

# ***PULLING TIGERS' TEETH WITHOUT GETTING BITTEN***

## ***Instructional Designers and Faculty***

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This directed qualitative research project concentrated on an instructional designer's expert qualities and their inter-relatedness to interpersonal dynamics with faculty in terms of the role the instructional designer plays. The designer's personal practical theories (PPTs) and their relationships to his or her effectiveness as an instructional designer are discussed. Researchers hope to present a vivid portrait of an instructional designer and to provide insights into the profession as reflected in a southeastern university setting. Implications and significance of the case study are also addressed.

### ***INTRODUCTION***

"Pulling tigers' teeth without getting bitten"  
—Chinese proverb, annotation of the accomplishment of a task that includes great danger or risk (Anonymous, n.d.).

In cybereducation—a term used by Vandervert, Shavinina, and Cornell (2001)—the role of instructional designer has arisen as a result of the increasing presence of Web-based instruction. An instructional designer's role is unique, neither clearly leading nor supporting, as revealed in the comments of one faculty member:

He makes appointments to suit my schedule (rather than his), often within a very short and pressing timeframe. He takes the time to find out what I really need (rather than coming from presuppositions), then gives me concrete, easy-to-follow instructions.

Making an appointment based on the other individual's schedule is a course of action expected of a subordinate, whereas giving instructions is deemed the prerogative of a leader. Yet both actions were revealed in the above comments, indicating a need for more nuanced definition of the role of an instructional designer, who is often a leader and subordinate at the same time. Thus, this research

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project was undertaken as an ethnographic case study in the hope to better understand the complexities involved in the work and experience of instructional designers.

## BACKGROUND

The University of Central Florida (UCF) has been implementing an online initiative since 1996 (and using WebCT since 1997). Course Development & Web Services (CDWS) was established to create a staff of instructional designers to work with UCF faculty members, considered subject matter experts, in the development of pedagogically-sound design, implementation, and evaluation of asynchronous learning courseware on both one-on-one and team bases. The instructional design team is one of the eight units of CDWS supervised by the executive team. The instructional design team is known for supporting UCF faculty teaching and student learning by means of consulting and facilitating training of the clients (UCF faculty members and/or graduate teaching assistants) as well as coordinating with the other seven teams of CDWS (University of Central Florida, n.d.). As a new career opportunity, the role of an instructional designer is unique and evolving. In particular, whether the instructional designer's role is leading or supporting is less clear. Understanding the nuances of the roles that instructional designers play is a major issue that the authors investigate and discuss in this report.

According to previous research (Pan, Thompson, & Deets, 2003), a typical day for an instructional designer usually started as follows:

It was close to 8 o'clock in the morning. He [the instructional designer] was working at this desk, as usual, with the computer on. He was taking notes down on the notepad, while he was reading emails from the screen. I realized that he was writing a to-do list to remind himself what is happening during the day. This was interrupted by an alert sound from the Instant Messenger. It was his client, asking for just-in-time infor-

mation to WebCT use. He quickly responded to the real time message before returning to his previous activity. It lasted an hour to finish note-taking. He then went on to a conference room for a task force meeting, discussing a cross-team project with the web analysts team and the techrangers team.

An hour later, he came back to the team office with a web analyst talking to him. Suddenly the phone rang, and he asked for a pause to conversation to answer the call. Quickly writing down the message, he turned to finish the talk with the web analyst. He then proceeded to a consultation with a new WebCT faculty user at 11 in the department of English.

Nearly 1 o'clock, he appeared in front of his computer again, with his hands busy moving between the keyboard and his peanut butter sandwich. While doing so, he was being in part of a conversation with his colleagues about teaching and learning models in WebCT. All of a sudden, there was a hard laugh in the conversation. I noticed that someone just cracked a joke about a birds' dropping on the shoulder the other day. The office was quiet after most of his colleagues were gone for lunch. He continued documenting the user file of the faculty he had a consultation with from the morning. At the moment, the phone rang again. He stopped to answer the call with a greeting. There was laughter during the phone talk. Then, he sorted the notes and tossed the old ones. He stood up and walked through the door to the digital media team for a course banner and bullets, customized as requested.

