

A First Meeting of Professors of Educational Technology: A Summary of Issues

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Preface

I arrived at the Indianapolis airport early on a warm Saturday afternoon in April. After walking from one end of the terminal to the other, I spotted the office of the limo service that would take me to the Shawnee Bluffs camp. A young man wearing a red baseball cap took my name and suggested that I catch a bite to eat while we waited for several passengers coming in on other flights.

A short time later, six other passengers, myself, and the driver in the red cap were settled into the van and on our way. Conversations quickly turned to work-related topics. How large is your program? Must your students take internships at the MA level? Are you located in a department of curriculum and instruction?

I sensed just a hint of nervousness filtering through our laughter and small talk. Were others wondering, as I was, whether it was a good idea to sacrifice a beautiful spring weekend at home? At this very moment I could have been digging up the flower beds or spending a few hours on a manuscript that I was hoping to finish. What was in store for us at this loosely structured meeting to be held at an isolated camp where the cabins have no bathrooms?

By the time we arrived, a wine and cheese reception was well underway. I checked into my cabin and discovered that I had two roommates who had already settled in. The cabins were sparsely furnished and had a primitive feel about them. I looked for a mirror to give my hair a quick brush but found none. Undaunted, I changed into some camp-type clothes and went out to join the others for a glass of wine. True to Maslow's principles, however, I first located the building with the bathrooms.

Introduction

In this paper, I will provide a brief overview of a meeting of representatives from more than 40 educational technology programs which was held on April 21-23 at the Indiana University Alumni camp outside of Bloomington, Indiana. The two papers which follow by Bob Reiser and Mike Hannafin will provide more in-depth treatments of two of the major topics discussed at this meeting.

Sponsorship of the Conference

The meeting was sponsored by the University Consortium for Instructional Development and Technology (UCIDT). For the past 21 years, UCIDT has attempted to facilitate cooperation and communication among institutions providing educational technology training programs. The consortium, which currently consists of seven universities (Arizona State, Florida State, Indiana University, Michigan State, Syracuse, University of Georgia, and University of Southern California), has the following goals:

1. To strengthen public and institutional support for educational applications of technology in schools and higher institutes of learning.
2. To help improve the quality and effectiveness of professional preparation programs for instructional technologists.
3. To promote the substantive growth and impact of the field of instructional technology.
4. To improve communications and mutual support among professional programs and between such programs and their respective publics and clients.
5. To provide leadership and influence in professional organizations representing instructional technologists and in other organizations, public or private, having strong interest in the improvement of education or training.

UCIDT has cooperated on a number of projects nationally and international-

ly including the Instructional Development Institutes which were conducted in hundreds of school districts during the Seventies.

Rationale for the Conference

The rapid development in technology in the Eighties caused UCIDT leaders to consider ways of addressing issues in the field with a larger group of colleagues. One proposed activity was a conference which would include faculty members from educational technology programs across the country. The purpose of this conference would be to address issues such as the status of curricula in training programs, the role of educational technology in the schools and other contexts, and the status of, and future directions for, research in the field.

Structure of the Conference

Three speakers provided direction for the meeting. Robert Heinich from Indiana University, drawing upon his ERIC/ECTJ Annual Review Paper from the Summer 1984 issue of *Educational Communications and Technology Journal*, discussed the status of the educational technology field. Robert Gagné from Florida State University focused on current and future research directions in the field. Charlie Schuller of Michigan State University provided a historical perspective of the field.

These paper presentations provided the focus for the activities of small working groups which were formed around the following topics: curriculum, research, relationship of the field to public education, relationship of the field to non-school settings, and interinstitutional cooperation. The goal for each working group was to generate a set of action plans that could be pursued in the coming months.

Curriculum

The programs represented at the meeting offered a range of curricula for different degrees and certificates. Some programs offer M.A. degrees only,

while others offer M.A. and Ph.D. degrees along with a certificate. A few programs are experimenting with undergraduate programs in educational technology.

A good deal of discussion focused on the need to identify core content and competencies for educational technology. Most participants were familiar with the work which has been done on defining competencies by the DID/NSPI Joint Task Force. These competencies provide a good starting point for the review of curricula, but most graduate programs have additional goals which similarly influence curriculum decisions. The question of whether graduate programs might specialize in certain topical areas was raised. From the sample of programs represented, it appears that specialization is occurring to some extent already. Historical traditions, as well as the nature of the institution, type of students, and expertise of faculty all play a role in determining the emphasis a program will acquire.

