Enacting Change: Examining the Instructional Designer's Role in Higher Education through a Coaching Lens

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The purpose of this paper is to review studies which have explored relationship dynamics between instructional designers and faculty in higher education with the intent to identify examples of how instructional designers engage in the six streams of coaching as proposed by Passmore (2007). Upon review of our findings, we offer heuristics to support instructional designers' abilities to approach their working relationships with faculty through a coaching lens. Recommendations for future research to better understand the implications and barriers a coaching lens may impose will also be discussed.

Introduction

To date, there have been several studies that have explored competencies espoused by instructional designers in higher education (Pollard & Kumar, 2022; Ritzhaupt & Kumar, 2015). In addition to designing and developing instruction, instructional designers often find themselves navigating relationships with the faculty members they are assisting to enhance their courses. While some of these working relationships can be very productive, others have been a source of conflict as evidenced by research examining these relationships specifically (Mueller et al., 2022a, b; Richardson et al., 2019).

In an integrative literature review, Chen and Carliner (2021) reviewed, critiqued, and synthesized 29 studies that explored the relationship between faculty and instructional designers. Their findings suggested that instructional designers serve within a customer-service relationship whereby the instructional designer provides a variety of services as requested by the faculty responsible for designing and teaching their course (e.g., Bawa & Watson, 2017; Kumar & Ritzhaupt, 2017). Their literature review findings also reported instructional designers could be viewed as change agents (Campbell et al., 2009; Schwier et al., 2007). Chen and Carliner (2021) describe the instructional designer's role as a change agent to mean they are responsible for helping "connect faculty's knowledge and thoughts with larger social contexts" (p. 481). Within their collaborative working relationships with faculty, instructional designers can coach the faculty members to consider the implications of the activities being presented and carried out in their respective courses. Within this capacity, the instructional designer is helping to support the faculty's understanding of how their instructional contributions can support learners, the institution, and society. Examples may include engaging in discussions about how course content in one course connects with other courses in a program, thinking about how different courses may or may not impact students' career paths within their respective fields, and considering how ethical practices may be present in different situations.

Other studies that have explored relationships and conflict between faculty and instructional designers, to date, have alluded to the instructional designer being responsible for guiding faculty with varying levels of design experience through the instructional design process. We are interested in exploring the role of instructional designers as coaches.

Coaching is defined as a "one to one process of helping others to improve, to grow and to get a higher level of performance, by providing focused feedback, encouragement and raising awareness" (Pousa & Mathieu, 2010, p. 34). Building upon the idea of an instructional designer in higher education settings as a change agent to help faculty make broader connections to support their course design, we want to explore the instructional designer's role in enacting change through a coaching lens.

In a paper examining the role of coaching within the context of instructional design, Stefaniak (2017) explored coaching frameworks that emphasized coach-coachee relationships, problem setting, goal setting, and situational awareness. The four most prevalent frameworks included Giglio et al.'s (1998) three-phase coaching framework that explores goal settings across three phases: 1) building commitment and personal transformation; 2) moving the executive forward; and 3) facilitating the personal

transformation. Within this framework, emphasis is placed on the coachee's personal and professional development.

Hooijberg and Lane (2009) developed a multisource feedback framework to support coaching where the coach provides feedback from multiple sources. This framework suggests that a variety of feedback sources should be provided to the coachee to provide a holistic feedback experience that supports their development. "This allows for the coachee to receive and interpret guidance from multiple lenses" (Stefaniak, 2017, p. 27).

The cognitive apprenticeship framework (Collins et al., 1989) promotes a one-to-one teaching relationship where the coach provides the apprentice (coachee) with a guided learning experience to enhance their cognitive skills in authentic settings. The cognitive apprenticeship framework consists of components that are carried out across the duration of the apprenticeship: modeling, coaching, articulation, reflection, scaffolding, and exploration.

Passmore's (2007) Integrative Coaching Model proposes six streams that coaches engage in as they provide feedback and guidance to their coachee throughout their working relationship:

- Developing the coaching relationship
- Maintaining the relationship
- Promoting permanent change
- Supporting conscious cognition
- Identifying motivational factors
- Considering cultural considerations within the organization.