Twenty minutes later, he returned. A different alert sound was heard. He rushed out for another consultation in the college of education right after checking his Palm Pilot.

The role of instructional designers at the CDWS is conceptualized as a teacher, based on the nature of the instructional designer's job—conducting workshops, teaching groups for various purposes, and holding customized consultations. Frequently, these consultations are to facilitate faculty members' and Teaching Assistants' (TA's) literacy of educational technology to help them meet their instructional needs. . Sanchez (1993) also argued that "the teacher appeared as decision-maker,

'rational executive,' and as physician who diagnoses learning needs and prescribes "instructional treatments" (p. 23). The authors wondered what and how the instructional designer's previous experiences might affect his beliefs about his job, his instructional decision-making, and his effectiveness.

An instructional designer's job performance is strongly related to his or her experiences with real world situations and projects (Julian, 2001; Summers, Lohr & O'Neil, 2002). Professional instructional designers depend on prior experiences to perform their complex work on a daily basis (Julian, 2001). The relationship of an individual's previous life experiences and activities to his or her beliefs about instruction as a result of designing, implementing, and evaluating the curriculum can be emphasized in the notion of personal practical theories (PPTs) (Cornett, Yeotis & Terwilliger, 1990). Cornett (1990) stated that each teacher possesses PPTs, which are statements of what he or she believes with respect to decision-making in curriculum and instruction. Cornett stressed that these PPTs are derived from all life experiences, non-teaching as well as teaching activities. Grimmett and Erickson (1988) argued that PPTs are not merely practical beliefs of teaching but a type of ideology that drives the individual to more consistently reflect on his or her perceptions, beliefs, and practice. Through reflective practice, theories are tested repeatedly; judgments and beliefs are built. Reflection is essential in order to better understand educational experiences and to develop better curriculum and instructional skills, knowledge, and attitude. Reflection is also a recurring theme in teachers' sense-making, concept development, and decision-making (Ertmer & Quinn, 1999; Rowland, 1992).

These reflective activities are in concert with what Condit (1996) coined "critical common sense." Condit stated, "This common sense is a reflective one, one that takes into account not only the lessons of daily experience, but also reflection on how those experiences fit into larger social structures, [thus]

one can refer to "critical common sense" (p.169). Critical common sense about teaching is reinforced and accentuated by continuous interaction amongst professionals working within unique organizations with unique situational factors affecting the interaction.

Situational factors, such as an organization's culture, structures, and values (Frost & Teodorescu, 2001), exert a significant influence on professional competence and practice (Kaufman, 1990). Environmental attributes or external forces affect any worker's motivation, professional competence, and job performance if a supporting institutional culture is not created and nurtured in response to inevitable change (Votruba, 1990).

Choosing to focus on the motivation dimension of external vagaries of organizational life, especially as articulated in Herzberg's (1966) work motivation theory (the motivator-hygiene theory), two concepts are crucial: *basic needs*, such as salary, peer relationship, supervision, and company policy, and *growth needs*, like achievement, recognition, advancement, responsibility, and work itself. In Herzberg's language, basic needs are hygiene factors, and the lack of those factors is associated with job dissatisfaction, whereas the presence of growth needs, which are also named motivators, would attribute to the feelings of growth and development at work.

Although debate about the generalizability and oversimplification of Herzberg's theory persists (Cooper & Locke, 2000; Farr, 1977; Graen, 1966; House & Wigdor, 1967), basic needs and growth needs are useful constructs for this study. For example, two growth needs, work itself and organizational processes, are also two vital sources of motivation (Farr & Middlebrooks, 1990). As Pinder (1998) suggested, "One need only believe that building jobs to provide responsibility, achievement, recognition for achievement, and advancement will make them satisfying and motivating" (p. 38). Further study for more empirical support is also recommended by Brief (1998). Thus, how the instructional designer's basic needs and growth needs interrelate with his PPTs

and, further, how they affect his performance at work are major factors in understanding the nuanced role(s) of the instructional designer.

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

Following the five elements of case study design by Yin (1994), the authors proposed three research questions:

1. What is the nature of the role(s) played by the instructional designer?
2. What is the relationship of the instructional designer's role to interpersonal dynamics with faculty?
3. How do the instructional designer's basic and growth needs interrelate with his PPTs?

