers, 2012). These types of courses give students more options when it comes do designing their educational process.

The technology of the day has always played a role in education, equipping instructional designers, administrators, and instructors with tool used for the delivery of information and knowledge. From blackboards, to overhead projectors, to computers, those involved in education have faced the challenge of how to enhance and enrich the educational process by utilizing the tools provided by advancing technology. “Preparing the technology proficient learners to meet
the needs of 21st century has emerged as a critical challenge facing education in our country” (Amutha, & Ramganesh 2011). Never before have there been so many options delivered by technology. Due to this a growing trend is the need for multi-media instructional design. “Multimedia based instructional design is a process that applies technology-based learning of all kinds that is accessible to students at college level and helps them learn independently through constructivism” (Amutha, & Ramganesh 2011). This concept moves instruction out of the confines of the four walls of the brick and mortar classrooms, into the global classroom created by the cyber savvy.

Predictions

The three trends mentioned above will continue to advance as education moves further into the 21st century. One can easily predict that the academic and professional learning landscape will change over the next 10 years and will begin to incorporate more and more technology in learning activities. One example would be the increased use of podcasting and interactive teleconference to deliver instruction. This will become prevalent in the delivery of distance learning and hybrid courses.

The use of computer based assessments to evaluate subject mastery will be become prevalent. This will allow instructor and learners to receive real time feedback as to competency. The incorporation of scenario based simulations will become common. These simulations allow the individuals to explore concepts and conduct experiments within the scenario in order to affect various outcomes. The results of these activities can be reported back to the instructor or trainer and the learner in real time. This facilitates a deeper understanding and more in-depth practical knowledge.

Influences
One of the greatest influences on course content is the industries in which students will be working. As the demands of the workforce changes the educational and training needs also change. These changes will influence course and curriculum content dramatically. Another influence on course content is the needs of the learner. As learners become more technologically savvy course content will have to adapt to these needs and incorporate training on various technology based tools.

Contributors to Development and Design of Adult Learning

There are many contributors and stakeholders in the development and design of future adult learning. As mentioned above the changing needs of the workforce exerts a tremendous amount of force on the content of curriculum. Because of this large companies such as Microsoft, Hewlett Packard, and IBM are partnering with universities to provide input into curriculum design. More and more companies are looking for innovative and cost effective ways to train their existing workforce and to assimilate new young talent into the organizations. Because of this the landscape of adult learning is changing. In an increasing global market must obtain and maintain knowledge that gives them a competitive edge. Because of this their contribution to the future of adult learning cannot be ignored.

Other contributors to the development and design of adult learning are the teachers, instructors, facilitators, trainers, and administrators on the front line of providing education to adults. Their observations and evaluation of content being delivered and the needs of the students cannot be underestimated. As adult learners become increasingly self-directed and as their needs change the design of adult learning programs must change in order to provide continuing value to the individual.
Affect on Instructional Design

The above mentioned influences will affect curriculum and course design dramatically. Designers and institutions will be challenged to develop curriculum that can be delivered “any-time, any-where” (Wilson, 2001). “Adult learners are typically seeking specific skills as opposed to general educational outcomes. The result is, many adult learners are starting to look first to the Web and to locally available resources before committing to formal programs of study” (Wilson, 2001). This trend will affect the way in which designer approach courses, curriculum, and training program design.

Another effect on instructional design is the way in which the process of instructional design is conducted. The increasing demand for the incorporation of technology in instruction requires that instructional designers be educated in design models that integrate technology.

Conclusion

More and more the field of adult education if trending towards distance learning and the utilization of technology to facilitate, enhance and enrich the learning experience. These trends present specific challenges for educators and instructional designers. As the adult learner becomes more self-directed these trends will continue. The adult learner is focused on gaining practical knowledge in an effort to increase their value in the workplace and meet the needs of an increasingly global marketplace. Curriculum and course designers will need to develop design models that integrates technology in a useful and relevant way.
Reference