The model provides a framework for an advised sequence of actions, but in reality, coaches must intuit and adapt when needed (Passmore, 2017). This approach to coaching is similar to the role instructional designers fulfill in design where they must adapt, iterate, and update their designs throughout a project.

Purpose of This Paper

While the abovementioned frameworks focus on fostering relationships between coaches and coachees, we believe Passmore's (2007) framework can best support the instructional designer-faculty member relationship. While Giglio et al.'s (1998) framework promotes goal setting and personal development, instructional designers may struggle with the degree of coaching they may impart to faculty members with whom they may be assigned to work. Giglio's framework works best when the coach and coachee have a mutual understanding of the coaching relationship.

Passmore's (2007) six streams allow for an instructional designer to provide feedback and guidance at varying levels along the duration of the working relationship. With Passmore's (2007) framework being grounded in workplace environments, the coach can provide specific feedback around projects. This dovetails nicely with how instructional designers are often paired with faculty to provide feedback and support throughout the design process (Richardson et al., 2019). While they often assume an informal coaching role, they can

structure their feedback around specific project tasks making it more likely for the faculty members to be receptive of the feedback they are receiving. In this paper, we examine how Passmore's (2007) six streams of coaching could be used by instructional designers while working with faculty members in higher education settings.

Considerations for the Integrative Coaching Model in Instructional Design

Stream 1: Developing the coaching relationship

Studies that have examined relationship dynamics between instructional designers and faculty have identified developing a sense of partnership, communication, collaboration, cooperation, and commitment as being critical to the success of a collaborative relationship (Outlaw & Rice, 2015; Stevens, 2013). To achieve a successful coaching partnership, Passmore (2007) outlines five critical elements including:

- The coach should have a positive self image, and confidence in their ability to work collaboratively with others.
- The coach should have confidence in the coachee, specifically in their ability to identify potential solutions to fit their needs.
- The coach should be able to effectively demonstrate empathy for the coachee.
- The coach should be able to communicate honestly and provide constructive feedback to the coachee.
- The coach should be able to keep activities focused on the coachee's needs.

In the context of higher education, instructional designers are often perceived as supportive or evaluative roles, straining their ability to form meaningful relationships with faculty (Richardson, et al, 2019). Overcoming this perception requires instructional designers to possess confidence in their abilities and expertise to design effective teaching and learning experiences. The ability to communicate design decisions confidently and intelligently is necessary to gain faculty 'buy in' and trust (Richardson, et al, 2019; Ritzhaupt & Kumar, 2015). Instructional designers draw on their knowledge of educational theories and instructional design models to craft a design process that fits each project (Ritzhaupt & Kumar, 2015; Schwier et al., 2007). Successful collaborative relationships between instructional designers and faculty require holding mutual respect for each other's talents, time, and effort (Stevens, 2013).

Bawa and Watson (2017) named empathy as a key characteristic of the success of a course design collaboration and noted the importance of remembering the faculty and their students are ultimately the customers. Instructional designers must remember the course will eventually be owned, managed, and taught by the faculty, so goals and timelines should be based on their needs and schedules (McCurry & Mullinix, 2017).

Instructional designers encounter several challenges in establishing productive working relationships with faculty because they fear relationships being adversarial or awkward (Stevens, 2013). Chao et al. (2010) noted that faculty members may feel a sense of vulnerability having another individual review and critique their work. Cowie (2010) emphasizes that overcoming these vulnerabilities requires deep trust and appreciation of the specialized and complimentary feedback shared between designers and faculty. Aligned with coaches staying focused on the needs of the coachees, Ritzhaupt and Kumar (2015) explain that "unique to higher education, instructional designers placed the goals and teaching beliefs of faculty first and adapted their instructional design processes or theories to the needs of the teaching faculty member who is also the subject matter expert and the needs of students in their contexts" (p.65). The ability to skillfully ask faculty questions is not only useful for determining needs and goals but can also be used to gently influence faculty and steer them in a certain direction (Bawa & Watson, 2017).

