

To Better Educate the Next Generation of Professionals

An Introduction to the 2008 Definition Articles in this Issue

By Michael Molenda

Continuing the tradition of the 1963, 1977, and 1994 AECT “definition” projects, the Definition and Terminology Committee completed the most recent definitional effort with the publication of *Educational Technology: A Definition with Commentary* (Januszewski & Molenda, 2008). What is new and, frankly, controversial, about this latest definition is its claim that certain values are integral to the very meaning of educational technology.

The first chapter begins with the one-sentence definition developed by the committee and approved by the AECT board of directors, and proceeds with a rationale for each of the major terms in the definition. Chapters 2-8 consist of commentaries on the key terms in the definition—facilitating learning, improving performance, creating, using, and managing technological processes and resources. Chapter 9 directly addresses the “values” issue by demonstrating how these value positions are inherent in the concept educational technology.

Chapter 10 sets the historical context of the definition; Chapter 11 tells the story of AECT’s years-long effort to establish and promulgate ethical standards and practices; and Chapter 12 discusses the ramifica-

tions of the new definition for academic programs. Those interested in the “back story” of the committee’s struggles will find it in the Afterword written by Al Januszewski, the committee chair.

Each of the central chapters provides a coherent conceptual framework for its topic and an authoritative review of the most relevant literature. Researchers, especially those new to each of the specialty areas, will find these literature reviews to be solid starting points for their own research pursuits. For instructors and students, the book can be viewed as a small encyclopedia of the current field, a foundation and launching point for further studies in educational technology.

To help promulgate the new definition book, the 2008 AECT national convention featured a series of presidential sessions focusing on the creation, interpretations, and uses of the book. During those sessions, several discussions occurred focusing on the definition (text) and other resources, instructional strategies, and expected outcomes of graduate preparation within educational technology programs. Professionals in attendance participated in lively conversation, with many questions and concerns posed to the panel members. Participants expressed interest in the

instructional strategies and activities panel members used to engage students in these core definitional aspects of the field.

Because of the great interest shown by instructors in specific ideas of how to integrate the new definition and the new definition book into their courses, we invited some of the panelists to expand their comments into full articles, presented now in this special theme issue.

Monica Tracey of Wayne State University and Ana Donaldson of University of Northern Iowa each discuss how they use the definition and the definition book in a specific course. Donaldson’s course is part of a curriculum built around AECT’s ECIT standards, so she faced the additional challenge of aligning her course with both the ECIT standards, which are based on the prior AECT definition of instructional technology (Seels & Richey, 1994), and with the new conceptual framework of the 2008 definition. A deft piece of work!

Rhonda Robinson of Northern Illinois University describes how the AECT definition and definition book relate to the whole master’s and doctoral curricula in their instructional technology program. She provides dozens of examples of specific course objectives, readings, and activities.

We hope these examples will spark further discussion about how we can better educate and inspire the next generation of professionals in our field.

Michael Molenda, PhD, is associate professor emeritus in the Instructional Systems Technology department at Indiana University. Now retired, he continues to do research and writing in the areas of historical and philosophical foundations of educational technology and remains active on the Definition and Terminology committee of AECT.

References

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- Seels, B. B., & Richey, R. C. (1994). *Instructional technology: The definition and domains of the field*. Washington, DC: Association for Educational Communications and Technology.