

Explore the Connections between Universal Instruction Design and Business Education in the Globalization Era

Abstract

The principle of Universal Instruction design (UID) is to ask instructors to design the curriculum and environment that are accessible to students with different learning styles, learning needs, physical abilities, and cultural backgrounds. This approach facilitates students with different learning styles and abilities to be engaged in the process of learning. It assumes that barriers to learning result from “learners’ interactions with inflexible education materials and methods” rather than the inherent capacities of learners (Rose & Meyer, 2002, p.vi). Students can keep their privacy and do not need to disclose their learning disabilities in the UID. It is the responsibility of instructors to think clearly about the essential components of the course and design multiple ways for students to access the key components and to demonstrate their abilities to reach the essential goals of learning. The basic principles of UID are (Disability Service of University of Minnesota, 2006):

1. Create a welcoming classroom climate;
2. Determine the essential components of the course;
3. Provide clear expectations and feedback;
4. Explore ways to incorporate natural supports for learning;
5. Use varied instruction methods;
6. Provide a variety ways for students to demonstrate knowledge;
7. Use technology to enhance learning opportunities;
8. Encourage faculty-student contact.

In the age of globalization era, business educators can use UID to reach out to many students with diverse needs and learning styles in their planning of the curricula and materials. Business educators using UID will present information in multiple ways, enable students to interact with and respond to the course in multiple ways, motivate students to use multiple ways to find meaning in the material and to demonstrate their knowledge and skills, and make good use of technology. Thus, business educators can use UID to educate students who may be far away from the instruction sites and have diverse learning culture. As more and more students of diverse background are engaged in the process of learning, students can learn how to listen to the voices of many people who are different from them and learn and become prepared to address many global signals in their work through a broad range of stakeholder engagement. Educators can facilitate students to prepare for more change, more conflicts, more coordination, and more collaboration among various stakeholders in a “permanent white water” situations of extreme turbulence and uncertainty (Vaill, 1989).

In this semester, the researcher adopted UID in two undergraduate and one graduate course. Her students can access her notes through computer or phone devices

places one week prior to the class. Students may bring the laptops to the classrooms and can modify their notes quickly. They are allowed to use multiple ways to access the knowledge and use multi-media to demonstrate their knowledge. Undergraduates are encouraged to use their known popular culture such as comics, video or posters to present their ideas. This approach can help students to relate what they know to the academic culture. Graduate students are also facilitated to connect their work experience to theories and to pull their strength together to solve a marketing problem for a specific company. Undergraduate and graduate students are guided to learn from their mentors, from critical research, through service learning, through collaborative learning, and by self-reflection practices. In summary, students are encouraged to develop their own personal insights and enhance their creative thinking. "Learning to think creativity in one discipline ...opens the door to understand creative thinking in all disciplines. Educating this universal creative imagination is the key to producing lifelong learners capable of shaping the innovations of tomorrow" (Root-Bernstein & Root-Bernstein, 1999, p. viii). Some of the researcher's students can see how their personal knowledge and their new ideas develop in the process of learning when UID allows them to see errors and to demonstrate their knowledge in many ways. UID allows educators to teach their students to recognize and use their non-logical and non-verbal thinking in the process of developing their inventive capabilities.

The researcher has conducted a survey to assess the effectiveness of UID in her three graduate and undergraduate courses. Many students agree that they are given multiple ways and opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge and skills. However, it is challenging for the instructor to communicate the assessments clearly when students are allowed to submit their assignments in different formats. The researcher needs to communicate with students about the rigor of learning goals and to encourage students to reach the goals with their creative works.

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