The Role of Instructional Designers in Coaching in the Context of the New Normal: A Case Study of RSU 127 Intercultural Communication Course at Rangsit University

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Abstract

Following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, educational systems across the globe encountered unparalleled difficulties, necessitating an expeditious shift towards online learning to maintain academic continuity. This qualitative research investigates the complexities associated with adjusting to online learning environments, with a specific emphasis on the experiences of a faculty member at the College of Liberal Arts, Rangsit University. In light of the heightened levels of student stress and anxiety documented in numerous studies amidst the pandemic, this research investigates intercultural communication instruction using an empathy map derived from design thinking. By employing thematic analysis of the collected data, this research endeavours to shed light on the obstacles and potential advantages associated with cultivating efficient intercultural communication among students hailing from various backgrounds. The results revealed that notwithstanding the challenges encountered by educators and students, such as adequacy in technological infrastructure and instructional planning, the revelations extracted from the faculty's experience underscore the capacity of online education to augment intercultural comprehension and compassion. This study highlights the importance of inclusive and reflective pedagogical approaches in addressing the challenges of intercultural communication in virtual learning environments. It contributes to the larger conversation regarding how to best accommodate the diverse requirements of students in online education.

Keywords: *Instructional Designer, Cultural Communication, Undergraduate Students*

1. Introduction

Numerous academic establishments across the globe have transitioned their curricula to digital platforms in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. UNESCO data from 2020 estimates that approximately 1.5 billion students are enrolled in online courses. Hodges et al. (2020) state that online education must provide best practices for developing successful learning activities in approximately 188 countries. Among the numerous benefits of online education is the enhanced student health and safety. As stated by Salari et al. (2020), several research studies have demonstrated that learners experienced elevated levels of tension, anxiety, and depression throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. The Student Senate for California Community Athletes additionally surveyed approximately 1,700 students hailing from 64 campuses. 67% of respondents to the 2020 US Department of Education and Ortiz Oakley et al. v. Devos study reported experiencing elevated levels of stress, anxiety, despondency, and psychological distress later in life. An examination of the outbreak's onset in Thailand from April 2020 onwards reveals that it has worsened significantly. Teachers and students at all levels have been impacted by the government-mandated closure, which has hampered the ability of numerous academic institutions to teach and students to study. At the time, there was arguably a dearth of analytical frameworks designed to assess and equip educators and learners with the knowledge required for effective learning and instruction. This is consistent with what Bessette, Chick and Friberg (2020) discovered. Alternatively, it is difficult to plan and prepare online instruction with precision.

Thus, an organized online learning experience differs significantly from a last-minute transition to online instruction. In light of the aforementioned, Rangsit University was inevitably bound to face such challenges. Although the institution comprises departments committed to advancing teaching and learning, the level of readiness among educators to utilize technology remains a concern. Both technology accessibility and instructional design experiences vary considerably, and these factors have a substantial impact on students.

Despite a variety of technologies, the support of instructional designers for faculty members in developing effective online courses is vital. Their capacity to cater to the varied requirements of students is, nevertheless, hindered by cultural disparities in instructional design and technology accessibility. Furthermore, there is considerable variation in the degree of preparedness exhibited by educators when it comes to utilizing technology, which presents obstacles in the pursuit of guaranteeing fair and equal access to online education.

Similar to numerous scholarly establishments, Rangsit University encounters difficulties when attempting to transition to online education. Despite concerted efforts to improve teaching and learning, lingering concerns persist regarding the preparedness of educators to effectively employ technology. Cultural elements exert an impact on both the accessibility of technology and the quality of instructional design, underscoring the imperative for intercultural sensitivity in the development of online courses. Moreover, instructional designers play a crucial role in overcoming these obstacles and maximizing student learning outcomes.

Therefore, the shift towards online education that academic institutions have undertaken in response to the COVID-19 pandemic presents a range of obstacles and prospects. The incorporation of intercultural factors is crucial when confronting these obstacles, especially in culturally heterogeneous environments such as Rangsit University. By recognizing and accounting for cultural variations in technological accessibility, instructional design backgrounds, and learning preferences, professionals in the fields of education and instructional design can create online courses that are more inclusive and effectively address the varied requirements of students. Notwithstanding the challenges encountered, the shift towards online education presents a prospect to cultivate collaboration and intercultural comprehension in the quest for excellence in education for all.

