Situational Analysis Worksheet

Below are the six types of situational factors and related questions developed by Fink (2013). Read the questions for each type of situational factor, and then write an analysis that answers the questions.

As *Fink (2013)* explains, some of these factors will be important to the design of your courses, and others will not be. However, you need to systematically review all factors so that you do not miss factors that are critical to the design of your course. The first type of situational factors - specific context factors - are always important; give them special attention. Also, there may be situational factors that impact your course design substantially but are not captured by the questions below. Try to think broadly and include any unique situational factors that you identify in the most appropriate category.

# Specific Context of the Teaching and Learning Situation

* How many students will be in the class?
* Is the course lower division, upper division, or graduate level?
* How long and frequent will the class meetings be (if in-person or synchronous)?
* How will the course be delivered: in-person, online, or some combination of both?

*Your Analysis:*

# Expectations of External Groups

* What does society at large need and expect in terms of the education of these students, in general or with regard to this particular subject?
* Does the state or related professional societies have professional accreditation requirements that affect the goals of this learning experience?
* What curricular goals does the institution or department have that affect this course or program?

*Your Analysis:*

# Nature of the Subject

* Is this subject matter convergent (working toward a single right answer) or divergent (working toward multiple, equally valid interpretations)?
* Is this subject primarily cognitive or does it include the learning of significant physical skills as well?
* Is this field of study relatively stable, in a period of rapid change, or in a situation in which competing paradigms are challenging each other?

*Your Analysis:*

# Characteristics of the Learners

* What is the life situation of the students at the moment: full-time student, part-time working student, family responsibilities, work responsibilities, and the like? How might COVID-19 be affecting the students?
* What life or professional goals do students have that relate to this learning experience?
* What are their reasons for enrolling? Are learners taking your course to earn a degree or expand their professional skills in this subject area?
* What prior experiences, knowledge, skills, and attitudes do the students have regarding the subject?
* What are the students’ learning styles?
* What are the cultural and ethnic backgrounds of students? What unique challenges might students of different cultural or ethnic backgrounds face in this learning environment? Will there be language challenges? How will your course create an inclusive environment?
* Do the learners have the technology skills and access necessary to complete assignments?
* What equity issues might affect the students? Do all students have equal access to the resources needed to be successful, such as broadband Internet, computing equipment, or a study environment conducive to learning?

*Your Analysis:*

# Characteristics of the Teacher

* What prior experiences, knowledge, skills, and attitudes do you have in terms of the subject of this course?
* Have you taught this subject before or is this the first time?
* Will you teach this course again in the future or is this the last time?
* Do you have a high level of competence and confidence in this subject or is this on the margins of your zone of competence?
* What prior experiences, knowledge, skills, and attitudes do you have in terms of the process of teaching? (That is, how much do you know about effective strategies for teaching online?)

*Your Analysis:*

# Special Pedagogical Challenge

* What is the special situation in this course that challenges the students and the teacher in the desire to make this a meaningful and important learning experience?

*Your Analysis:*