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Technology v. Media

Introduction

The terms *technology* and *media* are indeed defined differently in broader society and in the field of education. In broader society, the terms conjure visions of high definition television (HDTV) technology, and Blu-Ray digital versatile disks (DVDs) media. When used in combination, this pair can play your favorite movies in 1080p, true high definition (HD), and, provided that you have the appropriate receiver to decode the digital audio signals coming from your DVD player and the speakers for the appropriate playback of these signals, you can enjoy your movie in crystal clear surround sound.

However, in the field of education, the terms *technology* and *media* are not as simply defined as the televisions, DVD players, overhead projectors, etc. that are used in the classroom. Furthermore, *media* is not simply the physical DVDs, overhead transparencies, posters, etc. that may be found in a particular classroom at a given time. Although these might be the connotative definitions of these terms in the educational field, that is, examples of what one thinks of when thinking of *technology* and *media* in the classroom, the two terms are a bit more substantive than that.

In this short paper, these two terms will be defined through the lens of the education field, and the differences between the HDTVs and Blu-Ray DVDs of the broader society and the *technology* and *media* of the classroom will be demonstrated.

Educational Media

Educational media has been defined as “the devices of learning” (Reiser & Ely, 1997, p. 65) and “anything that carries information between a source and a receiver” and include such

things as video, television, diagrams, printed materials, computers, and instructors themselves (Heinich, Molenda, Russel, & Smaldino, 1999, p. 8). This *media* inherently has educational potential and when used in the classroom fosters learning, or carries a *message*. According to Heinich et al. (1999), in any instructional situation, a message is to be communicated and it is the *medium* which carries that message (p. 8).

For example, in order improve listening skills and to compare teenage life among cultures, students are to watch a film in class and write down phrases and concepts that do not make sense to them. The film is *American Graffiti*, and the students are English Language Learners (ELLs). The film has an instructional message because the students are learning about teenage life in the 1960's and comparing this life with the teenage life in their own culture. What is more, the students are continuing to improve their listening skills by actively listening.

Therefore, in the field of education, *media* cannot simply be a random film, CD track, or movie poster. The *media* must contain a *message*, in order to distinguish and differentiate itself from the more common *media* of broader society, the Blu-Ray DVDs.

Educational and Instructional Technology

Educational technology and *instructional technology* are often used interchangeably, and are similar, yet different. Roblyer (2006) defines the two as “a combination of the processes and tools involved in addressing educational needs and problems, with an emphasis on applying the most current tools: computers and other electronic technologies” (p. G2); and, “the subset of educational technology that deals directly with teaching and learning applications (as opposed to educational administrative applications)” (p. G6) respectively. Despite what appears as similarities there is more to *educational technology* than what Roblyer proposes.

Reiser & Ely (1997) defines *educational technology* as “the theory and practice of design, development, utilization, management, and evaluation of processes and resources for learning”

(p. 69). Furthermore, throughout the article the authors document the changes in the definition of the term and it appears that *educational technology* does not focus uniquely on the *media* components, as previously defined, of instruction as much as it studies the “science” of instruction included in Reiser & Ely’s (1997) definition. It could then be deduced that *instructional technology*, therefore, is the study of how to use *media*, as previously defined, to deliver *instructional messages*.

Once again, these definitions are different than those conjured of broader society’s view of technology, which is generally seen as the objects one uses to make life easier.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be seen that broader society’s definition of *technology* and *media* differ due to the fact that in the field of education, the terms are closely related with instruction rather than entertainment, or “life facilitating” purposes.

References

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