Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the critical role instructional designers play in helping faculty transition their course delivery to an online platform (Aschaiek, 2021; Nworie, 2021; Xie, Gulina, & Rice, 2021) and create inclusive learning experiences for students (Pilbeam, 2020). An essential aspect of the instructional designer’s consultation practice with faculty involves building collaborative, productive, and trusting relationships while helping them develop the skills and competencies necessary to design or revise their courses (van Leusen, Ottenbreit-Lefwich, & Brush, 2016; Schwier & Wilson, 2010). When instructors understand their roles and responsibilities with instructional designers in the course development process, they are more likely to consider innovative teaching strategies that align with evidence-based practices and engage students (Halupa, 2019). We can use the lens of servant leadership to understand how the relationships between instructional designers and faculty develop and influence faculty adoption of new pedagogical strategies.

Introduction

Servant Leadership

In his seminal work, Andrew Greenleaf (1991) described servant leaders as those persons who take care to ensure that "other people's highest priority needs are being served" (p. 15). They model and practice leadership as a service. Drury (2004) shared an operational definition of servant leadership as

An understanding and practice of leadership that promotes the good of those being led over the self-interest of the leader. Servant leadership promotes the valuing and development of people, the building of community, and the practice of authenticity, the providing of leadership for the good of those led, and the sharing of power and status for the common good of each individual, the total organization, and those served by the organization. (p. 7).

Researchers have found that the practice of servant leadership increases trust (Savage-Austin & Honeycutt, 2011), productivity (Grisaffe, VanMeter, & Chonko, 2016), and information exchange between leaders and organizational members (Sousa & Dierendonck, 2016). Spears (2010) identified ten essential attributes of servant leaders:

1. Listening.
2. Empathy.
3. Healing.
4. Awareness.
5. Persuasion.
6. Conceptualization.
7. Foresight.
8. Stewardship.
9. Commitment to the growth of people.
Building community.

Further, servant leaders also humble themselves and place the needs of others first (Wheeler, Ser2012). Russell and Stone (2002) noted that Spear's list of characteristics was not exhaustive and that other accompanying attributes supplement the servant leader behaviors in the workplace and their ability to connect with others on a personal level. These attributes include:

- Trust - "the assured reliance on the character, ability, strength, or truth of someone or something" (Merriam-Webster, n.d). Russell et al. (2002) noted people develop trust through direct interaction with one another and that followers are more likely to rely on and have confidence in the decision-making processes of trustworthy leaders. Russell (2000) stated that trust must be earned.

- Credibility - "the quality or power of inspiring belief" (Merriam-Webster, n.d). When people demonstrate relevant expertise in a given field, their legitimacy and leadership credibility is enhanced.

- Competence – Possessing the skills, knowledge, and abilities necessary to perform a job and demonstrate competence among their followers.

- Communication and Vision – Articulating the organization's mission, vision, and goals and the work to be completed now and in the future.

- Delegation – Giving followers the opportunity to take ownership in completing a task.

- Encouragement – Persuading others by intentionally seeking to build their self-esteem so they would not be hesitant to try new things.

- Persuasion – Collaborating with others to develop a shared understanding of the task at hand and develop a consensus on a recommended solution (presented by the leader) to move forward.

- Pioneering – Thinking "out of the box" by taking risks and having the courage to lead others in implementing new innovative strategies.

- Teaching – Identifying and developing the talents of others so that they can lead themselves and others. Russell et al. (2002) commented that servant leaders teach trust leading by example and through coaching.

