Chapter 6
Administrative Issues Impacting Instructional Design for Online Learning

Instructional designers must never forget that designing online programs and courses is not done in isolation from the institutional context in which the programs are to be offered. In other words, there are a number of administrative realities that must be considered in order for programs to be delivered to learners in a timely and effective manner. To effectively address such institutional issues, a program designer must take the time to clarify his or her own philosophy of program design. This clarification of personal philosophy must then combine with a clarification of agency philosophy. Obviously there will be differences between the personal and agency philosophies of program design. Understanding such differences provides a starting place for design negotiations so that the eventual programs designed can satisfy both parties in the design loop (designer and agency). Without such clarification and negotiation, the programs designed are likely to either foster a sense of frustration in the designer or foster dissatisfaction among the agency administrators. In the real world (in contrast to abstract discussions in classrooms or professional conferences), successful online educational programs must be designed in a win-win environment.

The task of educational program design and educational program delivery is fraught with ethical issues that must be both anticipated and resolved. Such anticipation and resolution requires several crucial steps for designers. First, program designers must understand the institutional or agency context into which their planned educational program will fit. Agencies and organization vary widely in terms of their view of education and training and its relative status and function within the broader organizational environment. How will your agency or organization view the product of your design effort? Second, program designers must understand how to both negotiate and navigate within their own institutional realities. In other words, administrative systems must be understood and used to insure that budget considerations, personnel, and student support services all work together in a mutually supportive manner. Within these administrative systems, program designers must learn to interact effectively with institutional or agency manage-
ment to help agency decision makers understand
the value and potential of the online courses be-
ing designed. Certainly program designers must
know how to obtain funding and other forms of
institutional support for their efforts. Planners
must also be sure that instructional faculty are
recruited and trained. Learners at a distance require
multiple learner support services, such as registra-
tions, advising, financial aid, technical support,
and learning assessment. In this chapter we will
examine a number of administrative issues that
impact on program designers and provide some
practical suggestions to increase your effectiveness
as designers within the administrative context into
which your programs must fit.

PROGRAM DESIGNERS MUST
LEARN TO THINK MORE
LIKE ADMINISTRATORS

While the focus of most this book is upon the
various skills involved in the task of designing
effective online educational programs, many pro-
gram designers are in positions where they have
coordinating responsibilities for educational and
training programs beyond the ones they personally
design. If you find yourself in such a position, you
know what it means to be responsible to oversee the
delicate interplay between individual educational
programs, i.e., seek to control the effects programs
have on one another. In such a role you also need
to be attending to the interacting variables of
people, procedures, and work (Handy, 1985). In
other words, although educational designers, you
must also think and act like educational adminis-
trators. Most of you have probably seen situations
in which the best-designed programs have failed
due to administrative issues, not teaching and
learning issues.

Donaldson (1990) has suggested five helpful
principles for effective program coordination that
can help you as a program designer to begin to
think like an educational administrator and more
effectively provide the proper leadership to your
program design effort.

1. **The Helicopter Effect:** To be effective,
program designers must be willing to rise
above the day to day issues of designing
a particular program and gain a bird’s eye
view of the broader context into which their
program will fit. Such non-program specific
issues would include seeing the agency
culture, the competing programs, and the
learner context.

2. **Power and Influence:** Often designers pos-
sess very limited formal power or authority
in their agencies. Because they are dependent
upon persons over whom they have little or no
control, designers must learn to rely on influ-
ence and leverage to accomplish their goals.
Management research and theory suggests
that influence in organizations can be gained
by three main strategies: status, expertise, and
inter-personal skills. The status of a position
grows as more people in an organization come
to see the position as important. Designers
must discover ways to communicate the
value of what they do (i.e., designing edu-
cational programs) for achieving the goals
of others, such as the value of well designed
programs to improving the safety record of a
shop or reducing the loss due to faulty skills.
Expertise refers to acknowledged proficiency
in valued activities. As the program designer
demonstrates effective programs over time,
the organization will come to value his/her
expertise and tend to be more willing to be
influenced by his/her recommendations and
counsel. Interpersonal skills are critical to
develop networks, communicate information,
and manage conflicts. The more effective
these skills, the more influence the program
planner has within the broader organization
despite limited formal authority.
Related Content

A Practical Software Architecture for Virtual Universities
Peifeng Xiang, Yuanchun Shi and Weijun Qin (2006). *International Journal of Distance Education Technologies* (pp. 56-70).
[www.igi-global.com/article/practical-software-architecture-virtual-universities/1670?camid=4v1a](www.igi-global.com/article/practical-software-architecture-virtual-universities/1670?camid=4v1a)

Adaptive Animation of Human Motion for E-Learning Applications
Frederick W.B. Li, Rynson W.H Lau, Taku Komura, Meng Wang and Becky Siu (2007). *International Journal of Distance Education Technologies* (pp. 74-85).
[www.igi-global.com/article/adaptive-animation-human-motion-learning/1704?camid=4v1a](www.igi-global.com/article/adaptive-animation-human-motion-learning/1704?camid=4v1a)

Oral Synchronous Computer-Mediated Communication between SL Students: A Learning Circle Approach
Sergi Roura Planas (2013). *Teaching Cases Collection* (pp. 124-141).
[www.igi-global.com/chapter/oral-synchronous-computer-mediated-communication/68234?camid=4v1a](www.igi-global.com/chapter/oral-synchronous-computer-mediated-communication/68234?camid=4v1a)

Preparing African Higher Education Faculty in Technology
[www.igi-global.com/chapter/preparing-african-higher-education-faculty/27628?camid=4v1a](www.igi-global.com/chapter/preparing-african-higher-education-faculty/27628?camid=4v1a)