What is educational technology, anyway?
A commentary on the new AECT definition of the field

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We are in a rush to incorporate new technology into teaching-learning situations on campus and in schools. *Technology integration, technology immersion* and *technology-enabled learning* are terms that appear more and more often in the vocabulary of teachers and administrators. Most often, the concepts default into issues of hardware, tools and things. In the common parlance, technology is a tool. Technology, at least communication technology, to the average person, means computers, Internet, online video, cell phones, iPhones, and iPads.

Oddly, this is not the dictionary definition. The standard dictionary definition of technology is "the application of scientific knowledge for practical purposes" [1] or "the study or use of the mechanical arts and applied sciences." [2]

In educational technology, our interest is the educative dimension. Until recently, we announced that fact in the name of our professional organization: We were an Association for **Media** and **Technology** in Education in Canada (AMTEC). Today, we have moved away from that, and are no longer an association, but a network (a popular Canadian buzzword, it seems); and no longer focused on "media and technology" but on all innovation. Thus we are now the Canadian Network for Innovation in Education (CNIE).

CNIE is the offspring of the Canadian Association for Distance Education (CADE) and the Association for Media and Technology in Education in Canada (AMTEC), with a mission to serve as the "the voice for Canada's distance and open education communities" (Jacobsen, 2007). CNIE's stated values include leadership, innovation, and remaining open to change; to pursue innovation in our service delivery in an environment of ongoing change, and to extend opportunities for our stakeholders by embracing change, taking risks, and stepping out of traditional roles and practice (http://www.cnie-rcie.ca/?q=node/3). A question is whether the term *innovation* carries a change in focus from technology or not.

Nevertheless, what are we all about? What is our focus? In short, what is educational technology, anyway?

There are other competing terms, of course. Instructional technology is one. ICT, that strange alphabet soup grab-bag of letters, is another. It is not the place here to debate the merits of alternative terms. However, at least in passing it is perhaps appropriate to comment on the increasingly popular term: ICT. In general a group of letters should not replace a word or phrase: such a practice merely adds self-serving jargon into the language. It dilutes and disguises meaning. More than that, the phrase "information and communication technology" leaves out the learning-teaching dimension that ultimately is what educational technology is all about.