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# Enhancing Instructional Design and Technology Academic Programs: A Summary of the Fifth Meeting of the Professors of Instructional Design and Technology

□ James D. Klein

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*EDITOR'S NOTE: As a member of the group that planned the first invitational meeting of professors of educational technology at the Indiana University Shawnee Bluffs Conference Center, I wanted to document the meeting so that the issues discussed there could be shared with those professors who did not attend. The planning group invited three senior leaders from the profession to address the professors. I, in turn, invited three emerging leaders to attend the conference and report their observations. Two papers prepared for the meeting and the observations of the three young professors were subsequently published in the Journal of Instructional Development, 8(3).*

*Over the past five years the professors have become more organized. They now have a name, Professors of Instructional Design and Technology (PIDT), and a charter. This year the meeting planners invited a senior leader to address their group, so I invited an emerging leader to attend the meeting and share his observations with the readers of ETR&D. James Klein, the young professor whose report follows, is a former student of Robert Reiser, one of the emerging leaders who prepared a report of the first meeting of the professors at the Shawnee Bluffs Conference Center.*

□ For the past five years, the Professors of Instructional Design and Technology (PIDT) have met at Indiana University to address issues affecting the field of educational technology. According to the PIDT charter (1987), the purpose of this group is:

- to facilitate the exchange of information among members of the instructional design and technology (IDT) academic community;
- to promote excellence in the academic programs in IDT;
- to encourage research and inquiry in the IDT field; and
- to provide leadership in the application and practice of IDT.

On May 19–22, 1989, PIDT members met once again at the Indiana University Shawnee Bluffs Conference Center. Over 100 faculty and students representing approximately 50 colleges and universities and business leaders representing a half dozen corporations discussed the trends, issues, and challenges facing the instructional design and technology field. The discussions focused on how to enhance academic programs in IDT. The fifth meeting of the Professors of Instructional Design and Technology is summarized here in order to give the reader a perspective of some of the major issues discussed at the meeting.

Throughout the 1989 PIDT meeting, numerous groups discussed a variety of issues pertaining to the enhancement of academic programs in instructional design and technology. It would be impossible to

summarize here all the concerns addressed at the meeting. In this article, some of the major issues related to the enhancement of academic programs are discussed. These issues include redefining the field of IDT, improving graduate studies in IDT, conducting research in IDT, and identifying the role of IDT outside of academic programs. The following paragraphs describe these issues.

#### REDEFINING THE FIELD OF IDT

What is the focus of the instructional design and technology field? Audiovisual instruction? Instructional design? Library science? Media production? What *should* the focus be?

In his opening address to PIDT participants, Paul Saettler indicated that the definitions of the IDT field are outdated and obsolete, and suggested that new definitions be developed (Saettler, 1989). The question of defining the IDT field is certainly not new. For several decades scholars have grappled with this problem (AECT, 1972; 1977; Ely, 1983; Silber, 1970). The Commission on Instructional Technology (1970) defined the field as the media used for instructional purposes *and* as the systematic approach to designing instruction. In reference to the latter definition, the Commission wrote, "The widespread acceptance and application of this broad definition belong to the future . . . this approach holds the key to the contribution technology can make to the advancement of education" (pp. 21–22). Others have defined instructional technology as a systematic approach to solving problems (Heinich, 1970) or as the facilitation of human learning through the systems approach (AECT, 1972). While a common definition has been sought, most scholars agree that IDT is a growing and changing field, so no definition can ever be considered final.

Several suggestions for redefining the instructional design and technology field were made by PIDT members. These include:

- Focus on human performance technology and educational environments instead of instructional materials development.

- Integrate current literature on cognitive science, artificial intelligence, linguistics, and other fields into instructional design models.
- Become involved in the revision of publications such as the *Educational Media Yearbook* and the *AECT Definition and Glossary of Terms*.
- Examine the unique contribution of the field of IDT.
- Provide a vision of the IDT field for the future.

#### IMPROVING GRADUATE STUDIES IN IDT

Over the course of the PIDT meeting, a number of participants discussed how to enhance academic programs through the improvement of graduate studies in IDT. Of major concern to PIDT members were the competencies of IDT graduates. A disturbing report presented by Mike Monar and Rob Foshay indicated that when IDT graduates enter the private sector, many lack basic IDT skills and are unprepared to assume leadership positions (Monar & Foshay, 1989). The major skill deficiencies identified by employers of IDT graduates were: developing test items which match objectives, conducting a task analysis, managing projects, working with subject matter experts, and writing video scripts.