However, personal characteristics of servant leaders are not enough to successfully lead others in their efforts to accomplish organizational goals. In a systematic review of servant leadership literature, Coetzer, Bussin, and Geldenhuys (2017) found that servant leaders should possess the competencies of empowerment, stewardship, building relationships, and articulating a compelling vision for their efforts in a systematic manner to achieve goals. (See Figure 1 Servant Leadership Attributes and Competencies). Empowering others includes creating an environment in which others can learn and grow on an individual and professional level, participate in collaborative decision-making and problem-solving experiences, build confidence, and work to their strengths. Stewardship encompasses being accountable as a leader to facilitate the successful completion of tasks or project goals. Building relationships involves bringing people and teams together and developing relationships based on trust and respect of others and their capabilities. Finally, the servant leader will articulate a clear, compelling vision, so that others can conceptualize, plan, execute, and understand the value and importance their work brings to the endeavor. They demonstrate the importance placed on others by listening actively and intently and incorporating their values and opinions into decision-making. Servant leaders work with integrity and use their interactions with others to continually improve their professional practice in their service to others.
Instructional Design Work
Instructors often find the processes of designing a new course, redesigning an existing course, or transitioning a course from a face-to-face to an online or blended format to be complicated endeavors (Chiasson, Terras, & Smart, 2015). One strategy instructional designers use to address this challenge is through the use of an instructional design model. Branch and Dousay (2015) commented that these models could be used to “visualize, direct, and manage processes for creating high-quality instruction… and assist us in selecting or directing appropriate operational tools and techniques” (p. 24). An important aspect of the instructional designer’s course design and development practice involves building collaborative, productive, and trusting relationships with instructors as they help them develop the skills and competencies necessary to design their hybrid/online courses (Schwier & Wilson, 2010).

When we consider the use of instructional design models through the lens of servant leadership, these models help instructional designers communicate and develop a compelling vision for the course design and development work with instructors. Also, these models help instructional designers organize their work with instructors by breaking down the course development cycle into component processes/strategies thereby aiding in the instructional designer’s ability to mentor instructors as they develop their courses. Table 1 provides an example of how servant leader attributes and competencies could be applied to the ADDIE model of instructional design, which includes Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, and Evaluation phases.
Table 1  
Servant Leadership Attributes and Competencies

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<tr>
<th>Phase &amp; ID Activities</th>
<th>Servant Leader Attributes</th>
<th>Servant Leader Competencies</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Analysis</strong></td>
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<td>• Communication</td>
<td>• Articulating a compelling vision</td>
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<td>The instructional designer (ID) meets with instructor or subject matter expert to discuss instructional goals and objectives, learner characteristics, environmental constraints, possible pedagogical strategies, and implementation timeline.</td>
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<td><strong>Servant Leader</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Attributes</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Design</strong></td>
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<td>The ID collaborates with the instructor in planning the course structure. This process includes systematically creating and reviewing learning objectives, formative and summative assessments, storyboards, instructional content, and select instructional media to achieve project goals. Appropriate instructional pedagogical theories and instructional content are also applied.</td>
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<td><strong>Development</strong></td>
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<td>During this phase, the ID and instructor continue their collaboration as they work together to create and organize content and activities; integrate instructional strategies and technologies; and test user interfaces.</td>
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<td><strong>Implementation</strong></td>
<td>• Communicating</td>
<td>• Stewardship</td>
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<td>(The ID might train instructors on various teaching strategies).</td>
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Instructors teach their course. The ID is available to answer any question the instructor might have.

| Evaluation | • Communication  
|            | • Encouragement  
|            | • Listening  
|            | • Stewardship  
|            | • Articulating a compelling vision (for the next ADDIE cycle)  

Evaluation occurs throughout each phase of the ADDIE model.

The formative evaluation process includes evaluating instructional strategies and materials and is designed to improve the process and delivery of instruction.

The summative evaluation process is designed to assess the learning effectiveness and the extent to which learners achieve learning goals.