## **METHODOLOGY**

In addition to Yin's (1994) case study design, Tellis (1997) recommended three major components of qualitative method that need to be employed: describing, understanding, and explaining. The instructional designer was selected based on familiarity, which smoothed the student researcher's transition from simply a colleague to a participant observer. Asking a familiar colleague to serve as research participant expedited entrée, which was a consideration given the short duration of a typical academic semester. The collegiality between the student researcher and the instructional designer smoothed the process of data collection.

Other than interviews with the instructional designer and observation of him alone and in interaction with others, a seven-item online questionnaire was designed to target 70 colleagues and clients, who had or have been working with the instructional designer in the past two years. Although the response rate was not strong (approximately 26%), 18 valid respondents (13 faculty or staff, four coworkers, and one unidentified) shared their perceptions of the instructional designer's role.

Videotaped interviews with the instructional designer and five other instructional designers (including one of the supervisors from the executive team) were conducted. The videotape was transcribed. The student researcher was scheduled to spend three hours each week in the field (i.e., the instructional designer's office) observing the instructional designer during the first eight weeks of the spring semester in 2002. E-mail correspondence between the instructional designer and 25 of the instructional designer's clients were chosen, and the results reviewed and analyzed. Information on the unit's and the Human Resource office's Web sites was documented. Copies of official job descriptions, used from the last round of instructional designer recruiting, were provided by the instructional designer, photocopied and filed. The goal of such description is to assist the reader in knowing what the researcher saw by visualization and emotion (Eisner, 1998; Glesne, 1999).

Regardless of the evolving themes in this case study (Zucker, 2001), the iterative process of analysis could be considered a sort of triangulation as it was intended to enhance the worth of the project (Kaulio & Karlsson, 1998; Silverman, 2000; Yin, 1994). For pragmatic and instructional purposes, the faculty researchers confronted and questioned the student researcher to refine and distill the latter's understanding and thoughts about the case as well as to reconsider and review his judgment skills.

## **FINDINGS OF THE STUDY**

### **Roles**

The dynamic relationship between the instructional designer and the faculty is intimate but vague in terms of interpersonal dyads. The participant instructional designer works closely with clients, especially when IDL6543, an eight-week-long faculty development course for online teaching and learning begins. While he was facilitating a first-time

faculty member's use of WebCT software, an interesting dialog occurred:

**Instructional Designer:** You went to the GroupWise thing [a training session on the use of the university's E-mail program] in the morning?

**Faculty 1:** No.

**Instructional Designer:** OK. Before you leave, remind me. I have the handout from that session. This Friday we are gonna teach you how to set up what is called "rules" in GroupWise.

**Faculty 1:** Oh, OK.

Asking for a reminder like this was not a breach of professionalism for the instructional designer. The question indicated that they work closely with each other, so the instructional designer did not feel uncomfortable about asking for such information. When it comes to faculty members' preference for a varying degree of service from an instructional designer, the following conversation occurred:

**Faculty 2:** I think it's [giving individual consultation] helpful, myself. Do I have the ability to go in and make changes to the REACH pages (i.e., WebCT course pages)?

**Instructional Designer:** Yes. Yes.

**Faculty 2:** O.K. I didn't know that. That's why I stopped using it, because I thought I had to go through the [instructional] designer to set those up.

**Instructional Designer:** You can use us, or you can do it yourself . . .

For this first-time faculty user of WebCT, a close relationship between him and the instructional designer is evident in this face-to-face individual consultation. Saying "use" here emphasizes the casualness seen in the previous conversation above. In this case, the instructional designer reminded the faculty member that he could do the work alone or could use the services/assistance of the instructional

design staff. The instructional designer indicated that the faculty member's preference for one route or another did not matter to him, but that he was willing and glad to be helpful as needed. The consultation also clarified some misunderstanding of how the instructional designer functions.