The relationship of the MA and Ph.D. curricula was suggested as another area needing examination. What are the skills and attitudes we hope to foster in each type of degree program? In some competency areas, the distinction between the two programs is clear. Most participants agreed, for example, that MA students need to be able to read and critically analyze research but need not conduct it. Ph.D. students, on the other hand, should have the skills to conduct research and to complete at least one research study by graduation. Bob Reiser's paper will provide a thorough summary of these and other issues.

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1. Present sessions at AECT which focus on the teaching of single competencies.
2. Compile a bibliography of materials that list competencies for the various specialty areas within the field.
3. Use electronic bulletin boards to communicate information about curriculum, research, materials, and new developments in the field.
4. Conduct a set of mailed surveys to assess questions like the following:
 - How much time is given to instruction on specific competencies?
 - Which programs in the country offer what degrees?
 - What competencies are considered

core for educational technology students?

5. Conduct a computer survey at AECT and ask respondents to contribute a few dollars to help cover costs.

Research

Discussions about research in the field followed a presentation by Robert Gagne (see paper published in this issue) on new directions for research. A major theme of these discussions was the need for alternative research methods. All of the major action items from the research centered on this need. These items were as follows:

1. Identify alternative research methods.
2. Identify expert researchers in alternative methods.
3. Commission papers that describe applications of new methodologies to our problems.
4. Distribute and discuss commissioned papers at UCIDT conferences.
5. Refine and publish papers as a professional monograph series.
6. Prepare a proposal that can be used to seek funding for the above actions.

A subgroup within the research group explored the need to generate better theories within the field. These theories might focus on, for example, social aspects of learning and must clarify three different areas: (a) epistemological—axiological questions of

A theme that emerged was that educational technology faculty need to become more involved in research on teacher education. Closer ties with teacher education faculty, for example, might lead to collaborative research and development efforts. Based on their discussions, this group recommended the following action items:

1. Align ourselves with teacher educators so that we become trusted and knowledgeable of their needs, concerns, etc.
2. Use the "seed philosophy" (work with individual teacher education faculty to help them address their specific problems; they then can pass the information to their peers or refer them to you).
3. Seek joint research and publications with teacher education colleagues.
4. Encourage instructional technology faculty to participate in NCATE.
5. Participate with other professional organizations at the local, state, and national levels.
6. Use techniques in presentations that reflect the state of the art of our profession.

Relationships with Business and Industry and other Non-school Settings

Increasing numbers of graduates from educational technology programs seek and are recruited for employment in set-

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education, (b) political-social questions concerning education, and (c) human-historical dilemmas of education. This group recommended that social/critical theory be addressed in our journals and other publications, at conference sessions, and in our graduate curricula. A more detail analysis of these discussions is found in Mike Hannafin's paper published in this issue.

Relationships with Public Schools

This group considered issued relevant to the role and influence of educational technologists in public education. Discussions centered around the apparent lack of influence of educational technologists on public school practices.

tings other than traditional educational institutions. Business and industry in particular have become primary employers for MA graduates. Many of the most innovative and sophisticated applications of technology-based instruction are occurring in these settings. Many faculty in the field consult with these organizations on the design of training experiences on large scale instructional projects. Action items from this group consisted of the following:

1. Appoint a program development committee to design a MODEL curriculum for the preparation of instructional technologists for nontraditional settings.

2. Establish an INFORMATIONAL CLEARINGHOUSE related to instructional technology and non-traditional learning environments.

3. Establish informational communications between the educational technology community and the non-traditional educational/training world.

4. Encourage "contextual" research related to Instructional Technology and non-school domains.

5. Develop a national "Placement Center" for Instructional Technology career placement/ development in non-traditional educational/training settings.

Interinstitutional Cooperation

The major recommendation made by the group working on the problem of interinstitutional cooperation was the establishing of a new organization of professors of educational technology. This organization would be open to all institutions with educational technology training programs. It would be independent of all major professional organizations (AECT, NSPI, ASTD, etc.) but would capitalize on the national meetings of each of these groups to hold meetings and to conduct its meetings. In other words, a half-day session of this group might be held in conjunction with the AECT or NSPI annual meeting. The steps in creating such a group are as follows:

1. Create a membership list from existing indices of educational technology training programs. Criteria for membership would need to be established.

