

Domain of Utilization

The domain of utilization has its roots in the beginning of the 20th century with the visual education movement. The domain involves the use of processes and resources for learning (Seels & Richey, 1994). The utilization domain is important in that it acts as a liaison between the learner and the instructional material. An instructional designer who works within the domain of utilization is responsible for planning and overseeing the implementation and/or the delivery of instruction. The instructional designer's job includes ensuring the proper materials are available to the learners, introducing innovations to the learners and/or the stakeholders, implementing said innovations and ensuring their integration into the organization, and following policies and regulations as they pertain to the innovation.

The domain encompasses four sub-domains: media utilization, diffusion of innovations, implementation and institutionalization, and policies and regulations. Each sub-domain is explained in more detail below.

Media Utilization

Media utilization is the “systematic use of resources for learning” (Seels & Richey, p. 46). The instructional designer's job as it pertains to media utilization is to ensure that the instructional materials and corresponding media meet the objectives set forth during the design phase of instruction. The instructional designer must make certain that the instructional materials and media are compatible with the learners lest anything interfere with the learners' successful completion of the instruction.

Media utilization and media selection are somewhat overlapping areas. When media selection is performed during a systematic design process, it is considered a design task; however, when media is selected based on subject content or media characteristics, it is considered a utilization task (Seels & Richey, 1994).

Despite its being over twenty years old, Reiser and Gagne's (1983) Media Selection Flowchart is still in use today as a model for selecting the best medium for instruction (Dick, Carey, & Carey, 2005). Another model is the ASSURE model (Analyze learners, State objectives, Select methods, media and material, Utilize media and materials, Require learner participation, and Evaluate and Revise) which incorporates Gagne's Nine Events of Instruction to ensure effective use of media in instruction (Heinich, Molenda, Russell, & Smaldino, 1999).

Diffusion of Innovations

The essential goal of the sub-domain of diffusion of innovations is to bring about change and adoption of a new idea or product. Seels and Richey (1994, p. 46) define diffusion of innovations as “the process of communicating through planned strategies for the purpose of gaining adoption.” Diffusion of innovations can have a serious impact on the success

or failure of an instructional project since at the root of such projects is the intention to change something.

Everett M. Rogers Diffusion of Innovations (1995) has been of enormous importance to the sub-domain. In his book, Rogers characterizes five different categories of adopters: innovators (2.5%), early adopters (13.5%), early majority (34%), late majority (34%), and laggards (16%). The different categories assume that each adopter will take a different amount of time to accept the innovation due to his or her attitudes, beliefs, and existing knowledge regarding change. On top of the categories of adopters, Rogers also states that there are four characteristics which govern the rate of adoption of an innovation. Those characteristics are: knowledge (early announcements), persuasion (marketing), decision (adopt or reject?), and implementation (product placement). Additionally, Rogers states that most successful innovations share the following attributes: trialability, observability, complexity, compatibility, and relative advantage.

Implementation and Institutionalization

Seels & Richey (1994, p. 47) define implementation as “using instructional materials or strategies in real (not simulated) settings,” and institutionalization as “the continuing, routine use of the instructional innovation in the structure and culture of an organization.” Both implementation and institutionalization depend on each other and also on adoption by individuals and by the organization. Implementation ensures the proper use by individuals within the organization, while institutionalization ensures that the innovation integrates into the organizational structure and adheres to the policies and procedures in place. The instructional designer must propose new policies and procedures if any incompatibilities are found. Implementation and institutionalization are important because, if individual and organizational change is not properly planned for, it can mean failure for the project.

Policies and Regulations

All organizations have policies and regulations in place which rule and govern their operation and can affect changes taking place within an organization. It is vitally important for instructional designers to be familiar with the organization’s policies and regulations in order to determine if the instructional projects are compatible with the rules and procedures. If any incompatibilities are discovered, the instructional designer is responsible for initiating changes or revisions to the existing policies and regulations. Being proactive in this arena will be of great service to the instructional designer so he or she may avoid regulatory and procedural roadblocks while carrying out utilization tasks.

Two of the newer standards and policies which instructional designers should be aware of are Section 508 and SCORM compliance for web delivery. Section 508 is a law which was amended to the Rehabilitation Act in 1998 and requires all Federal agencies to make their electronic information and processes accessible to people with disabilities. SCORM

(Sharable Content Object Reference Model) compliance for Web delivery involves technical specifications that govern how e-learning is created and delivered to users. SCORM enables interoperability, accessibility, and reusability of learning content which is Web-based. In other words, SCORM allows content authors to disburse their content over a variety of Learning Management Systems (LMS) in the easiest ways possible.