A certain amount of trust is implied in the relationship between an instructional designer and a faculty member. In many ways, the relationship resembles that of a pitcher and a catcher. The catcher calls for certain pitches, which the pitcher strives to deliver—or, which the pitcher may reject. The silent communication from home plate to pitcher's mound and back again highlights an intimacy often unacknowledged in the two roles—roles that are more often seen as distinct and independent. Thus, based on the closeness of the instructional designer/faculty member relationship, the authors believe that the relationship established in the creating and maintenance of on-line courses was as partners and teammates.

The relationship between the two players—instructional designer and faculty member—was strong and interdependent. The instructional designer's primary job is to design, in WebCT and to set up courses on the Web. Most faculty interviewed perceive the instructional designer's job to be technical knowledge-based rather than pedagogically-oriented. Although the consultations observed by the student researcher were related to technical questions and issues, a Web-based course will not exist without knowledge, skills, and appropriate attitudes from the two parties. Both faculty member and instructional designer influence each other.

**Instructional Designer:** But if you ever have a question for me, I am gonna be working with you and developing a course. The best way to get me is email. Or if you want to call here, you may want to try and see if I am around. What I am gonna do for you is to get you a good course experience.

**Faculty 2:** There is something that I find, something really amazing, about developing courses through technology. Students walk in the classroom and interact in the discussion board. They become more active.

Indeed, for a novice on-line instructor, a good beginning experience can affect his or her attitude toward using the system and a good experience ultimately affects the actual use of the technology (Harris, 1999). Like fish and coral reefs that depend on each other for survival, the instructional designer and faculty members in a sense cohabit within a social system. Without the technical and pedagogical knowledge from the instructional designer, a course with good content (from faculty or subject matter experts) will not succeed on the Web.

As previously mentioned, the instructional designer in the study always made an appointment at a suitable time to conduct an effective consultation; meanwhile, he exerted an influence on faculty by giving constructive advice. He acted as a leader who offered suggestion and guidance, but he was also adaptive and willing to show his support to maintain a balanced relationship. A client recalled:

Bill is easy to talk to. He is prompt in responses to any questions I have had. He is knowledgeable about WebCT and keeps me abreast of changes. He is a pleasant person to work with. In no way does he condescend. He never brushes me off—even when I've done something stupid.

On the other hand, if the shared goal is not sustained (i.e., designing a sound Web-based course), faculty can maintain good quality of instruction by teaching in a conventional manner (i.e., face to face instruction) or they can teach “whatever and however they want” on the Web. Another conversation between the student researcher and the instructional designer is as follows:

**Student Researcher:** What do you think of this class? A class without a sound instructional design . . .

**Instructional Designer:** Right, and I am gonna tell you . . . I am gonna recommend to that instructor what he should be doing to really kind of hold the line to make it right, but he is not gonna listen to me . . . and that is fine. If what he is doing makes him successful, makes his learners successful, then he is doing something right. Maybe that is a little bit radical for a real instructional designer to talk like that. If it works for him, it works for students, then it works for me.

Bill's stance in this case was strongly in favor of neutrality on his part. For instructional designers, if the mission (i.e., supporting teaching and learning at the university, affiliated academic units, and partner organizations) is not carried out, their presence and existence will not be justified. One of the practices this instructional designer honed was developing and maintaining a smooth relationship with his clients. The need for smooth relationships also holds true in corporate settings. Liang (1999, p. 319) claimed that “[Instructional designers] present a low profile, a technique helpful in developing and maintaining personal relationships. They may sacrifice professional ego to accomplish managerial and people-oriented tasks.” Similarly, when the faculty member's experiences and competencies of teaching online courses increase, instructional designers will assume more of an assistance role rather than an advisory one.

Eventually, both instructional designers and faculty become more field independent, which is what Kelvin Thompson, Coordinator of Professional Programs of CDWS at UCF described as “three ways to see the relationships playing out, very simply, in terms of control, authority, and power hierarchy or clout.” He saw one with the instructional designer being subordinate to the faculty member, another with the faculty member being subordinate to the instructional designer, and the final one being one of balance. In an interview

he said, "The third way I perceive kind of playing out is one of the more independence. There is alonsideness, coming alongside, being supportive and helpful, you know, something of a partnership."

