DEVELOPMENT OF A CO-PARTICIPATORY AND REFLEXIVE APPROACH TO TEACHING AND LEARNING INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN

by

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(ABSTRACT)

While there are numerous models to practice instructional design, few instructional models to teach instructional design have been documented. This dissertation documents the development of a reflexive teaching model for the teaching of instructional design (ID) in a graduate education program. The model supports co-participatory learning of instructional design and mutual examination of one's learning and participation by both instructor and students. A design and development framework is used to describe the design decisions, model implementation, and evaluation of the model across six deliveries, or case studies, of a master’s level instructional design course from 1994-1998. Design decisions included course sequence, learning tasks, instructional materials, and assessment rubric. Model implementation described student responses to instruction and instructor efforts to assist learners. The model was evaluated in terms of student performance on instructional design projects, student perceptions of their learning, and instructor responsivity to learner needs. The model's development was summarized in terms of changes in design decisions, model implementation, and model evaluation over the six cases. A discussion of the reflexive model is presented using Joyce and Weil’s (1996) conceptual approach, describing the model’s social system, syntax, participants’ reaction, support system, plus the model's instructional and nurturant effects. Four categories of conclusions address improvements to the instructional approach, conditions that promote successful use of the model, impact of the model on student and teacher learning, and conditions conducive to efficient model development. Limitations of the study, future research options, and the implications of the model for ID instruction, the ID process, and teacher inquiry are discussed.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First of all, I would like to acknowledge and thank the 100+ participants in the ID course that I had the privilege to interact with and learn from between 1994 and 1998. Their understanding of the course has always led our understanding, as a novice to any new endeavor brings insights that experts can learn from, if only they pay attention to what newcomers think, say, and do. This dissertation documents what it means to “pay attention” to learners, as well as what it means to study one’s own teaching. Over my graduate experience, in both master’s and doctoral programs between 1992 and 1998, I have learned many things, the most important of which is the human nature of learning, the very human endeavor of teaching, and how it is that we come to know anything.

I would like to thank my committee of six for their confidence in my work and for narrowing down my initial ideas for this dissertation; in particular to Dr. Jerry Niles for his comment during the preliminary examination about the significance of instructional design to help teachers talk about their teaching.

The greatest outcome from working with Dr. Susan Magliaro, my committee chair, a mentor and friend, was in becoming less cynical and overall a better human being at mid-life. We experienced the quality of collaborative work, particularly those moments, limited by busy lives, when we “bounced” ideas off each other and insight would always follow. There were never enough of those moments. Once again, thank you for signing my Force-Add slip as a student in the ID course. Thank you for asking me to help you with teaching the course from 1994-1998 and allowing me to be the custodian for the course during your research leave. During this time I learned how interesting and exciting student thinking could be.

As I attempted to leverage all of my graduate work into this research effort, some thanks are in order for particular faculty and courses. From my undergraduate Management Science program, a thanks to Dr. Loren Rees, a fine teacher and researcher and a great model for what it means to be human. A thank-you to Dr. Terry Wildman for the College Teaching course where I met people from all over the University and where the notion that “teaching and learning is a human enterprise” became a guiding principle for my life’s work. A thanks, too, to Dr. Rosary Lalik, who introduced me to the wider notion of literacy and who acknowledged me early-on as a scholar, and to members of the Reading Research Seminar for taking risks during our time together. Finally, a thanks to Dr. Jim Garrison, who introduced me to challenging ideas and how to use them. Also, I picked up Jim’s working habits or maybe it was just because we preferred to work in coffee shops, bars, and airports.

A thank-you to Dr. Tom Hergert, a co-worker for 15 years, who nagged at me to enter the master’s program. My very good friend, Michelle Reece, whom I met in graduate school and continually encouraged me throughout the doctoral program, taught me how important friendship and mutual support are. Also, a thanks to my friends scattered across the country, particularly the new colleagues I met and came to know as friends from conferences I attended.

Although I write all the time, I am incapable of expressing in words adequate gratitude to my spouse, Cindy Beacham, for her support and tolerance over the last 3 years. As Cindy was also moving through a doctoral program, we could intimately share this experience and mutually appreciate the challenge and trials and ultimately, the rewards, of this time together. Fortunately, we learned early that we worked differently, but that we would always support each other. We
have shared what it means to be friends, colleagues, husband and wife, and still have survived to talk about it.

I’d like to also thank my parents for only wanting happiness for me. My Father, Roy Shambaugh, passed away on the day I handed in my written preliminary exam document. One year later, the day after I defended the dissertation, I received a letter from my Father, a letter written by him just before his death and which had recently been discovered by my Mother. He wrote:

To Neal, my one and only son. You have fulfilled my dreams of a perfect son! There is no need to want for more. Because of you, my life is complete. I want you to rejoice in the fact you have made me feel at peace with my life. Continue to care and feel love to those around you—you have affected many lives. Mine the most! Thank you, Dad.

My last words to him during the Funeral Home viewing were “It’s time to let go now and rest. I’ll take it from here.”

When I was very young, my equal-aged Uncle asked if I was going to be a lawyer or a doctor when I grew up. Before I could answer, he yelled, “I’m going to be a lawyer! You have to be the doctor.” Twenty years ago Hank became the lawyer. It has taken a while, but I finally became the doctor.

Finally, although reluctant to do so, I need to acknowledge for myself the 15 steady years of coursework and three degrees from Virginia Tech, as well as the thinking, writing, and interacting with people, including my co-workers who got used to me taking off for another class. It is time to move on. Where we do not know, but my mind is already out there. Thanks to everyone for this experience. I loved it all.
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