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Student Role Play and Negotiation in an Instructional Design Education Class

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Abstract: *The following design case describes the introduction of two complementary pedagogical strategies to an EdD course on Instructional Design Application: student role play and negotiation between student design teams. The case describes the thinking behind, and implementation of, these strategies in relation to the overall redesign of an existing course. The goal of adopting these strategies was to foster interactions and opportunities for creativity and designerly thinking among student instructional designers.*

Keywords: design thinking, instructional design education, creativity, empathy, ideation.

The debate between those advocating for the use of specified processes across learning contexts and those in favor of more authentic design experiences has been a running theme in instructional design (ID) education and training for many years (see Rowland, 1992). Embedded in this debate is the concern that a strictly process-oriented approach to instructional design education can lead to gaps in what ID students learn in training and their activities, responsibilities, and experiences in real-world practice (Carr-Chellman & Rowland, 2016). In fact, in a seminal study on the practices of working instructional designers, Rowland (1992) found that many ID professionals use formal design models sporadically and often only certain parts of a model. In other words, the real-world work experiences of an instructional designer may not involve the use of formal design models as instructional design programs might have us believe (York & Ertmer, 2016).

CASE BACKGROUND

This design case took place in a Learning, Design, & Technology program at a land grant university in the western United States. A course on Instructional Design Application (referred to herein as "the course") was scheduled for revising and updating to reflect a recent change in the program's orientation from Instructional Technologies to Learning, Design, & Technology. EdD students who enrolled in the course were typically in-service teachers and professionals in educational contexts familiar with basic principles of instructional design. Reflecting the recent change in program focus, the faculty member in charge of revising and teaching the course was interested in design and incorporating new opportunities for student creativity, collaboration, and design thinking.

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BASE COURSE RE-DESIGN ELEMENTS

As noted above, the instructor identified several pedagogical elements he felt were essential in his re-design of the course. These elements were chosen based on the affordances they could provide to support and foster creativity, as well as opportunities for flexible design thinking and greater interaction among students. They include:

- Basis in social constructivism
- Collaboration between students
- Closed communication (no 3rd party "clients")
- Real world examples (not text-book case studies)
- Multiple small ID projects (as opposed to one semester-long project)
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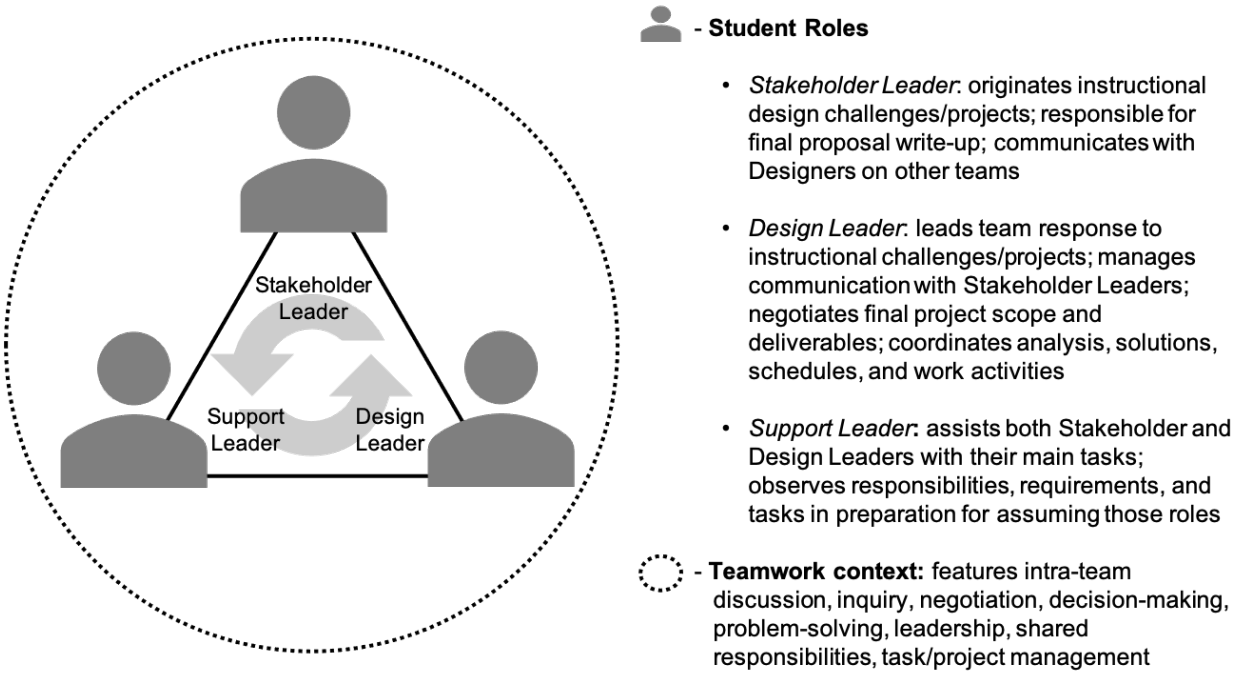
ADOPTING INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN ROLES

The instructor noted that the course had 12 students enrolled that semester, which accommodated 4 teams of 3 students each. To provide a sense of structure, the instructor decided to designate roles within the teams that correspond with traditional roles in instructional design work: Stakeholder Leaders, Design Leaders, and Support Leaders. Figure 1 is a visualization provided to the students to help them understand the intended team dynamics and responsibilities.

