

Summary: A Systems Definition of Educational Technology in Society

Title: "A Systems Definition of Educational Technology in Society"

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Problem: This article is examining the influences (both internal and external) that are placed on educational technology field by society. It looks at how these influences impact the conceptual development of the field.

Context: This article is not based on any new studies or interviews. However, data is used from over 27 studies ranging in date from 1968 to 2005.

Findings: As previously stated this article looks at internal and external influences on the educational technology field. One of the main issues regarding external influences is science. This field is similar to the sciences in that it has a hard time giving a concrete definition of itself. However, unlike the sciences, where a topic can be observed and experimented on, society (which is the main subject area of educational technology) cannot. When looking at educational technology through an external lens, one needs to look at how they are defining technology. In the hard sciences, technology refers to machinery and tools, while in the soft sciences it relates more closely to intellectual and social areas. As silly as it may sound, it is important to remember that when looking at educational technology from the outside, you are bringing in the outside and need to be mindful of outside prejudices that will influence the way you see the field.

Looking at educational technology from an internal perspective is not any easier. Educational technology is currently grouped into the applied social sciences department and is having trouble establishing credibility within its field. One suggestion to remedy this would be to allow members of the field to decide what and how educational technology is. Not only will you allow members who already feel they are in the field to be acknowledged, you will be determining what the field is and does by those who do it! Along with that, there is not one single knowledge base that educational technologists come from (as is the case with biology); therefore, many different aspects of the field would need to be included in order to create a comprehensive definition. With so many different backgrounds melding into one field, the scope within which the field operates is getting so vast it is difficult to derive one single definition.

Recommendations: As an instructional designer or educational technologist, I would find this article very interesting. It examines the way that the field conducts itself as well as how 'outsiders' perceive and interpret my data. This would help keep me mindful of the way I articulate my findings and interact with my colleagues and potential clients. Overall, this article makes me more aware of public perception of my field.