Inouye, Merrill, and Swan (2005) described the instructional design field design as a helping profession designed to improve learning and foster growth in instructors and learners. While there is an extensive body of literature describing the technical competencies necessary for successful instructional design work (Tracey & Boling, 2013; Larson & Lockee, 2009), the philosophy and practice of servant leadership can also inform our understanding of how collaborative relationships evolve between the instructional designer and instructor. Hunter et al. (2013) noted in their study of a sales organization that servant leadership can foster a service climate in organizations in which “the customer’s needs are highly valued and carefully addressed” (p. 321). In addition, these researchers argued that servant leadership promotes the value of helping behaviors among employees and fosters an environment in which employees want to stay and work. These outcomes can be translated into the work of the instructional design organization and the consultative practice of the instructional designer with an instructor.

Research Questions
This research will examine the influence of four servant leader competences on the professional practice of instructional designers and faculty by investigating the following research questions:

For instructional designers:
- How do you go about building relationships and trust with the faculty?
- How do you approach helping faculty members develop a vision for their course?
- What does stewardship mean to you?

For faculty:
- Based on your participation in this workshop and work with the instructional designers, what new pedagogical strategies will you try in your course?
Many instructors must transition their pedagogical strategies from teaching traditional face-to-face courses to teaching online courses. To address this challenge, universities provide professional development opportunities (Leary, Dopp, Turley, Cheney, Simmons, Graham, et al., 2020). Researchers provide recommendations to help guide colleagues in their efforts to design and facilitate online experiences. Fiock (2020) commented, "while the Community of Inquiry (COI) presences are important, they are of no use to instructors or instructional designers without guidance on how to foster them in online environments" (p. 139). The COI framework is a process model outlining how the interdependence of core elements (social, cognitive, and teaching presences) can be structured to create a deep and meaningful online educational experience for students (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2010).

Study Context (Setting)
Three instructional designers, Victoria, Angela, and Michelle, participated in this study. They had extensive experience in adult education, higher education, and corporate training. In addition, faculty participants in this research included two instructors from the College of Arts and Sciences, Professor Alexander and Professor Daniels, and one instructor from the College of Public Affairs, Professor Shaw. These faculty participated in the seven-week Promoting Online Excellence (POE) training program at a public university in Maryland. Victoria, Angela, and Michelle served as co-facilitators in the delivery of the POE program.

Promoting Online Excellence (POE) combines faculty self-paced work with cohort work and individual consultations with instructional designers. This seven-week training program aims to develop faculty expertise in online education. See Figure 2 for workshop components.

Figure 2
Promoting Online Excellence (POE) Timeline
Methodology
This study employed a hermeneutic phenomenological approach to examine how instructional designers applied the servant leadership competencies of building relationships, empowerment, stewardship, and articulating a compelling vision in their consultative practice with faculty during a seven-week professional development workshop designed to help faculty develop expertise in online education and whether these servant leader competencies prompted faculty to consider implementing innovative teaching practices in their courses. Laverty (2003) stated the focus of the hermeneutic approach is to illuminate details within an experience to create meaning by understanding a person's culture, historical context, and how they are embedded in the world.

Data Collection
Data was gathered by conducting qualitative interviews. Patton (2002) stated "the purpose of qualitative interviewing to capture how those being interviewed view their world, to learn their terminology, and to capture their complexities of their perceptions and experiences" (p. 348). Three faculty and three instructional designers were interviewed following their facilitation and participation in the online teaching workshop, respectively.

Interviews
The instructional designers and faculty members participating in this research signed informed consent forms before they participated in this research. The researcher used a semi-structured interview protocol, anonymizing participant responses. In addition, the researcher used Microsoft Teams to record and transcribe interviews. The researcher asked the instructional designer participants about their professional background and consultation process, how they built relationships with faculty, how they helped faculty develop a vision for their course, and stewardship. In addition, faculty were asked questions about their professional experiences, a
pedagogical challenge in a course they hoped to address by enrolling in the workshop, and whether they would implement any changes in their class.