2. Purposes

The study aims to examine how instructional designers function as counselors and what changes they are making.

3. Review of the Literature

This section provides information about two important concepts: instructional designers and intercultural communication. The details are as follows:

3.1 Instructional Designers

The AECT designates instructional designers to oversee the theory and application of developing, implementing, regulating, and assessing learning resources and processes. The faculty is assisted in the establishment of learning objectives for each course and module through the provision of support from instructional designers. An enumeration of the educational materials, activities, and assessment instruments is required. Given the composition of the teaching faculty, which includes full-time and part-time faculty and graduate teaching assistants, it is crucial to incorporate technology into the pedagogical process. This integration will guarantee that students successfully accomplish their academic objectives despite

[141]

encountering various learning environments and formats (Beirne & Romanoski, 2018). Conversely, instructional designers might not have completed formal education. Furthermore, educators frequently encounter obstacles concerning motivation and time in the process of revising their lesson plans on a consistent basis (Brownell & Tanner, 2012). Their primary duty is to provide support to instructors during the course design and implementation phases (Beirne & Romanoski, 2018; Kurt, 2018).

This can be attributed to the current requirement for all levels of education to implement online instruction. As a result, instructional designers support the design process of online instruction by facilitating the incorporation of online teaching principles into learning management systems. A component of these guidelines entails reassessing the obligations that instructors bear regarding online instruction. The deployment of digital platforms Achieving proficiency in overseeing virtual discourse while maximizing learning and instruction via the implementation of asynchronous instructional methods Enhancing Evaluations for Internet Applications By offering resources that facilitate improved feedback, distance education can foster appropriate student-to-teacher ratios and increase learner engagement (Means, Bakia, & Murphy, 2014; McPherson & Nunes, 2006).The current mandate for the implementation of online instruction at all levels of education is the cause of this. Consequently, instructional designers facilitate the integration of online teaching principles into learning management systems in support of the design process of online instruction. An element of these guidelines involves a reevaluation of the responsibility instructors have in relation to online instruction. The implementation of electronic platforms Succeeding in the management of virtual discourse with optimal learning and instruction through the utilization of asynchronous instructional techniques Improving Assessments of Internet Application Distance education has the potential to promote optimal student-to-teacher ratios and enhance learner engagement through the provision of feedback-enhancing resources (Means, Bakia, & Murphy, 2014; McPherson & Nunes, 2006).

This is a result of the existing need to incorporate online training at every educational level. Instructional designers aid in the integration of online teaching ideas into learning management systems, hence supporting the design process of online training. One aspect of these recommendations involves a reevaluation of the responsibilities that teachers have regarding online instruction. The incorporation of digital platforms Efficiently supervising online interactions to provide the best possible learning and teaching outcomes by utilizing asynchronous instructional techniques. Distance education has the potential to boost learner engagement by providing feedback-enhancing resources and creating ideal student-to-teacher ratios, as suggested by research conducted by Means, Bakia, and Murphy (2014) and McPherson and Nunes (2006).

3.2 Intercultural Communication

Various individuals communicate information, ideas, and cultural views in educational contexts via intercultural communication. Effective communication requires negotiating cultural differences between people from different cultures. Ting-Toomey (2009) characterizes intercultural communication as a complex combination of verbal and nonverbal clues in which cultural values, conventions, and behaviors are essential to meaningful relationships.

Intercultural communication is crucial to promote diversity, inclusion, and understanding among students and educators. This communication promotes cross-cultural understanding and empathy, creating inclusive learning settings where all students feel valued and respected. Lustig and Koester (2015) state that intercultural communication skills are essential for managing heterogeneous classrooms and promoting effective intercultural relationships.

Intercultural communication at educational institutions requires effective instructional materials. Culturally appropriate texts, multimedia, and experiential activities teach students about other cultures and

[142]

communication methods. Such resources help students grasp cultural variety and foster meaningful intercultural contacts.

Effective classroom management and proper instructional materials are essential for intercultural communication. This involves using culturally responsive education and proactive communication methods to respect students' cultures. By promoting mutual respect and open discourse, educators may help students communicate across cultures (Ting-Toomey, 2009).