While the question of which competencies to teach IDT students has been addressed in the literature and at past PIDT meetings (AECT/DID Task Force on ID Certification, 1981; Bratton, 1983; Carrier, 1986; Redfield & Dick, 1984; Reiser, 1986), there was still some disagreement about this issue at this year's meeting. Questions surrounding this matter included: Should IDT programs focus on preparing practitioners or scholars? Should the competencies of IDT graduates be market driven? What skills and knowledge should a master's student versus a doctoral student learn in an IDT program?

In addition to addressing the competencies of IDT graduates, the characteristics of a quality IDT program were discussed. A few par-

Participants suggested that PIDT identify criteria that could be used to judge IDT programs, and then implement a plan to evaluate any academic program that claims to teach IDT. While most of the participants were against the notion of evaluating academic programs, many felt that it was important to identify the qualities of each individual program, so that the strengths and weaknesses of each could be recognized.

While discussing the characteristics of a quality IDT program, Phil Doughty distributed a paper by Smith (1989) which detailed a plan for a field-based residency program. This plan, currently under consideration at Syracuse University, would require doctoral students to participate in research and writing, professional service, teaching, development, consultation, and project management.

The following suggestions concerning how to improve graduate programs in IDT were proposed by PIDT members:

- Implement the core IDT competencies previously identified in the literature.
- Identify the competencies that students should exhibit for each IDT degree awarded.
- Adopt a field-based residency program in IDT, such as the one currently under consideration at Syracuse University (Smith, 1989).
- Facilitate communication among IDT programs through the sharing of course syllabi and other materials.
- Facilitate communication between academic programs and employers through internships, projects, and visiting professorships.
- Find the strengths of each IDT program and market them.

#### CONDUCTING RESEARCH IN IDT

Another issue addressed at the fifth PIDT meeting concerned conducting research. Several participants indicated that the IDT academic community must expand the role of

scholarly inquiry. The role of research in IDT has been discussed at previous PIDT meetings. In summarizing the first PIDT meeting, Hannafin (1986) indicated that "Many have become content with debating the problems with research rather than contributing to solutions" (p. 25).

The participants at Shawnee Bluffs in 1989 took a proactive stance toward research and offered some suggestions for improving the status of research in the field. Many of these suggestions surrounded the topics of setting a research agenda for IDT and using alternative methodologies. The following suggestions pertaining to conducting research in IDT were proposed by PIDT members:

- Identify research questions and problems that are of interest to the entire IDT community.
- Set a research agenda for the IDT field to answer these questions.
- Develop an IDT research consortium to address problems and issues concerning research in the field.
- Implement collaborative research projects with colleagues at other institutions.
- Conduct IDT research using alternate methodologies.
- Submit to IDT journals papers and articles which can be used as good examples of alternative methodologies.
- Identify experts in alternative methodologies on each campus to assist with faculty and student research projects.
- Use research to develop and update IDT theory and models.

#### IDENTIFYING THE ROLE OF IDT OUTSIDE ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

A final topic of discussion at the 1989 PIDT meeting was the role that IDT should play outside academic programs. A number of participants indicated that IDT academic programs would be enhanced by getting involved in activities that are external to the programs themselves. While PIDT members have discussed their relationship with the ex-

ternal world at past meetings (Carrier, 1986), many participants at this year's meeting felt that this involvement was essential to the survival of IDT. The following suggestions were made by PIDT members:

- Provide service to other academic programs within an institution.
- Participate in strategic planning at the program, college, and university level.
- Identify the contributions that IDT will make in the restructuring of the American educational system.
- Become involved in the refinement of NCATE guidelines and the International Board of Standards.

### CONCLUSIONS

The fifth meeting of the Professors of Instructional Design and Technology provided a forum for members of the IDT academic community to discuss the trends, issues, and problems facing the field. The meeting was successful in that it helped to facilitate the exchange of information among PIDT members from a variety of programs and settings. The meeting also encouraged the enhancement of academic programs in IDT.

The annual meeting of PIDT covered a variety of issues that are of interest to the profession. While many of these issues have been discussed before, the profession will move ahead by continuing to identify challenges and by finding ways to implement solutions to those challenges. □

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