Data Analysis
Data were analyzed using a hermeneutic phenomenological methodology to interpret the lived experience of instructional designers and faculty members during their participation in the POE program. Laverty (2003) identified distinctions between phenomenology and hermeneutic phenomenology and stated:

Phenomenological research is descriptive and focuses on the structure of experience, the organizing principles that give form and meaning to the life world… Hermeneutic research is interpretive and concentrated on historical meanings of experience. This interpretive process includes explicit statements of …philosophies that are guiding interpretation as well as the presuppositions that motivate the individuals who make the interpretations. (p. 27)

Lauterbach (2018) noted that hermeneutic phenomenology allows for collaboration between the researcher and participants to develop a shared understanding of the phenomenon under study. Crowther, Ironside, Spence, and Smythe (2018) stated that this methodology highlights essential “but hidden” aspects of the lived experience. According to van Manen (1997), there are four ways in which people experience their lived experiences or “lifeworld:” existentials through the lived body (corporeality), our physical presence in everyday life; lived human relations (relationality), how we interact, communicate, maintain and develop relationships with others; lived space (spatiality), how we experience the spaces (environments) that we find ourselves in; and lived time (temporality), how we experience time and moments in our lives and the constraints placed on that time. Rich, Graham, Taket, and Shelley (2013) commented that the lifeworld existentials interact with one another and present a helpful framework in which to explore a phenomenon.

For this study, the data analysis process involved seeking meaning, theme analysis, and reflective interpretation (van Manen, 2007). The first step in the analysis process of seeking meaning encompassed reading the transcripts of the instructional designers and faculty members and placing answers to questions in an Excel spreadsheet, guided by the question: what events did the instructional designers and faculty describe? The second step was analysis and aggregation of subthemes encompassed in instructional designers’ and faculty members’ lived experiences. The overarching questions for this phase of the analysis were: How did the servant leadership competencies inform the course consultation process and influence faculty pedagogical decisions moving forward? The third step was the interpretation of the results and included my reflections about the consultation process as well. (See Figure 3).

Figure 3
Steps involved in Hermeneutic Phenomenological analysis
I used three existential (lifeworld) views, lived relations, lived space, and lived time, to explore how servant leadership competencies informed the instructional designers' consultative practice and influenced whether faculty adopted new pedagogical strategies because of their participation in the POE program (or due to their participation in the POE program). Below, I present an explanation with examples of each of these existential views.

**Building Relationships (Lived Space).** The lived space encompasses the environments in which we find ourselves daily. How we experience space is subjective based on whether we feel safe or uncomfortable. The instructional designers facilitated the POE workshop work with participants having varied online teaching experiences. Victoria commented:

> With Poe we tried to establish our cohort as well, you know, and make Faculty feel comfortable sharing and establishing an environment where they could bring in ideas and drafts of things and bounce that off their colleagues for ideas. So I think that (strategy) worked well with establishing, you know, just building a community and establishing that Faculty are experts in this as well. So they can help each other. It's not just instructional designers telling them what to do. POE is a non-judgmental zone.

As their time in POE progressed, faculty participants became more comfortable discussing pedagogical strategies and seeking information from one another. Michelle stated:

> In breakout rooms you.... You let them know that their questions and contributions were important. [Faculty] were more open to providing answers to questions, sharing more information about what they (or their colleagues) were doing in their courses, and giving suggestions. We even had one faculty member soliciting other faculty members to critique what she submitted. They were all open to a kind of self-evaluation.

**Stewardship and Building Relations with Others (Lived Relations).** The lived relations view encompasses how we communicate, interact, and develop relationships with one another. This view frames how instructional designers built relationships and trust with faculty. For example, Victoria commented, "establishing trust with faculty means being flexible... because faculty are people first and the work comes second." As a steward, Angela commented that "it's serving in a community that I think I belong to and care about. And being a leader, being engaged member, doing my best to improve it." These comments inform the philosophy of service members of the instructional design team bring to their work.
Building trust with faculty. Building trust with faculty begins with respectfully talking to faculty and listening to what they have to say. Victoria stated, "I found it helpful to have one-on-one conversations with faculty... to provide a listening space for them... Communicating clearly, responding to faculty needs, and following through are essential when establishing trust. You do not want over promise and under-deliver; you want to reverse that. You want to exceed expectations as much as you can.”