Figure 1

Intra-team structure and dynamics for Stakeholder, Design, and Support Role



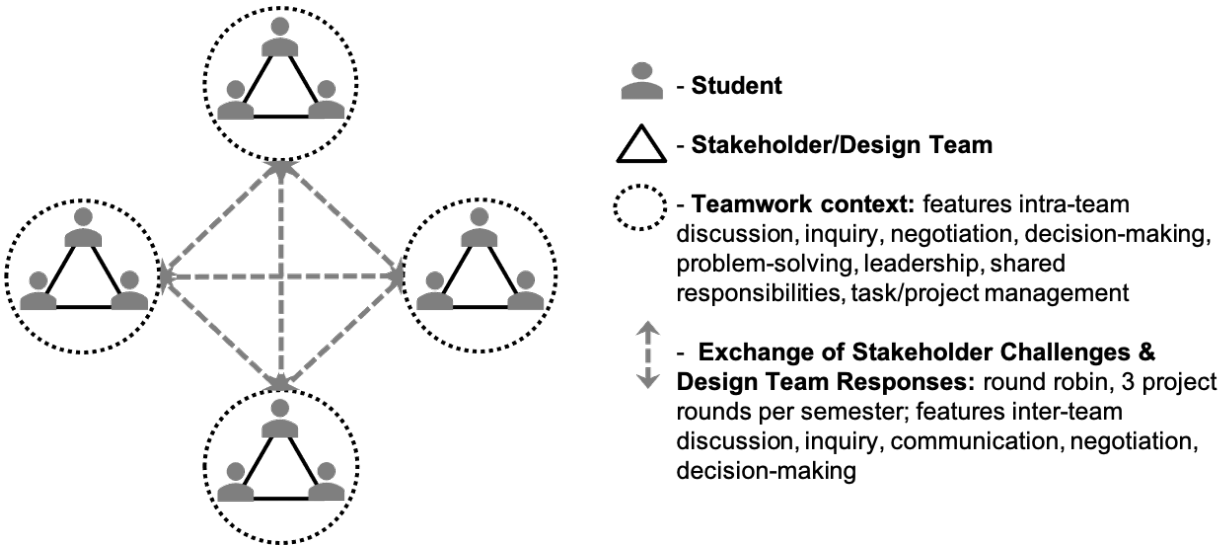
NEGOTIATING ID PROPOSALS AND SOLUTIONS

Seeing the balance of teams, the instructor then considered how the course design could be enhanced to allow for student interactions not just within teams but between teams as well. He

decided that for each project period, each team would assume the role of a Stakeholder Team that was responsible for developing and proposing an instructional design project/challenge for which another team would design a response or solution. At the same time, each team also assumed the role of a Design Team that would address an instructional design project/challenge proposed by another team (see Figure 2 for a visualization provided to students of the intended inter-team roles and interactions).

Figure 2

Inter-team Interactions During Design Challenge/project Rounds



Discussion and Future Directions

The above design case highlights considerations and experiences around implementing role playing and negotiation activities in an instructional design education course. The case is offered as an artifact of genuine instructional design, one that was intended to offer students opportunities for creativity and design thinking that may not be found in strictly process-oriented approaches. By having students work in teams to develop design challenges to propose to other student teams, the course design was structured to promote learner autonomy. By having them assume different leadership roles associated in real world instructional design contexts – Stakeholders, Design Team, and Support – the course design also provided a structure for students to gain experience with different ID perspectives and responsibilities. Finally, by having them negotiate the scope and particulars of their solutions to the proposed ID challenges, the course design provided collaborative mechanisms by which students could develop appreciation and empathy for real world Stakeholder positions while gaining a nuanced understanding of their capacities and limitations as a design team.

Informal student feedback for this course model has generally been positive. Students appreciated opportunities to assume different roles in instructional design contexts, as well as apply course knowledge and content towards solutions for their own professional problems of practice. One issue of concern for some students regarded the scope and length of negotiations, i.e., what items in Stakeholder challenges were open to negotiation and alternative solutions, and how long negotiations should last. Future iterations of the course will focus on providing students

with enhanced guidance and parameters for establishing effective negotiations between teams, including suggested areas of negotiation and timeframes. Future research will focus on formally collecting data regarding student perceptions on the effects of team-based role playing and negotiation on designerly attributes such as empathy and ideation in instructional design contexts.

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