2. Generate a program of public relations to make the new organization visible within the broader field of education. It is hoped that these activities would increase the representation of our field on major decision-making bodies.

3. Use the new organization to facilitate communication among educational technology programs on matters of curriculum, recruitment, standards, and research. Specific examples would include the sharing of teaching materials and techniques, collaboration on research and development projects, or faculty exchange programs.

4. Create a career information network that would serve as a clearinghouse in which internship opportunities and position descriptions could be circulated.

5. Hold a one-day pre-AECT conference to formalize the organization. Announcements of the meeting would be sent to all eligible educational

technology programs. The purpose of this meeting would be to review the status of various activities suggested at the Bloomington meeting, to explore possibilities for funding of various projects, and to focus on issues important to the field. The group also proposed that a second invitational spring conference be held.

Some Personal Observations, Thoughts, and Comments

On the Curriculum in Graduate Training Programs. Discussions at the conference suggested that, at present, three factors seem especially influential in shaping curricula for graduate programs in educational technology. One of these is the work being done on certification requirements by the DID-NSPI Joint Certification Task Force. This group has identified competencies for instructional designers and is now formulating a plan for a certification program. Under this program, instructional designers would complete a series of

program areas should be facilitated by the competency orientation. Such activities have already begun within sessions at AECT.

Another factor which appears to be influencing graduate curricula is the burgeoning market for graduates in business and industry. It seems that at no point in recent history has the job market been more powerful in shaping what is taught in our courses. One example of the "pull" on curricula by business comes from internship programs. Many of the academic programs represented at the conference now have internship requirements for students and many of these take place in business. Companies such as Arthur Anderson and AT&T have large, well-organized internship programs which aggressively recruit students from across the country. Students who return from these internships communicate to faculty their observations about how well their academic training has prepared them to deal with tasks assigned. Areas of

An emerging theme was the need for more faculty involvement in teacher education research.

assessment activities, and, if successful, be awarded certification by a governing board. Although many questions remain unanswered about the certification process—not the least of which is how to finance such an effort—the Task Force is making progress toward establishing such a program. The implications of a certification program for graduate programs are far reaching. At the very least, program faculties will need to review their curricula to determine how well they prepare students in each of the competency areas deemed critical. The issue of accountability to students will become increasingly important. As a prospective student in a graduate program in instructional design, I would certainly wish to know whether the program's graduates have been successful in becoming certified. Within their home institutions, programs in educational technology should benefit from a more clearly articulated definition of the competent professional. The sharing of teaching materials and methods across

weakness which become identified as students go out to these settings may become targets for curriculum revision. Similarly, input from graduates who go to work in these settings may also lead to modifications in the curriculum. This trend raises some important questions about the nature of a degree program in our field. To what extent is it appropriate to align our curricula to address the vocational needs of students? What areas of content can we legitimately teach in academic classrooms, and which are better left for inservice training by those who hire our graduates?

The third major factor influencing curricula is the escalating technology revolution. As more sophisticated forms of technology-based learning become available, educational technology faculties hope to be responsive to training needs. In many of our institutions, these technological innovations pose major problems to graduate training because the funds to purchase even the hardware are scarce, notwithstanding

funds needed to conduct research on the most effective ways to use these new systems. State of the art equipment and applications should be a given for programs, but our locations within Colleges of Education often makes our program low priorities for funding.

On Research and the Training of Researchers. Personally, a troubling aspect of the conference were the discussions about the status of research in the field. The old cliché, "everybody talks about it but nobody does it," seems apropos for our field. It would have been interesting to survey participants to determine how many had conducted research (regardless of paradigm used) in the past two years. I suspect that less than a third of those who attended the conference are active researchers even though most are faculty in academic training programs. It is apparent that many academicians in educational technology do not view themselves as researchers. Consider as evidence the small membership of the Research and Theory Division of AECT and the relatively limited number of submissions to ECTJ. These would seem to be indicators that identity with research is rather limited by many in the profession. However, those involved in graduate training might be expected to demonstrate a higher level of activity in research than actually occurs. Hannafin, in his paper in this issue, speculates about why there is a lack of research by people in the field. He discusses a number of barriers to research, including the narrowness of what has been considered acceptable to journals or to colleagues making promotion and tenure decisions. He argues that we need to expand our notions of research by using other research paradigms to investigate questions important to our field. In an interesting paper by Marcy Driscoll (1985) published in a recent issue of this journal, a number of alternative paradigms are presented and applications to our field exemplified by sample studies.

