One Librarian’s Trash is Another’s …Artifact?: Methods for Assessing Instructional Design Performance

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Purpose:
Assessing instructional design artifacts can provide librarians with insight as to how to improve their instruction, identify areas of need for further professional development or training, and ultimately enhance the impact of their teaching on student learning. In order to provide substantive feedback regarding instructional design performance in the context of an instruction-focused internship program for LIS graduate students, a variety of methodologies and tools were employed. While interns were the target population for this assessment effort, instruction librarians and coordinators should find that the methods and tools have direct applicability in professional practice.

Design/Methodology/Approach:
First, instructional design criteria of interest were identified, including among others:

- the assessibility, developmental appropriateness, and transferability of learning outcomes for the session
- the degree of fidelity between the learning outcomes and the formative assessments
- the feasibility of the instructional strategies identified
- the clarity of links made between session learning outcomes and programmatic outcomes or goals

A three-column rubric was created as well as a small set of other quantitative measures to be taken. Next, instructional design artifacts of potential value were identified. As part of the process of identifying artifacts, a previously-existing lesson plan template was modified and distributed to interns in order to facilitate the collection of the most important data. Then, the lesson plan templates and other related artifacts were collected before and/or after instruction sessions took place over the course of the semester. Finally, data was extracted from the artifacts and analyzed in order provide educative feedback and make improvements to both the assessment and training processes. The assessment cycle has been completed twice as of this writing.

Findings:
Data collection and analysis has taken place for two cohorts of interns. The results have enabled several positive outcomes for the interns and the internship program as a whole, including:

- opportunities to provide robust educative feedback to the interns at point of need
- improvements to the instructional design and assessment training provided
- the establishment of clearly defined categories of performance that can serve as teaching tools
- two detailed assessment reports for campus stakeholders regarding student performance against key programmatic learning outcomes

Practical Implications/Value:
All instruction librarians and coordinators can use the methods and tools as described or easily adapt them to meet local needs. For those responsible for programmatic oversight or the provision of professional development to librarians who teach, the methods and materials outlined will be useful as both evaluative and teaching tools.