### *Personal Qualities*

Whether working in corporate journalism or for the university, the instructional designer is an individual who is enthusiastic about what he is doing and seeks fun in his work at all times. Fun is the source of his motivation for work. According to the people around him, the instructional designer appeared to have personal traits that made him stand out from his peers. After a workshop at another campus, a university staff person told the student researcher:

**Staff 1:** He is casual, he is very relaxed, and he is humorous . . . kind of takes the stiffness out of the way . . . he continued to go over his points and instructed that you have to do something and kind of gives you a recap what we have done.

The instructional designer was described by his colleagues as a professional (i.e., knowledgeable about what he does), who was personable, reliable, and humorous. A coworker said on the survey, "Again, I think his humor is what makes him great to work with. He always gets his job done but always in a light-hearted way. Bill is awesome." Another indicated, "His sense of humor puts people at ease which allows for easier communication." The other mentioned his great communication skills and that the instructional designer "works/plays well" with others.

These co-worker comments were congruent with how his clients felt about him. Their impression of the instructional designer was that he was a patient professional with an appropriate mindset. A faculty member wrote on the survey:

He's intelligent and has a sense of what faculty do. He is open to letting faculty deal

with technology themselves rather than forcing us to submit to the whims of Course Development [where the instructional designer works], who as a rule, seem to know nothing of what faculty actually do. He has a sense of what good pedagogy is and cares that we are able to be the kind of teachers we are, despite what WebCT would seem to enable or disable.

The quote also reveals that uniqueness and advantage of his personal traits and prior experiences as an adjunct faculty member are involved in his job performance. While cultivating positive, productive interpersonal relationships with faculty, instructional designers in a higher educational setting often serve as change agents. As previously quoted, a faculty member commented that the instructional designer has kept her "abreast of changes," and Thompson concurred on the "change" issue that ideally an instructional designer should carry two dispositions, high tolerance of change and willingness to be the agent of change,

When asked about the qualities of a competent instructional designer at the university level other than what was addressed above, other instructional designers mentioned: organization (e.g., time management), empathy, assertiveness, work ethics, good energy, creativity, proactivity, interpersonal sensitivity (Snodgrass, 2001), and the concept of group-as-a-whole (Ringer, 2002). Almost all of the qualities for instructional designers are showcased within the UCF Course Development & Web Services, and these qualities are the attributes of instructional technology professionals found in the AECT book, *Technology in Instruction: Standards for College and University Learning Resources Programs, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition* (Cornell, 1989).

### *Needs and PPTs*

The instructional designer provided the following list of his PPTs (Personal Practical Theories). The ten beliefs are listed in order of priority to the instructional designer:

1. Lifelong learning is essential. In order to prosper, mature, or gain knowledge throughout life, one must learn and continue to learn or risk becoming stagnant.
2. Anyone can learn if motivated. Learning is fun if motivated and one has a desire to gain knowledge.
3. Everyone learns in a different way. Each person learns in his or her own way and at his or her own pace.
4. Learning must take place for one to grow. To grow on the inside or on the outside one must learn.
5. Learning comes faster when doing while learning. If an exercise is handed to the learner, the learner will learn faster when doing as opposed to just listening.
6. Adult learners are motivated learners. Adult learners want to learn and to grow and to gain knowledge. To the adult learner, knowledge is strength. Adult learners understand the consequences of learning or not learning.
7. Learning in a group environment is stimulating. Playing off of others while learning is fun and stimulating and motivating for the learner.
8. Learning should be organized in order to be effective. By organizing curriculum, one is facilitating the learner and makes learning easier to understand and absorb.
9. Learning takes place at an individual pace. Each person learns at his or her own pace and in his or her own way.
10. Learning should be in bite-sized nuggets. Too much curriculum at one time is not fun and not stimulating for the learner. Curriculum should be organized in bite-sized chunks to be learned effectively.

While he was teaching as an adjunct instructor, these beliefs started to grow in his mind:

**Student Researcher:** While you were a journalist instructor . . .

**Instructional Designer:** Right. And I loved it, it was a fun course . . . students wanted

to be there . . . wanted to learn as much as I could give them. To learn about communications and education. So we had a great time. And I discovered during those 7 years, that you know . . . I think . . . I was meant to be a teacher. So I kind of went in and learned a little more about being a teacher.