In conclusion, intercultural communication is essential to educational diversity, inclusion, and understanding. By accepting various viewpoints, using effective educational resources, and using successful classroom management practices, educators may improve students' intercultural competency and prepare them for global success. Creating inclusive learning settings where all students may succeed requires strengthening intercultural communication skills.

4. Materials and Methods

This research adopts a qualitative methodology, utilizing the empathy map from design thinking as the primary data collection and analysis tool. This study focuses on exploring the complexities and challenges of intercultural communication, as experienced and taught by a faculty staff at Rangsit University's College of Liberal Arts.

The informant has a comprehensive educational background in the fields of linguistics and English. He earned a secondary education diploma from Takua Pa Senanukul School, a bachelor's degree from the College of Liberal Arts at Rangsit University, and a master's degree in Linguistics from the Faculty of Humanities at Kasetsart University. His academic journey provides a solid foundation for his expertise in intercultural communication. Currently, he teaches RSU 127 at Rangsit University, focusing on various aspects of intercultural communication, such as cultural dimensions, nonverbal communication, and the impact of culture shock, among others.

The empathy map, a tool derived from design thinking, was employed to gather insights into perspectives and experiences in teaching intercultural communication. This approach involves a detailed and empathetic engagement with the subject, aiming to understand his views on the challenges faced by students in navigating cultural differences. The empathy map will enable us to capture observations on student reactions, misunderstandings, and breakthroughs in learning about intercultural communication. This method is particularly suited for qualitative research where the depth of understanding and insight into personal experiences is prioritized over quantitative data.

The collected data were analyzed thematically, focusing on key themes related to intercultural communication as identified in the course RSU 127. These themes include, but are not limited to, definitions of intercultural communication, types of culture, factors influencing intercultural communication, culture shock, cultural dimensions, nonverbal communication, and the significance of language and communication styles in cultural interaction. The analysis also considered how international languages reflect the cultural values of their respective nations, as discussed in the course. Through carefully examining these themes, the research aims to uncover nuanced insights into the challenges and opportunities presented by intercultural communication.

By employing a qualitative approach centered around an empathy map, this research aims to contribute to the broader understanding of intercultural communication from the perspective of an educator deeply involved in the field. The insights gained from the experiences and teaching methodologies offer valuable contributions to academic discussions on intercultural communication. Furthermore, the findings

[143]

may inform the development of more effective teaching strategies and curricula that address the complexities of intercultural interaction, ultimately fostering greater empathy and understanding among students from diverse cultural backgrounds.

The study aims to enhance the academic discourse on this crucial subject by capturing the essence of intercultural communication as taught and experienced by an educator through this research approach.

5. Results

The counselor explained the basics of this discussion to the person who was advised to study this further.

5.1 Issues from the Course:

However, the counselor continued to inquire the person receiving the consultation to analyze the following issues.

1) Student issues
2) Teaching material issues
3) Issues of readiness for online learning

There are a number of potential uses for the data collection. Like observing a classroom, asking students to think about instructional media and then returning to collaborate on solutions

Following three weeks, the counselor questioned the person getting the consultation: What issues did you have in the classroom during your three weeks of teaching RSU 127 (students, media, technology, time, and the instructor)

The person receiving the consultation explained the matter in detail and was able to divide the issues as follows:

"The challenges I faced after teaching this topic were due to the group from all faculties. It may be argued that each student has their own learning style or that the nature of studying is not the same. As a result, the challenge may be in determining what we can do to ensure that all groups of students can interact with one another, speak to one another, and then talk to one another as a result of the latter's efforts. This will be 100% group work. Yes, so everyone may need to speak more. I may have to change my teaching techniques to make it more exciting and to ensure that students from various faculties comprehend and study at the same time.

The person receiving the consultation explained further that

"Actually, the major issue may be that there are several organizations. And students may not communicate with one another. There was little talking going on. What I'd want to solve is the possibility of a breakout room or the alley being broken into several smaller groups, allowing for more frequent conversation or debate. Every week, each subject is separated into groups. Let's look at what we learnt this week and then put it to work. How is our life or work?"

The counselor shared the summary. The issues and causes are as follows:

1) Student issues

"Some students expressed that the study material was excessive, making it difficult for them to keep pace, and that a significant number of lectures were too lengthy. Occasionally, it instigates a desire inside me to engage in other activities."

