Peter van Leusen

Title: Interpersonal Consulting Skills among Instructional Technology Consultants at an Institution of Higher Education in the Midwest – A multiple case study

As new developments in digital technologies rapidly influence our society, higher education organizations are under increasing pressure to utilize new instructional methods and technologies to educate students (Educause, 2005; Phipps & Wellman, 2001; U.S. Department of Education, 2010). The task to integrate these tools into teaching and learning experiences of higher education students generally falls within the responsibility of faculty (Tessmer, 1988). Although experts in their content areas, faculty often lack the time or expertise to integrate new technologies (Nowrie, 2009; Tessmer, 1988). Recognizing the need for support, universities have established teaching and technology centers where faculty collaborate with Instructional Technology Consultants (ITC), who provide the expertise in the latest technology developments and pedagogical implications (Nowrie, 2009; Privateer, 1999).

To fulfill their responsibilities effectively, ITCs must meet the unique demands in higher education and develop a comprehensive understanding of a particular instructional project. Perhaps most importantly, ITCs need to be able to extract information regarding the characteristics of a faculty’s particular instructional needs (pedagogical objectives, learners, and context) in an efficient and effective manner.

Utilizing a multiple case study research design, four experienced ITCs showed that interpersonal consulting skills are crucial when collaborating with faculty on integrating technology into higher education. By applying interpersonal consulting skills, ITCs developed trust-based relationships with faculty and generated an atmosphere conducive to change. This study showed that ITCs approached each consultation with three ‘Overarching Perspectives’ which influenced each action and interaction. Secondly, ITCs structured each consultation into six ‘Consultation Phases’ to collaborate effectively with faculty. Thirdly, this study further identified interpersonal skills that ITCs applied during certain phases of the consultation.