Definition of Utilization

The domain of utilization involves the use of processes and resources for learning (Seels & Richey, 1994). It deals with the planning and overseeing of the implementation and/or the delivery of instruction

The role of the instructional designer, with regards to the domain of utilization, is to choose appropriate materials and activities for learners, encourage learners to interact with the selected materials and activities, provide guidance during the implementation, and provide for assessment of the results. Additionally, the instructional designer must follow policies and regulations as they relate to the innovation (Seels & Richey, 1994).

According to Seels and Richey (1994), the domain of utilization consists of four sub-domains: media utilization, diffusion of innovation, implementation and institutionalization, and policies and regulations.

Media Utilization

Seels and Richey (1994) define media utilization as the systematic use of resources for learning. The sub-domain involves checking the site for the availability of equipment needed to use the learning products and for ensuring the equipment is working properly (Seels & Richey, 1994). If the equipment is not available or not working properly, the success of the instruction could be compromised.

Media utilization makes certain the instructor has the knowledge and skills necessary for delivering the instruction (Seels & Richey, 1994). Without the necessary knowledge and skills to use the media to deliver the instruction as planned, the intended results of the instruction might not be achieved.

When using technology/media to deliver instruction, the designer must make certain there is a back up plan or "Plan B." This is crucial in the event of the technology/media malfunctioning.

Diffusion of Innovations

"Diffusion of innovations is the process of communicating through planned strategies for the purpose of gaining adoption" (Seels & Richey, 1994, p.46). The purpose of this sub-domain is to gain adoption of new materials within the organization.

To ensure adoption, the instructional designer must create awareness through dissemination of information. The instructional designer must also gain interest from the audience, provide opportunities to try the new innovations and provide support throughout the implementation process (Rogers, 1995). Rogers (1995) classified the adopters of an innovation into five categories: the innovators, the early adopters, the early majority, the late majority, and the laggards.

An instructional designer or change agent should take into account the characteristics of different adopter categories during the diffusion process in order to maximize the rate of adoption by the target population. It is also important to note the personalities of the target population affect how the innovations will be implemented within the organization.

Implementation and Institutionalization

Seels and 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." They are both dependant on the changes in individuals and changes within the organization. The goal of implementation is to ensure proper use by individuals within the organization. The goal of institutionalization is to incorporate to innovation in the structure and life of the organization. The instructional designer must plan for new policies and procedures if any incompatibilities are found.

Policies and Regulations

"Policies and regulations are the rules and actions of society (or its surrogates) that affect the diffusion and use of Instructional Technology (Seels & Richey, 1994, p.47). They are guidelines instructional designers rely on when designing and developing materials. The materials must be examined against the policies and regulations to ensure the materials are in accordance with the policies and regulations mandated for that specific organization.