



COMMUNICATION EDUCATION

Volume 67 Number 4 • October 2018



NATIONAL
COMMUNICATION
ASSOCIATION



Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

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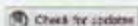
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INTRODUCTION



Introduction to this special issue on communication and instruction beyond the traditional classroom

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Most people are familiar with the Chinese proverb, “Give a man [*sic*] a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime” (Tripp, 1970, p. 76). Those of us studying instructional communication not only concur, but also argue that effective communication is critical to successful teaching and learning in all contexts. Moreover, we assert that many communication initiatives, interventions, and campaigns are destined to fail when the messages do not instruct receivers about how and why to act on the information.

The term *instructional communication* was originally conceived in the 1970s as a means to distinguish it from *communication education*, which was broadly defined as instruction in communication (how to teach interpersonal communication, group communication, public communication, etc.). Instructional communication, on the other hand, referred to the role of communication *in* instruction (Richmond & Frymier, 2010). Scholars believed that conceptualizing instructional communication in this broader context would encourage a wealth of instructional research occurring in a variety of communication contexts (e.g., health, intercultural, interpersonal, family, organizational, political). In fact, Mottet and Beebe (2006) poignantly confirmed that instructional communication research “is not limited to the traditional primary, secondary, and higher education classroom, but can also be applied to non-traditional instructional settings” (p. 5).

Unfortunately, however, our observations over several decades indicate that this did not happen; at least not overtly. Instead, scholars studying the role of communication in instruction in various subfields often coined their own terms. For example, health communication scholars created the term *health interventions*, organizational communication scholars referred to such instructional research as *professional training and development*, and public relations scholars adopted the term *communication campaigns*. Although we cannot be certain as to why scholars in various communication subfields conceived unique terms to define what is essentially instructional communication research, one possible explanation is that we (instructional communication scholars) have not articulated what we mean by instructional communication as clearly as we could. Another is that we have not highlighted the intersections among our shared research goals, methods, and outcome measures as explicitly as we should. What is clear, however, is that the call to expand the scope of instructional communication research beyond traditional classroom contexts has not materialized to the degree instructional communication researchers