It is important to remember that developing the coaching relationship takes time. We recommend instructional designers take some time during this initial phase to explain roles and expectations for the project. These initial conversations can aid in alleviating challenges when the instructional designer begins providing constructive feedback throughout the design project. This also helps to establish trust and encourages open dialogue, ultimately leading to a more successful and productive coaching experience.

Stream 2: Maintaining the relationship

Passmore (2007) describes how, in order to successfully maintain relationships in the coaching process, coaches should carefully monitor their own emotions and behaviors, and those of the coachee, and adapt their own behaviors appropriately, being careful to maintain professionalism while showing personal investment and concern for the coachee's success. Ritzhaupt and Kumar (2015) note the ability to maintain a working relationship with faculty is considered to be an important expectation of instructional designers working in higher education. The most productive faculty-instructional designer relationships are those that have been going on for an extended period of time. Established relationships or a history of past teamwork helps, and hosting in-depth conversations early in the design process supports open dialogue (Chao et al., 2010).

Depending on the extent of the project and the expectations the instructional designer and faculty members have of one another, it is important time is given for the instructional designer to establish a shared vision with the faculty they are supporting. To become a strong team, taking time to set expectations and allowing enough space for adequate reflection and feedback is key (Chao et al., 2010). As the collaborative relationship progresses, trust is developed and expertise demonstrated, leading to lowered barriers of self-preservation and openness to the contributions of others (Cowie, 2010).

Stream 3: Supporting Behavioral Change

This phase aims to deepen problem-solving, plan appropriately, and adapt behaviors to reach stated objectives by following the GROW (goal, reality, options, way forward) model (Passmore, 2017). The team must name the desired outcome, consider the current situation, explore the available options, and draft a contract about how to proceed (Passmore, 2017).

This stream models the project management aspects of the instructional design process. The similarities between executive coaching and instructional design become more visible as the application of the ubiquitously simple GROW coaching model parallels the common use of the foundational ADDIE (analyze, design, develop, iterate, evaluate) process, often adapted for use in instructional design practice (Branch, 2017). The GROW model (Alexander & Renshaw, 2005) is a four-step model:

- Goal: Identify the employee's goal.
- Reality: Establishing present conditions.
- Options: Determining what can be done.
- Will: How an employee can move forward.

Passmore's (2007) coaching framework recommends coaches support their coachees by promoting permanent change. An instructional designer working in higher education will often find themselves encountering challenges with this phase. A common challenge is that faculty often rely so heavily on the instructional designers to develop their content that they do not necessarily pay sufficient attention to how content has been structured or the rationale for why it may be structured in a particular way (Outlaw & Rice, 2015). In Ritzhaupt and Kumar's (2015) study of instructional design competencies in higher education, one respondent explained, "You know the old adage that you give someone a fish, they eat for a day. You teach them to fish, they eat for a lifetime. My job is giving fishing lessons. I try to teach the faculty how to use the system so they can be self-sufficient" (p.59). Instructional designers should prioritize explaining their thoughts, recommendations, decisions, and processes to faculty members to support their successful independence after the collaboration period ends.

It is in this stream of the Integrative Coaching Model where Passmore (2007) notes many novice coaches spend most of their time, as they often "work with evidence at its face value and seek the easiest solutions to issues" (p.72). Novice instructional designers identify a problem based on the presented characteristics and apply the simplest solution, rather than explore the problem and its confounding factors the way an expert would approach a situation (Ertmer & Stepich, 2005; Perez & Emery, 1995; Stefaniak & Hwang, 2021).

Promoting permanent change through a coaching lens could help instructional designers mitigate conflict when working collaboratively with faculty. In a study examining how instructional designers approach conflict with faculty in design projects, Mueller et al. (2022) noted that a lack of clarity and collaborators' understanding of stakeholder's roles can pose challenges, ultimately resulting in conflict. In their study interviewing instructional designers about their experiences with managing conflict, Mueller et al.'s (2022) findings suggest instructional designers who were successful at managing conflict with faculty used strategies to "convey their personal commitment and attentiveness to the faculty member" (p. 6).