Intricately related to the issue of research productivity by people in the field is the training of future researchers. As a group, those at this conference represented a larger pool of individuals and settings responsible for mentoring new scholars and researchers. As such, we face some new challenges. Many of our doctoral level graduates now go to business and industry post-Ph.D. Unlike in earlier times, few are motivated to seek employment in more traditional

academic settings where research is expected and valued. If this trend continues, who will produce scholarship in the future? If our "best and brightest" doctoral students take nonacademic positions which do not include the production of research and scholarship, where will important questions be investigated? I believe that one solution to the problem is research which will increasingly result from partnerships between academe and industry. The high costs of newer technologies may spur many academic researchers to team up with colleagues from business who have the resources and facilities to conduct research. The organizations themselves may be the locus for investigations of instructional technology. One example of such partnerships on a grand scheme is a plan for an "Alliance for Learning," which would bring together as many as 40 corporations along with a number of scholars and researchers in a joint effort to conduct research on adult learning and technology. Funding for this operation would be provided by corporate members, and all research would occur within the training settings of these corporations. On a smaller scale, individual efforts involving selected faculty with a single corporation may provide a successful combination.

The longer I work in this field, the more I am impressed by the power of one's doctoral lineage. The roots of scholarly orientation are firmly established during a doctoral program

to emerge as an alternative methodology. Some of my fellow students who worked with other faculty were pursuing what Heinich describes as decision-based research in that they were investigating issues related to the delivery and cost-effectiveness of large-scale instructional efforts. At the time, it seemed that the educational technology program was a convenient albeit loose alliance of faculty who focused their professional energy on very different types of problems. The years later, I now understand and appreciate this diversity among faculty far more than I did at the time. Further, it seems that the examination of these different orientations is an excellent mirror for reflecting what we, the developers of graduate curricula, value as a field.

On the Development of a Formal Organization. In general, participants at the conference supported in spirit the recommendation to create an organization of professors of education technology. Some expressed concerns, however, about the pitfalls of formalizing what was a loosely structured gathering of individuals with a set of shared concerns. Would the creation of a formal organization result in a proliferation of committees which would feel compelled to create agendas for themselves? Might the energy required to move toward a more permanent structure detract from dealing with important issues we face as graduate training programs? As members become preoccupied with the

For the past 21 years, UCIDT has attempted to provide communication among educational technology programs.

shaped for the most part by two factors: (a) the faculty with whom one studies more closely, and (b) the context. For many, these orientations and assumptions which underlie them, remain unexamined until much later in one's career or perhaps not at all.

My own training, which took place at Syracuse, had a strong instructional psychology orientation and a bias toward what Heinich (1984) describes as conclusion-based research or the testing of cause and effect relationships. Naturalistic inquiry was only beginning

structure and survival of the organization itself, would they lose sight of its mission? Would such an organization be redundant with existing professional organizations such as AECT or AERA?

While acknowledging these and other concerns, most participants expressed enthusiastic support for the continued alliance of programs and people. If consensus existed, it was the viewpoint that as a group of professors, we have reasons to convene. We need to support one another's work, to encourage joint investigation of research questions, and

to sort out important curricular issues. The recognition of these commonalities was highlighted by the three productive days spent together in Indiana. Tom Schwen offered an invitation for the group to return to the same site for a second meeting next year. The group accepted the invitation with the understanding that other programs might bring invitations to visit other sites for a third year meeting.

Summary

The first meeting of professors of educational technology met the objectives of its organizers. A forum was created in which the issues which affect our lives as professors working in a dynamic and innovative field were discussed and debated. Participants took a break from the day-to-day activities at their respective institutions to think more globally about problems affecting the field, especially those which relate to the training of students. Action items were generated which will give direction to future activities for the group. Old friendships were renewed and new friendships begun. It is these personal linkages that will keep folks communicating and it will be this communication that will generate new ways to work together on productive tasks in the upcoming months. Not a bad outcome for a weekend in the woods.

References

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