From the dialog above, "Students wanted to be there . . . wanted to learn as much as I could give them." corresponds to his PPT6: Adult learners are motivated learners. The last sentence represents PPT1: Lifelong learning is essential. For this instructional designer, it is never too late to learn. In the interview, the instructional designer talked animatedly about learning how to do some household projects. The instructional designer is also pursuing an Ed.D. in Curriculum and Instruction at UCF, indicating his life-long learning. To him, "fun" is the drive, and excitement is his motivation. In a sense, learning about being a university teacher is not just advancement to him, but also a responsibility. Both advancement and responsibility are regarded as growth needs in Herzberg's (1966) language. However, the coexistence of both growth and basic needs is identified in the following conversation:

**Student Researcher:** OK. Tell me something more about the transition [from being in photojournalism to becoming an instructional designer].

**Instructional Designer:** Yeah, it [being an instructional designer and teaching] was the only motivation. It was most of it. It is funny. I wanted something new, something challenging, something on the cutting edge, something close to home . . .

The following conversation falls into his PPT2: Anyone can learn if motivated.

**Student Researcher:** Correct me if I am wrong . . . you were saying if the course is fun, students would get motivated. Right?

**Instructional Designer:** Right. I think so. I think if it is fun . . . they will enjoy it.



They are gonna learn more and they are gonna have a better time taking that class. Their grade may . . . you know . . . show through that.

The instructional designer set a goal that students come to his class and enjoy themselves in the class, which is in concert with another growth need, achievement.

**Student Researcher:** You mentioned that maybe this summer you might have more time to do your personal learning profile thing? Is it required to do this?

**Instructional Designer:** We just actually formalized this. We are in the process of writing those now. That is, what do we want to learn and what would the benefit of that be to the unit? I kind of came up with an idea . . . last year we did IDA7000, Instructional Designer Academy . . . I am sure we are going to move it to another level pretty soon. But we created IDA and a couple of us went on the road and presented this. It was incredibly successful. IDA is basically a WebCT course where we teach instructional designers what we do and how we do it. I want to do the same thing with a course for adjuncts. Because I was an adjunct, I know the frustrations and I know what adjuncts go through . . . to find a parking place at night . . . you know, little things like that . . . I want to build not just a course that will teach adjuncts of all these logistics over here but also I want to give adjuncts . . . there are a huge number of adjuncts who teach at UCF . . . I want to be able to give adjuncts an online tool or an "E" course to facilitate their learners' growth and make their teaching more effective.

Based on the dialogue above, his PPT9, "Learning takes place at an individual pace" was identified. An online training session occurs at an individual pace. At the same time, the work itself brought achievement and recognition to him and his abilities. He even used himself as an example when it comes to the

notion that everyone learns in a different way (i.e., PPT3 and PPT5).

**Student Researcher:** Do you believe that each of us learn differently?

**Instructional Designer:** I do. Because I am a visual learner. And I cannot tell you how frustrating it is for me to be given verbal information from an instructor and expect to learn it. So I need a picture. Maybe that is because [of] my 25 years in photojournalism. I need a chart or picture or a diagram or a table. I am having a real hard time right now with a class I am taking, trying to differentiate between the behaviorist and constructivist . . . you know . . . Piaget and Vygotsky and you know . . . because I don't have the pictures of all these . . . actually I know where the picture is. It is from a class I took last semester. It is in one of the textbooks. I just didn't go back and copy this to be able to visualize it. Therefore, when I teach, I teach toward the visual learners. I try to get the visual learners as many pictures as I can. And I am a firm believer of giving the learners something to do . . . if you involve them and create the interaction between the learners and materials or the content. I firmly believe that they will learn quicker and easier and comprehend more.

He strongly believed that for various learners, different teaching models are needed. Web-based instruction (WBI) is believed to bridge the gap between these two factors of various learners and different teaching models. Kahn (1997) defined WBI . . .

Web-based instruction (WBI) is a hyper-media-based instructional program which utilizes the attributes and resources of the World Wide Web to create a meaningful learning environment where learning is fostered and supported (p. 6).

