

Table of Contents

| | |
|---------------------------|---|
| Executive Summary | 1 |
| Project Purpose | 1 |
| Practicum Activities..... | 1 |
| Practicum Outcomes | 2 |
| Processes | 2 |
| Key Framing Model..... | 2 |
| Lessons Learned | 3 |
| Challenges..... | 3 |
| Hindsight..... | 4 |
| ID Skills | 4 |
| Summary | 5 |

Executive Summary

For my practicum project, I have been working in a live academic environment as an Instructional Designer assisting Purdue Assistant Professor, Patricia Morita-Mullaney, Ph.D.

EDCI 559, Academic Language and Content Area Learning for English Language Learners (ELL), is conducted entirely online via Blackboard. My SME stakeholder, who likes to be referred to as Trish, desired the reduction of overwhelming individual inquiries from her 52 students. Most of these inquiries addressed BB navigation and Assignment detail.

The target audience comprises Graduate and PhD students working in academic environments within Indiana school districts. Most students are peer supported in these working school environments, yet others learn in a silo with limited technology expertise. The latter group are the ones requiring the most attention as they don't have peer support.

Project Purpose

The primary purpose of my practicum project was to reduce the number of individual inquiries from Trish's 52 students regarding posted Assignment details and BB functionality. I have been working in this live academic environment for six weeks as an Instructional Designer and teaching assistant.

Practicum Activities

My involvement, having full access within BB as a TA (Teaching Assistant), included:

- Course evaluation and change matrix
- Creation of course Calendar
- Linking of course Schedule

- Realigned course navigation
- Development of multimedia assets ([videos](https://youtu.be/GQqldGYJ9DI) <https://youtu.be/GQqldGYJ9DI>)
- Redevelopment of course Syllabus
- Development of a FAQ resource
- Other suggestions for course improvement

Practicum Outcomes

Whereas some of the activities I performed (Calendar, Schedule linking) were implemented mid-course, all other accomplishments (Syllabus, FAQ) will be utilized in the next iteration of the course. There were many other course improvement proposals made in my Final Evaluation Report, included, which may or many not be implemented.

Processes

Various processes were used to accomplished a multitude of tasks. Analysis was first conducted through examining the existing course to target the audience and see where improvements could be made. I also spent a good deal of time researching functionality and tools within Blackboard. I then designed (working with Trish and my Purdue evaluation course professor) and developed a Level 1 evaluation form (see Artifact 1), which was delivered to the class mid-term. From these results, I determined next steps, which included a FAQ resource, improved course navigation, and the development of explainer videos (1 of which was accomplished to be used as a template). My suggestion to change navigation from the Discussion Board navigation heading to Professor's Office was implemented, as well as the new Calendar and Schedule. Through the exercise of going through all of the emails, I was able to gain a better picture as to the course comprehension problems as the basis for the FAQ. I then created an evaluation report based on the survey results and my personal observations from reading these emails to the professor.

Key Framing Model

The model I chose to frame my work was the ADDIE model, although not all activities were performed in succession. Having presented and defended the D&C model in previous courses, I worked under these influences as well. With limited time for the practicum, some Rapid Prototyping practices were utilized. Similar to using several theories (Constructivism being the most used here), several models are sometimes necessary, though not optimal. I believe all models derive from ADDIE, so I made sure that all aspects of ADDIE were covered.

Lessons Learned

The main lesson I learned was how to critically think through a problem and address it with solutions. These solutions included better organization of material, relevancy (and separation of the less relevant), engagement, organization (hyper-linking) and FAQ resources. I also gained more experience working with a professor SME. Through the creation of a Syllabus, I learned that breaking down the components of a course to the most relevant information is a task where you can easily lose focus, particularly with complex subject matter. In this process, I gained knowledge in designing a course to become less complex. The end means do not require the most complex methods, nor include everything written on the subject. I learned that every instructor/professor utilizes a different theoretical approach towards their practice. In my opinion, the best courses contain balanced content – pushing the student along the higher regions of the Vygotsky Zone, yet not over the edge through cognitive overload. However, this approach does not fit well with the teaching philosophy of this professor, so communicating the design became the greatest challenge. Courses are easy to change. Professors are not.

Other lessons learned include the enjoyment of designing. I like to use my brain to critically think of ways to improve education on any scale. In most positions I've been in, I am often assigned roles of development for my multi-media skills. If the work is creative, I don't mind this, but if it is data entry intensive, I would prefer to push my mind to find greater solutions to Ed tech problems.

Challenges

Recalling the examples of my Evaluation and Technology Implementation courses, my professors created a welcoming environment, carried a positive tone, pulling their learners through subject matter, even when those students were not previously engaged. On the other end of the spectrum, a professor in Advanced Case Studies handed out Fs to most students for the first assignment to challenge her students, to put their backs against the wall from the get go. In this ELL course, the professor purposely pushes her students hard.

“Forcing them to speak and video in VT has made them purposively think about their language domains which is the main focus of the course. I'm forcing many of them to work outside of their comfort production zone, but that is the hallmark of adult learning theory. We learn best when we are in discomfort.”

Force. The professor used language of this nature throughout in the original Syllabus (which I recommended changing, a change which was accepted). This approach was somewhat new to me, in that it had never been discussed in my theory classes. Though the group social environment is constructivist, pushing

students outside of the Vygotsky Zone seems anti-constructivist in nature. What then, would one call it? Does everything fit neatly into a theory?

Culturally speaking, Asian students are pushed harder than their American counterparts, and the results have proven to achieve higher standardized test scores. So to recommend to the instructor, particularly one of Asian descent, that she not push her students hard and cut back on the amount of material studied is not a call I was comfortable with. But I made it. However, I was challenged to find data to prove that my recommendation would create better end results. Perhaps happier end results, but whether it was better absorbed and applied to ESL teaching would have required much more evaluation from course to course.

Hindsight

Looking back at the project, I mostly wish that I had more time to become an actual participant of the course. Having a challenging Portfolio course and work schedule to compete for time made it impossible to go all in, as this ELL course is a burgeoning one. As it were, I was on the outside looking in. Therefore, my observations are based on a distant perspective, thus not entirely accurate. However, that may be the typical job of an Instructional Designer; to do what they can with the time that they have.

ID Skills

I would reflect that because I am less experienced in the analysis, design, LMS implementation, and evaluation roles, I improved from having gone through this experience. While I felt comfortable and naturally engaged with analysis and design, I don't have the volume of experience in an academic environment to say that my end design was the best for the course. If I am fortunate enough to continue in this capacity for a University, I may look back on my practicum decisions and second think my decisions. However, to have wrong move experiences *not* come at the expense of a future job, this practice will have proven to be even more worthwhile.

I did ask my prior professor for evaluation question advice, to find that most were on target. Being in a real environment was a true test of these newly learned knowledge/survey skills. Because only 50% of the class responded, I had to wonder what the other 50% responses would have revealed. Perhaps they were afraid their negative response would affect their grade. I also needed to do some critical thinking to evaluate the course on my own. My outlook on some questions was very different from what the response data.

Summary

I am thankful to have had this opportunity to work in a real academic environment on a higher education course. I plan to take this experience and grow from it, hoping to add value to a University, its faculty, and student body. My goal is to advance the use of technology, increase engagement, and most of all, create relevant curriculum that will transfer to real work environments.