Entering a graduate program is easier today than it has ever been. Flexible approaches to residency requirements, class times, and the format of instruction allow adult learners to participate effectively in advanced study. The transactional distance between the instructor and the learners may be reduced through well designed distance education programs. The need for lifelong learning through advanced degrees is greater now than it has ever been. Technology teachers have long been recognized as the people in the schools who fix things that are broken. They fixed computers and they also fixed the tables the computers stood on (Burke 2005). The paradigm is shifting. In our new global economy we expect teachers to facilitate entry into the information age for their students. This means the teachers are now responsible for managing the network within the school, designing the school’s web page, and knowing and teaching the newest and best Internet search engine. Joseph Janes (2007) says: “In an information world increasingly dominated by the digital and the networked, these kinds of skill are important and increasingly more evident” (p38).

ADDIE

A familiar acronym for instructional designers, ADDIE offers a pattern for effective course development. The ITDE program revolves around five learning outcomes that are closely related to the ADDIE component parts. At the beginning of a development project there must be effective analysis. Graduate level analysis requires a foundation in research that makes a professional able to access, critically review, and design formal research projects. CUR 526 guided learners through both group and individual projects designed to increase skills at accessing current journal and text articles relevant to the topic. The final project in CUR 526 included research of current
literature, design and use of survey tools to define the need, and presentation of a proposed research plan to evaluate the effectiveness of the recommended treatment.

EDD 8012 was an excellent overview from a program evaluation perspective. Moving beyond the evaluation of a single course and looking at the macro level program issues allowed for inspection of such topics as the Digital Divide, consideration of a new online ministry at our church, and a guided review of a major vendor providing an online test delivery system. The opportunity to plan, organize, coordinate and supervise instructional technology is enhanced by a growing familiarity with leaders in the field.

The EDD 8008 course provided an opportunity to better understand the associations of professionals working in our field. Nominating a specific leader in our field (Kay Kohl) for a position in the Distance Education Hall of Fame helped me evaluate qualities that cause her to stand out as exceptional. The literature review completed as an exercise in multiple courses (8008 and 8574) helped prepare me for the rigor of both initial analysis and final evaluation of instruction.

After the initial analysis defined in the ADDIE model, a designer moves into course design and development. In studying the Digital Dakota Network and the Iowa Communications network during the introductory phase of EDD 8123, I was able to trace the growth of disruptive technologies across large scale implementations. During the course of my study in that area I was able to join the evolution of both the Georgia Work Ready and the Florida Ready to Work programs. My personal involvement and leadership in those programs was enhanced by the research I was part of in my studies at Nova. In the spring of 2009 we delivered over 130,000 assessments to individuals in Florida as part of the program. Faced with tax based funding, the Florida program is
facing serious budget concerns this year. The effectiveness of the program, however, is
driving leaders across the state to find and apply many thousands of dollars in one time
funding grants to fill the gap for this year to keep the program moving forward. EDD
8123 was the framework that led to my production of both a video record of the state-
wide launch, and the journal article based on the Florida Ready to Work career readiness
credential. The article was published in Distance Learning Journal, volume 5, issue 1
(p19).

As part of the study during the ITDE program the development of instructional
materials for use in both computer-aided and Web-delivered courses offered a taste of the
practitioner’s world. EDD 8001 allowed me to thread course development around the
topic of learning to record using the TiVo application. The guided practice in EDD 8001
covered analyzing the need, designing the course, developing the materials, delivering the
instruction, evaluating the materials as a formative tool and the final user evaluation of
the course. EDD 7005 included the development of a web based lesson on a topic related
to distance education. I enjoyed learning more about dual coding and the value of
presenting both graphic and text as part of a lesson. I also discovered the challenge of
posting a lesson to the Web. My appreciation for professional Web designers continues
to this day. As an important part of designing courses for computer-aided or Web-based
delivery EDD 7005 offered guidelines and practice in essential skills such as still
photography, motion video recording, audio recording and editing. Using applications
such as Garage Band, Audacity, Swish, and iMovie helped me to understand the basics of
production. While recording, like Web-publishing, is a portion of course design I will
probably chose to outsource, the experience in the basics helped me to understand the theory even if I did not become fully competent in the actual practice.

A fourth learning outcome anticipated as part of the ITDE Masters program is that of the use of best practices, processes and resources. Throughout EDD 7007 and EDD 8008 the Principles of Distance Education and Principles of Instructional Technology the reading offered insight to the foundational tenets related to distance education and computer-aided instruction. Video lessons provided as part of EDD 8123 included original recordings from authors of seminal works such as BF Skinner in which he discussed early innovations in behavioral education. EDD 8574 combined education and workforce topics as we investigated tools for demonstrating the potential for return on investment of training dollars. Aghazadeh (n.d.) says that human resource management must change as the business environment changes. Training and evaluation that was effective last year must be reevaluate this year, and the evaluation must fairly consider the value, not just the cost. As we learned conservative estimation of ROI, using techniques outlined by Phillips and Phillips (2005) I found a significantly higher level of trust in projections than I have had in the past. Listening to Donald Kirkpatrick speak during a workshop at the Training 2007 conference in Florida, I was reminded of the responsibility senior management has to provide not only training, but effective training. Dr. Kirkpatrick has long been a proponent of evaluations to demonstrate the effectiveness of training, but it was not until working through a proposal to my management team that I actually understood the science behind the evaluations.

The final course in the ITDE program was EDD 9100, Leadership Seminar. As a culmination of work through the Masters program this final course required me to deeply
evaluate my leadership style. The stark difference between management and leadership became the basis for the most significant growth I have experienced professionally during the program. As my base of understanding in the content area of instructional design has grown I have developed a deeper understanding of the challenges we face in our profession. The courage to become a Level Three manager (Clawson, 2009) is based on a better understanding of me, and a higher appreciation for those individuals who share my workplace.

Evaluating the adequacy of instruction is essential for both formative and summative review. EDD 8001 offered an excellent opportunity for formative review as we developed our lessons and asked other professionals in our field and members of our target audience for input before the final lesson was released. Ongoing evaluation comes in many forms. The use of ROI evaluations practiced in EDD 8574 will continue to be helpful in the business environment as employers I meet with need to make cogent business decisions relating to training allocations.

**Conclusion**

I started the Instructional Technology and Distance Education program at Nova Southeastern in the summer of 2006. For the previous 15 years I progressed nicely through the promotional ranks within the operations of a large multinational computer-based testing company. I had been responsible for the management of the “blinking lights” on the screens and, the humans hired to maintain both the machines, and the decorum and security in the test centers. Joining my new company, ACT, allowed me the opportunity to move from delivering service to our client programs to a role of consulting with senior management in testing. I found that I needed a broader understanding of the
theory behind instructional technology and testing to be effective as we worked together designing and implementing innovative new testing programs. The breadth and depth of the ITDE program at Nova has brought me to a new level of competence in my job, and opened opportunities for future growth both academically and professionally. My company sells valid and reliable standardized tests, with over two million administrations last year in the United States. Course work through Nova has helped make me more effective in dealing with the state level policy makers working to implement testing and training programs for the workforce in their state. The teachers with whom I work deliver curriculum developed for online delivery to help individuals improve their essential workplace skills in reading, applied mathematics and locating information in text or from charts and graphs. A better understanding of the theory and practice of instructional technology and distance education is my competitive advantage in the market. The skills and knowledge gained in the last three years of study has helped me to develop an effective scaffold from which I work, with my colleagues across the country, to help individuals succeed in education and the workplace. My journey through ITDE is not over, but the postcards from my trip will serve as excellent road maps for future adventures.
References