The instructional designer's PPT5 is about learning by doing, which is illustrated in the following quote:

**Student Researcher:** Is that what you do to your clients when you are doing your IDL and other training sessions?

**Instructional Designer:** Right. You don't know how hard it is to do, because especially like I want to teach somebody how to dial in on Dreamweaver and change their office hours on their homepage. . . . I can do it like that (easy). Instead I want them to turn on the computer and open Dreamweaver to set up the dial in information, to dial in and connect to the site, and to make changes and save it and put it back up. . . . I want them to learn how to do it but it is frustrating because I know I can do it so much quicker. But if they do it a few times they are gonna learn how to do it. If I do that for them, it is all about teaching a man to fish. . . .

His bite-size-nugget learning (i.e., PPT10) is exactly what the research demonstrated is a productive approach to take. Chunking is a fundamental instructional tactic familiar to educators and serves to decrease the limited cognitive load of human beings (van Merriënboer, 1997).

### **Workload**

The authors expected that external forces like work itself and environmental change could at times prohibit the instructional designer from acting on his stated PPTs, and thereby interfere with his job satisfaction and possibly his performance at work. Although most of the PPTs the student researcher scrutinized were well-articulated with his personal growth and survival needs, one issue, workload (i.e., a large number of clients as well as additional workplace responsibilities), which is commonly seen as problematic in the organization, commanded attention (Mouly & Sankaran, 1999; Tattersall & Morgan, 1997). One of the faculty members who completed the survey pointed out an intriguing phenomenon, "He should have fewer faculty that he's responsible for or more assistants."

The instructional designer stated:

Since last December, after IDL and the Winter Workshop were finished, the faculty were knocking down our doors asking for our professional services and technology (WebCT) facilitation. Our workload has been increasing even since. We created over two hundred new courses in just over a month starting about December 15. The Pegasus Disc, faculty training, and faculty projects like Winter Workshop and Summer Institute and things like that kept us very, very busy. I can't spend as much time on each course as I would like to. I have ideas that can make these courses better in terms of sound pedagogy, but due to the time constraints. . . . I feel bad about what is going on, because now I am always looking for shortcuts. I do not really mean that in a negative way but. . . . I didn't do that before. I do wish to spend more time interacting with faculty "as they teach" [2f [abbreviation in the e-mail for face-to-face] and online. . . . observing, challenging. I wish I could research other courses, schools and programs for good ideas. I just don't have time to do it now. Hopefully the summer semester will allow us more time to think and write and work on some creative projects.

Not only the faculty members, but the instructional designer himself realized that workload may have exceeded his capacities. Thompson acknowledged this challenge in the interview:

Obviously, we cannot keep the same number of people and continue to increase the workload. You cannot continue to pile on. We have a policy here that the faculty are free to be anywhere they choose to be on a full service to self service continuum with us. . . . Most faculty are somewhere between those. . . . those two extremes. That is all good. That is all fun. But that means if you worked with me once three years ago, you are technically in my workload.

It sounds straightforward that the instructional designer was drowning in his work. The student researcher wondered how long this situation could last before problems occur. If the instructional designer failed to accomplish things that he used to do, did this change impact his work effectiveness and job perfor-

mance in the faculty's eyes? According to the survey results, 16 of 18 valid respondents indicated that the instructional designer was weighted 5 (5 as the highest and 1 as the lowest), in terms of his job performance. One gave him a 4.9, and the others a 4. On average, the instructional designer's work effectiveness seemed not to be a problem to the clients. In any event, the student researcher suspects that the silent non-respondents (approximately 54) may have a different viewpoint regarding the instructional designer's effectiveness at work, but due to the timeline of this study, the next phase of this study will have to address this issue in more depth.

## CONCLUSION

The relationship between the instructional designer and his clients (i.e., faculty) is multifaceted. While the interpersonal connection was reciprocal to some extent, the instructional designer, in most of the work performed, was supporting faculty in teaching and learning, both from faculty's viewpoints and what the student researcher observed from the university's description of expectations, regardless of the leading role in the process of curriculum and professional development. That unique role is enhanced by the instructional designer's personal attributes, which, in turn, correlate his basic and growth needs. Those needs then are interrelated with the instructional designer's personal practical theories. Moving along this continuum, his role, personal attributes, survival and growth needs, and personal practical theories are strengthened by moderate workload.

