

Can You Really Do Instructional Development On 2¢ A Day ?

It was originally intended to put out a plea for case studies concerning instructional development activities at all levels of education at this point of the first Journal issue. By coincidence Kent Gustafson has presented this plea in much more stirring terms than we could possibly achieve. Notice that Kent is calling for Developers to publicize successful I.D. efforts — what better means than through your own Journal? Kent, say it for us...

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The inauguration of a new publication devoted specifically to Instructional Development (ID) should cause developers to pause and assess the path we appear to be taking. I refer primarily to the cost and complexity we often imply are a concomitant part of the ID process.

This developer (and trainer of developers) is increasingly concerned about the aura many developers are creating around themselves and their activities. This aura is characterized by the attitude that ID is somewhat similar to the occult and can only be practiced by those who

have reached some pinnacle of the priesthood. Carrying the religious analogy a bit further, the ID ritual is seen as being conducted with great formality, requiring a sizeable contingent of celebrants known as a *team*. We continually talk about the team model even though we rarely use it. The fact is, that such ID teams are very expensive, and while ID *may* be conducted by teams, as the song says "it ain't necessarily so".

Thus developers are faced with the question, "Can we have ID without millions?" Well, I certainly hope so or we will find little demand for our services from anyone but the idle rich. The logical extension of such thinking about the

cost of ID will put us in the museum somewhere between the dinosaur and the dodo bird.

Perhaps an anecdote will demonstrate the kind of thinking and attitudes about which I am concerned. The incident occurred at a state convention of media and library personnel where a developer from a large university made a presentation on ID. He went on at great length about how ID was done at his institution with all the accompanying bells and whistles. At the end of his presentation a member of the audience asked how ID might be done at his own school since he didn't have *any* learning psychologists or evaluation specialists available, not to mention personnel highly skilled and experienced in ID process. The developer's response was "Well, you can't really do ID then". Most of the audience felt frustrated by the seeming lack of relevance of ID to their situation and their lack of major resources to commit to ID. My reaction was one of shock, partially from the developer's superior tone, and partially from the fact that the developer's response was absolutely fraudulent.

There have been, and continue to be, many very respectable instructional development efforts mounted by individuals and small groups of dedicated teachers and media specialists without all the high priced "experts". For example, documentation of a number of significant development projects was collected by Harris (1975) following conducts of ID training institutes for public school personnel in various parts of the country. This systematic follow-up study found that many substantial projects were successfully conducted. Further, these projects were all conducted without the high cost often associated with ID projects.

At the community college level one can also find numerous examples of systematically designed courses of instruction which really work and didn't cost the proverbial "arm and a leg". In fact, some of the most effective and certainly most cost effective instructional development is being conducted at the community college level; public schools would be well advised to look to the community colleges for a relevant ID model before looking to most big name universities.

It would be nice for all of us to have the ID resources of Sesame Street, military or some of our universities. But to my knowledge no economist is predicting an expanding resource base for most segments of the educational community.

The hard fact is we are going to have to do more for less (or more for the same).

If ID is to have the impact on education we say it can, it must be practiced at a variety of levels of cost and sophistication. I see no inherent conflict between either an individual elementary school teacher or a multidisciplinary team of highly trained university level specialists applying the tools and principles of ID. The knowledgeable individual teacher who is provided with supportive and encouraging environment by administrators and a modest amount of assistance from media and library personnel can make systematic improvements in instruction. These factors of administrator support (especially from the principal) and assistance from other personnel have been documented by UCIDT and others as being critical to ID at the public school level.

Naturally, individual teachers need at least a modest amount of preservice and/or in-service training to improve their ID skills, and some efforts are now being made in this direction. But it seems to me, that if ID people are really interested in improving the entire range of educational activities we should expend more of our efforts in this direction.

So far, only the high cost of teams has been considered, but another and in some ways more insidious factor also drives up development costs. And here the finger must be pointed at both the developers and/or media people (if not the same). In our stimulus oriented society, developers (and everyone else) often become enamored of the vast array of sparkling gadgets placed at our disposal. Hence, we begin to think of what is the glamorous and innovative way of developing the material rather than what is most cost effective and efficient. If any developer doubts this statement, try to recall the last time a development project you know about came in well under budget. Then think of all the projects that have come in well over budget. While poor budgeting and management practices are partially responsible for these results, one of Murphy's laws is also operating — costs rise to consume available resources. We may not be able to do ID for 2¢ a day, but we don't always need millions either.

But enough of this telling everyone what is wrong with the instructional developer's world. Let's close on a more positive note. What can be done to insure that ID does help reform education — without millions? The author makes the follow-

ing rather humble recommendations and encourages others to add to the list. A professional dialogue on "ID without millions" would indeed be a very healthy activity for all of us.

1. ID personnel should address themselves directly to pre-service teacher training programs to insure that the principles of ID are taught in a practical way to prospective teachers for their individual use.

2. ID personnel should address themselves to the in-service training need of teachers for practical skills in applying ID principles in their classrooms.

3. The Division of Instructional Development (DID) of AECT should seek out and publicize the successful ID efforts of individual teachers at all levels of education.

4. The Division of Instructional Development (DID) of AECT should sponsor a symposium devoted to identifying simple but rigorous tools and strategies for low cost ID activities by individuals or small groups. The results of the symposium should be widely publicized.

5. Media and library personnel who have shied away from ID because of its perceived complexity and cost should seek out new information and begin to develop a minimal competency in the area. DID and AECT should act as a resource for these individuals.

6. Instructional developers should include a disclaimer in their writing and speeches which reminds their audiences that their respective project represents only one way to conduct ID.

I would like to suggest that the Instructional Development Division through its journal and convention sessions, sponsor such a dialogue.

Bibliography

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- Harris, Thomas (ed), *Instructional Implementation Project: Final Report*. Contract No. OEG 0-70-1700 (725). East Lansing: University Consortium for Instructional Development and Technology, by Michigan State University, June 1975.