Professor Alexander has known Victoria for several years, including working with her on POE and commended her work ethic. From the beginning, Victoria’s just had the quickest and the fastest solutions. If she doesn't know the answer, she goes out of her way to find it for you. So, I'm excited about whatever project I will bring her. Whatever problem I'm trying to solve. I'm not asking just because I want to know, but because I'm going to, you know, follow through and use it. There's a lot of trust that goes both ways. If I'm in a room with other people who are questioning, how valid her strategies are, or whether something works like she knows she has an ally in me as well.

It is also important to serve for instructional designers to serve as collaborative partners with faculty. For example, Victoria stated, “the course map is important, a vital process, and a document to create. But even before that, faculty need to discuss it and think about what they want it look like before grounding it in alignment and learning outcomes.” Angela said “I ask a lot of questions. So I listen a lot to what faculty are talking about their likes and worries, their questions, and what they ask in POE. Then I make sure that I listen to all of that and think about it. Making connections with people is done well when they think or they know that I am valuing their time, valuing their effort.”

Empowerment (Lived Time). This lifeview helps us to understand "how individuals experience their world on a temporal level" in each situation (Rich, Graham, Taket, & Shelley, 2013, p. 501). Individuals' feelings, constraints, and demands also influence how they experience time. POE linked the concept of time to group participation in cohort meetings, instructional designers' individual consultation meetings with faculty, and faculty preparation of POE deliverables.

Michelle commented: We asked the faculty to review the content in each module in Pressbooks and develop any questions they would want to bring to the meetings once we got in the meeting... So we'd have them ask questions, and it was just the back and forth of sharing information and what they had learned that really helped the faculty understand their role even further.

Professor Shaw described his experience working with Victoria and Michelle to make his syllabus more accessible. He stated: So, I had to spend some time correcting [my document for accessibility issues]. I'm just a private session with the two of them. And they helped me out. Michelle also took the time to go over the various student outcomes and how to revise them, so they are more active. So that was extremely helpful. I think it made it [the syllabus] much better. How they managed to do this, I don't know, but they [Victoria and Michelle] managed to interject at the proper times and places. And once I got that format, I applied it to all my courses.

While POE aims to develop faculty expertise in online education, sometimes faculty face instructional and pedagogical challenges that may be barriers to adopting new strategies in their teaching practice. Victoria commented, "It's going back to that idea of planting a seed; sometimes you work with people who are there and engaged [in POE], but they're kind of..."
resistant to the ideas and might not want to devote the time to developing deliverables.” Professor Daniels stated:

In the POE meetings, we talk about best practices. If I find out that at least half the other instructors in my department are using true-false exams and I’m giving essay exams, I realize that I’m an outlier, and either I go with the pack or try to convince the pack (to change).

Conclusion

The lifeworld existentials of Lived Space, Lived Relations, and Lived Time provide an opportunity for members of the instructional design community to consider how servant leadership competencies of building relationships, stewardship, and empowerment can inform their professional practice. The instructional designers in this research highlighted the importance of respecting faculty expertise. When building relationships with faculty, they made a conscious effort to create a community and environment (lived space) in which faculty felt comfortable sharing ideas, asking questions, and seeking feedback from colleagues. Further, regarding the importance of stewardship, building relationships, and empowerment, the instructional designers discussed the importance of establishing trust with the faculty (lived relations) by following through on commitments, being flexible with deliverables, and listening to faculty (empowerment), because “people come first, and the work comes second.” This research suggests that faculty are more willing to adopt new pedagogical strategies in their courses when instructional designers integrate the competencies of building relationships, stewardship, and empowerment in their professional practice.
References