The instructional designer's role is not dichotomous. The robust interpersonal dyad relationship is reinforced by the complex role (both leading and supporting) the instructional designer played. It is a harmonious relationship in most of the cases, just like the one between the pitcher and the catcher. It is also the ultimate form of partnership and collegial-

ity so much as an ecological symbiosis between the fish and the coral reefs.

Both the instructional designer's distinctive personal traits, such as humor, humanity, patience, and empathy, and his professionalism led him to be a success at work, particularly as a change agent. Reflected by his job performance, these good qualities are also consistent with the four competencies of instructional designers at CDWS: faculty interface, curriculum development, instructional materials design and development, and curriculum delivery. The qualities the instructional designer possesses are endorsed by Thompson, the coordinator:

We have these two things working together. It is easier to characterize one curriculum development as an introverted trait and the standup training stuff as an extroverted trait . . . We expect people [new instructional designer applicants] to do both. We often vote people out for that [not having both traits].

Furthermore, the instructional designer's previous working experiences and reflective thinking contribute implicitly to the formation of his personal practical theories as well as to his job performance. As discussed, his PPTs were interwoven with personal (survival and growth) needs: being close to home, advancement, responsibility, and love for work. All of these traits illustrated the instructional designer's life at work.

As the instructional designer was swamped by the increasing workload, less time was given for more experiments with new methods of teaching and learning at his work. Though it had not caused any problem to that point, it, in the long run, may inhibit the instructional designer's ability to perform his job. His endeavors to interact more with faculty in teaching effectiveness may eventually fail.

Thus far, sources of data revealed that the instructional designer essentially plays a sensitive but tricky role, as pulling tigers' teeth without getting bitten. This finding may or may not introduce a vertical dyad relationship, which is a superordinate-subordinate relation-

ship. A mutually-important, peer relationship was witnessed in this case. That this instructional designer was able to interact well with a large number of differing personalities does not necessarily mean that an unbalanced linkage (perhaps fueled by perceptions of differential professional status as determined by degrees held, etc.), suspected by the researchers, would not take place. According to Bode (1999), the issue of collegiality and mentoring to the new faculty is a concern of community building in the university setting.

As the university continues to grow, more new faculty will be hired, some of whom will want to use online options for instruction, and the matter of the interpersonal skills of the instructional designer to relate with and assist those newcomers remains significant. Exploration of possibly unbalanced relationships would further the research in the next steps. Any possibility of an ethnographic case study of the instructional designer team by conducting a 360-degree performance appraisal (i.e., collecting information from all directions and sources with respect to the instructional designer team's performance) can shed additional light on job performance of instructional designers in an educational setting. Application of the Western mindset in differing cultures with respect to instructional designers' dynamics with faculty is worth probing (Pan, Tsai, Tao & Cornell, 2002). Over the years, whereas the instructional designer team at UCF has gone through group socialization, it has also moved to a certain level of bureaucracy, which might hamper the instructional designer's individual job performance and, ultimately, degrade team effectiveness (e.g., creativity and tolerance to change) (Brown, 2000; Levi, 2001). This balance between the prevailing bureaucracy and the implementation of innovative uses of instructional design is also an issue of interest to Thompson:

But I think as we have grown more established in instructional designer [as a] team as we have more process and procedures, documents, and the trapping of bureaucracy . . . I am curious myself to what

degree that tolerance to change is still there with individual or the team as a whole. I think within an individual primarily it is there, but with a team as a whole I wonder if it is there.

This case study documents the robust relationship of the instructional designer and faculty by examining the instructional designer's personal traits, needs, and philosophical beliefs of teaching. The authors hope this paper can help other instructional designers with in-depth insights in better serving their clients in a time-efficient fashion, especially in the context of higher education. The value of this case study lies in its identification of the significant part an instructional designer can play within an academic unit. It also provides university instructors with a closer look at the potential relationship and interaction with instructional designers. Moreover, it can allow university administrators to further examine how their systems might benefit from the UCF model and experiences, such as job (re)design, resource allocation, and instructional designer recruitment.

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