We recommend the four steps in the GROW model (Alexander & Renshaw, 2005) be used by instructional designers while they communicate with faculty during an initial project kickoff meeting. The GROW framework can support discussion to specifically acknowledge the reality pertaining to the project. During this time, the instructional designer and faculty ensure they have a shared understanding regarding the contextual factors (conditions) that

will directly impact the project. By acknowledging these factors, the faculty member and instructional designer can brainstorm possibilities that are feasible, and efficient, and address the conditions imposed on the project. By engaging in these discussions both stakeholders can work to have a shared understanding of the situation and expectations related to the project.

Stream 4: Supporting conscious cognition

A key theme in this stream of coaching is to help the coachee find any irrational beliefs that are driving their current behaviors, and challenge them (Passmore, 2017). Irrational beliefs could be assumptions related to teaching the specific subject matter, challenges with delivering instruction in a different format (i.e., online versus face-to-face), or obstacles associated with designing and delivering authentic learning experiences. Instructional designers are often partnered with faculty to develop or revise online or technology-enhanced courses. Bunk et al. (2015) studied faculty attitudes towards teaching online, and noted faculty may feel reluctant due to concerns about missing face-to-face interaction, lack of time to become familiar with technology, lack of support with technology, and concerns about compromised academic honesty. These concerns highlight the complexity of instructional designer's role, as they not only must explore instructional issues and brainstorm solutions, but also must "convince the faculty SME that the solution is both viable and reasonable to implement" (Pollard & Kumar, 2022, p. 13)

There is the potential for a lot of informal learning to take place during meetings between the instructional designer and the faculty they are supporting. Instructional designers can support faculty members' conscious cognition by explaining the relationship between their design activities and decisions and engaging the faculty in conversations about how different instructional strategies can support specific content and expected learning outcomes in their course. In coaching, Passmore (2007) recommends techniques such as "reframing, immersion, visualization, and the use of homework tasks" (p. 73) to support the coachee's belief in themselves to achieve their desired outcome. Checklists can also be used as an organizational tool to help guide work and discussions through the design process. Campbell et al. (2009) note that instructional designers often come from a variety of backgrounds, and gain many of their possessed skills with technology informally while on the job. This experience can act as a support for increasing confidence in a faculty member's ability to overcome any barriers they have towards changing their teaching methods.

Outlaw and Rice (2015) found in universities that employed a course development model where the instructional designer completed the course-building activities alone, faculty were initially thankful to be relieved of the workload, but ultimately found it to be a disservice as it "deprives them of additional technical skillsets and certain levels of autonomy" after the collaboration period has ended (Outlaw & Rice, 2015, p. 1). Faculty need to be able to update course content on their own, once the instructional designer has moved on to a new project. Instructional designers who demonstrate their processes empower their faculty partners' future independence and assist in developing technical competencies.

Chao et al. (2010) recommend the use of quality standards in design, as they can serve as a formative guiding outline to the course design process and positive reinforcement to faculty. Specifically, using quality standards in design helped faculty feel confident in their courses'

ability to withstand scrutiny from university review committees, and served as a checklist of alignment between activities and objectives (Chao et al., 2010). The use of quality standards can act as a scaffold for demonstrating many of the tasks that instructional designers often work on behind the scenes. By structuring conversations and meetings around how progress is being made in regard to instructional design standards, instructional designers can effectively engage in communication that is centered around improving the project.

Stream 5: Identifying motivational factors

Everyone is motivated by different factors and instructional designers in higher education will find themselves working with faculty who have been assigned to work with them for a variety of reasons. While some faculty may be enthusiastic about improving the design of their courses or transitioning courses from a face-to-face environment to an online learning environment, others may feel as though they did not have a choice. Instructional designers can extrinsically motivate faculty by helping them to identify and integrate different instructional applications in their programming, create more efficient mechanisms for grading, and set up learning management systems to be updated and modified easily each time a course is taught (Outlaw & Rice, 2015).

In this stream of coaching, Passmore (2007) recommends the use of motivational interviewing to assist the "client bring into conscious awareness the consequences of their behaviors and thus stimulates a stronger motivation to act" (p. 74). This includes gauging where the client is starting from, rating readiness to change, and then building arguments in support of change (Passmore, 2007). In the environment of higher education, instructional designers are not likely to overtly ask a faculty member how ready they are to change but rather try to determine readiness based on interactions. Starting with suggesting incremental changes rooted in areas of the faculty member's strengths can yield early small wins, creating momentum for the project.