2) Teaching material issues

"A significant number of kids expressed their opinion that PowerPoint was neither intriguing nor fascinating. In many instances, there was no video, despite the fact that it seemed to be useful."

5.2 Analysis and reflection of the mentee

1) Communication and explanation of the course RSU 127

"The counselor communicates and explains this course in both one-way communication and two-way communication formats. This is because the counselor will send course information via online media to all teaching staff, as well as discuss and exchange knowledge and experiences, including teaching methods, with all teachers, including myself, every week. I am very happy to have consulted and communicated about this kind of teaching with the counselor."

2) Consulting in organizing teaching and learning in the subject RSU 127

"First of all, as I said before, the counselor is a person who is good at talking, speaking, and teaching. Therefore, Ton's advice is very good. When I have a problem, I go and ask the counselor directly. The counselor will also tell you methods for solving problems or methods for teaching. This week, we have a topic like this: how should we teach it? We may have additional content for the students. I consider it very useful."

The consultation process undertaken on the teaching methods at RSU 127 resulted in a thorough comprehension of the difficulties linked to intercultural communication. After engaging in thorough discussions and careful examination, several significant matters were pinpointed. These include apprehensions about the efficacy of educational resources, preparedness for online learning environments, and the variety of student demographics.

An effective approach to tackle these difficulties is the use of breakout rooms during virtual lessons. Breakout rooms facilitate smaller group conversations, promoting individualized connections and cultivating a feeling of camaraderie among students from all backgrounds. Furthermore, it is suggested that more interactive teaching methods be used in order to improve student involvement and enable cross-cultural communication.

The implementation of breakout rooms and the integration of participatory teaching methodologies are proactive steps taken to tackle the stated difficulties. These solutions demonstrate an acknowledgement of the need for instructional methods that may be adjusted to accommodate students' varied requirements and backgrounds. Instructors may foster inclusion and cater to diverse learning styles by facilitating collaborative learning and encouraging active student engagement.

Moreover, the use of breakout rooms and interactive teaching methods demonstrates an increased recognition of the need to cultivate an inclusive learning atmosphere. These techniques recognize the need to enable significant contact between students from different cultural backgrounds and foster cross-cultural comprehension.

In summary, the consultation process emphasized the need to use creative instructional techniques to address obstacles pertaining to intercultural communication. By adopting methods such as breakout rooms and interactive teaching approaches, educators may establish inclusive and flexible learning environments that accommodate the requirements of all students.

Overall, the consultation process carried out at RSU 127 emphasized the need to tackle difficulties related to intercultural communication in educational environments. The suggestion to use breakout rooms and include interactive teaching methods demonstrates a proactive strategy to foster inclusion and cater to the

needs of varied student groups. Implementing these tactics may help create an inclusive learning environment that appreciates and honors the cultural variety of students.

6. Conclusion and Discussions

The findings of this case study highlight the need to provide faculty members who are transitioning to online teaching and learning with chances for complete professional development. Through the provision of devoted help, tailored treatment, seminars, and online education, instructional designers play a significant part in easing the shift that is being made. It is possible for instructional designers to assist faculty members in developing the required skills and competencies for successful online education by providing a variety of professional development opportunities, including training in technology capabilities. An essential factor emphasized in this research is the need to enhance technology literacy among faculty members. Training events and learning activities targeting technology skills may effectively equip teachers for the transition to online teaching and learning. In addition, offering technology instruction in small cohorts or via self-paced teaching techniques may improve accessibility and adaptability, guaranteeing that faculty members have the necessary access to professional development opportunities.

By deviating from conventional methods of professional development, such as large-scale lectures, instructional designers might use new strategies to expand faculty members' prospects for professional growth. To enhance faculty members' transition to online education, instructional designers may provide customized professional development experiences that cater to their specific requirements and interests. This strategy is in line with the changing nature of higher education, which is placing more and more emphasis on individualized and adaptable learning experiences.

Ultimately, the primary objective of professional development in online teaching and learning is to guarantee that every student has equal access to excellent instructional resources and support services. Instructional designers may promote a learner-centred approach to online education by equipping faculty members with the necessary knowledge, skills, and resources for success. By continuously collaborating and innovating, instructional designers and faculty members may jointly develop captivating and efficient online learning experiences that foster student achievement.

7. Acknowledgements

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