Promoting Excellence in the Instructional Design of Distance Education Programs

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Models of multifunctional agriculture are becoming more prevalent throughout the world. The multifunctionality of agriculture has implications for the instructional design of distance education programs. Worldwide distance education has become an effective and efficient means for disseminating educational programs. Many extension agents and faculty lack the instructional design competencies to develop courses and programs using distance education delivery strategies. Offering support for technology-based faculty training and development efforts is a key issue facing many institutions of higher learning. However, few institutions have invested in the training and development of instructional designers or educational technologists assigned to assist in the development of distance education courses (Telg, 1995).

Purpose of Poster

The purpose of the poster is to visually depict the process of developing an online training program to increase understanding of instructional design in the distance education learning environment.

Major Points to be Shared

The major points to be shared visually on the poster are clustered around the following competency areas:

- Adult learning and understanding teaching at a distance;
- Instructional design and course development;
- Delivery strategies for teaching at a distance and instructional technology resources;
- Advanced interaction methods and accessibility;
- Planning and conducting evaluation, and evaluation analysis and reporting; and
- Administrative issues, and training and support.

Findings

A study of 14 land-grant universities (Irani & Telg, 2001) found that nearly two-thirds (61.5%) of distance education faculty training was conducted by staff instructional designers. Also, 64.3% of instructional designers actively working with faculty had had no prior training or knowledge of instructional design methods used in distance education before working at their universities. Twelve of the 14 respondents said they had learned distance education instructional design methods while “on the job.” These findings raise the questions: Who provides the technology skills and instructional design training and support for faculty? Are these staff members adequately prepared to train and support the faculty?
Instructional designers must be adequately prepared in order to assist faculty, so that faculty can effectively teach undergraduate and graduate distance courses.

**Educational Importance**

The information provided on this poster may help extension agents and faculty gain a greater understanding of the major instructional design competencies needed to develop online training programs. Such understanding may, further, help organizations respond, on a more global nature, to the call for multifunctional agriculture by creating nonproprietary educational programs and systems available over the Internet.

**References**