Additionally, the International Board of Standards, for Training, Performance, and Instruction (IBSTPI) has identified several competencies to promote communication, such as using effective questioning techniques, soliciting and providing constructive feedback, and preparing written and oral messages to promote consensus-building and actively engage audiences (Koszalka et al., 2012). Passmore's (2007) recommendation for motivational interviewing can equip instructional designers with the necessary strategies to engage in questioning to obtain the information they need to support the project, identify the project needs, and communicate in meaningful ways that would not simultaneously be considered obtrusive by faculty.

Stream 6: Considering cultural considerations within the organization

When designing instruction within a higher education institute, instructional designers need to be aware of the multiple systems and subsystems that influence their work. During the coaching relationship, instructional designers can work with faculty to help them understand the larger system and the processes that have been put in place to support maintenance and sustainable instructional solutions.

Stream 6 of the coaching relationship is typically achieved after an extended period of time. Maintaining open dialogue between the instructional designer and the faculty member can help to support discussions related to the various systems at work. The factor of time allows for the course to be implemented, ultimately allowing for the faculty member to see how their design project may align with other projects in the future.

In the Integrative Coaching Model, Passmore (2007) highlights that all other streams occur simultaneously with this systemic stream, which includes all stakeholders and influencers. In instructional design, this could include faculty, peers teaching within the same program, administrators, and ultimately, the learners for whom the instruction is being designed. Campbell et al. (2007) note that "every institution has an embedded culture" and that "culture thrives on shared values and shared perspectives of the world" (p. 653). Instructional designers in higher education are working in a role that supports innovation, access, and inclusion.

Instructional designers may face the challenge of being in a situation where values or standards are not shared. Campbell et al. (2007) state "instructional designers feel responsibility for more things than they have the ability to influence," and may "find themselves in positions that require them to act beyond their authority, or in a vacuum of authority" (p. 660). It is important to note Passmore's (2007) streams do not occur in a linear fashion. As instructional designers and faculty work together over an extended period of time, they can inform and support each other to address the cultural considerations embedded within their institution.

Conclusion

The majority of studies that have focused on instructional designers in higher education are focused on their abilities to engage in design activities, online learning strategies, and interacting with faculty. Other areas that warrant exploration include how instructional designers can weave project management strategies into the design process. To date, there is a paucity of literature that has explored project management (i.e., Kline et al., 2020; Laying, 1997; Williams van Rooij, 2011). We believe there is potential to explore the synergies between coaching and project management as they relate to instructional design practices in higher education.

In a study examining project management competencies expected of educational technology professionals in higher education, Kline et al. (2020) identified several competencies related to communicating with stakeholders, and using tools for project planning, and management. Integrating coaching strategies within the design process can enhance the instructional designer's ability to cultivate relationships with faculty, Coaching strategies coupled with project management strategies could greatly impact an instructional designer's ability to make effective and efficient decisions.

Future Research

Some of the earliest papers exploring relationships between instructional designers and faculty members date back to the 1980s (i.e., Wedman, 1989). As instructional designers are

seen as a prominent resource within higher education institutions, there is a growing body of research exploring the dynamics that occur between instructional designers and faculty (Bawa & Watson, 2017; Chen & Carliner, 2021; Richardson et al., 2019). Additionally, a subarea of research exploring how instructional designers manage conflict is emerging (Fortney & Yamagata-Lynch, 2013; Mueller et al., 2022a, b).

As these relationships continue to be explored in greater depth, research exploring strategies to help instructional designers mitigate conflict is needed. We recommend additional studies be conducted that examine how various coaching frameworks can be used to support instructional designers' abilities to support faculty with their projects while providing the necessary guidance and resources for faculty to become self-sustaining upon completion of the project.

Additionally, more research is needed to explore ways in which instructional designers communicate with stakeholders during projects. Communication and conflict resolution are recognized as being essential instructional design competencies. By developing a better understanding of the challenges instructional designers face, appropriate strategies and efforts can be integrated into instructional design programs to support the development of novice instructional designers entering the field.

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