Seels and Richey (1994) challenged readers in their foreword by stating, “The purpose of this book is to propose a new definition of the field based not only on a reexamination of the 1977 definition, but also upon the developments in research, theory, and practice”.

After reading the first chapter, admittedly overwhelmed, I asked myself, “Do we really need yet another definition of Instructional Technology?” It seemed to me that the 1994 definition was very clear and encompassed previous definitions and left an opening for any advances in the field.

The 1994 official definition of the field of Instructional Technology as recognized by the Association for Educational Communication and Technology (AECT) is as follows: Instructional Technology is the theory and practice of design, development, utilization, management and evaluation of processes and resources for learning.

My personal definition of the field, prior to studying and researching, was comparable to popular understanding: That Instructional Technology dealt with using computers and other forms of technology (e.g. digital cameras, internet, software programs, etc.) in the learning process.

My existing belief is that while there have been many advances in media resources, the quality of media, and uses of media (e.g. the advent of MP3, DVD, streaming video, etc.) since 1994, the field of instructional technology has not changed sufficiently according to the AECT definition. Technology is not synonymous with media.

That said, I reread (and reread) the 1994 AECT definition and decided that while complete, its scope is not clear unless someone has access to the components. That aspect is not necessarily related to advances in the field, but may be very helpful for laypersons or individuals that are novices in the field.

In an effort to be succinct, (I noticed that the 1994 definition was the shortest one), the definition leaves room for ambiguity and/or misinterpretation.

Heinich

Heinich either has a true passion for his beliefs or he has a great affinity for the art of instigation.

His point about the housing of instructional technology programs in colleges of education hindering the progress of research in the field is well-taken. I agree that teachers can in fact become bogged down in the mire of bureaucracy that prevents them from expanding the pool of knowledge. An independent educational administrative type department might be of some value.

I do not subscribe to the belief that one has to have done the actual work or lived the situation to understand, write, or research the topic at hand. In fact, there are times when
having done the same thing for so long obscures the ability to remain open to change. The original inventor of breast implants never even had breasts! A man, he revolutionized the field of plastic surgery and has forever changed many women’s future. It is worth noting though that he needed women to be successful in his endeavors. They were his patients, his subject matter experts and they were never excluded from his research. They helped him understand everything from the ramifications of reconstruction for a breast cancer survivor to the aesthetics of what would eventually manifest itself in a clothing reveal during and NFL half time show.

That said, moving instructional technology may cause more harm than good. Educators by and large, want to be involved in instructional development and may see the shift as a sort of punishment. The resentment of these users may hinder the progress of the field in other ways if educators feel slighted. They may decide not to assist researchers as subject matter experts or even refuse to be a party to future studies, both as an emotional reaction to the change as well as retribution. The message being, ”You said you could do it, that I was not contributing…try doing it without me then.”

I believe a collaboration of efforts between the college of education, technology departments, and an administrative entity would help to alleviate the pressure felt by educators to continuously practice and give them time, money, and skills to allow those with the talent to contribute to the research. Leadership in the field should also be a collaborative effort.

Technology does not have the ability to make teachers extinct, but it does have the ability to make the role as we know it, an “endangered species”. Educators must begin to use the technology to teach the technology. They must research and contribute to the research to be in concert with changes in the field. Most of all they must discard the “us vs. them” mentality, capitalize on the benefits of instructional technology and embrace all it has to offer.