Renee Burrell
OMDE 610 9040
2/23/14

Evolution: The tradition of distance learning

The tradition of distance learning has informed online teaching and learning by demonstrating the evolution of pedagogy as it transform with the times. Distance learning was established on the principle of evolution. This paper will examine distance educations' tenacity to evolution, the implications of such evolution and the future of online teaching and learning.

Evolution of Distance Learning

Distance learning originated during the industrial revolution as a response to the economy, and also addressed supply and demand. Distance learning was available to the educational disadvantaged living in rural areas. It afforded the poor the opportunity to overcome economic stagnation. Teaching and learning was propagated by postal correspondence, later television, radio and film, then by interactive tools and currently Web 2.0. (Rodriguez, 2012). These innovative technologies were produced to meet the demands of society. Holmberg promoted the concept of the evolution of distance education calling attention to the psychological, social and cultural time periods. Thus, emphasizing the relevance of the "pedagogical heritage" of distance learning (Holmberg, 2005, p. 13). Throughout the history of distance learning, we can see the direct association of the learner, teacher, technology, economy, and culture.

Implications of Evolution on Online Teaching and Learning

There are implications that help to strengthen and solidify online distance education; consequently, evolving the methodology of teaching and learning. The modernization of technology has had a significant impact on online teaching and learning. Students have

accessibility to resources, customized education and online educational materials. The geographical distance between teachers and learners is remedied through the technological innovations in distance learning. Modernized technology is the foundation of distance education and will serve to transform and revolutionize online teaching and learning.

Furthermore, continuing the tradition of distance education is dependent upon strong leadership that considers the use of technology a top priority. The leadership of educational institutions must understand how technology can be used as an instrument for the evolvement of online teaching and learning. Nworie, Haughton, and Oprandi (2012) accentuate that the old view of administrative systems impact higher education's opinion of distance education and how distance education leadership is perceived and categorized. To continue in the steps of traditional distance education, the 21st century educational leader must not be afraid of technology and encourage others to use it. Leadership should understand that technology is not an ad hoc solution, but a long-term, tactical component of online teaching and training.

Finally, the tradition of distance education uses tools to increase the relevancy of the diverse needs of teachers and learners. Paul Michael Privateer indicated that, "higher education is at a cross-road – one path continuing an essentially administrative approach to the management of learning, and a second, promising meaningful change by redesigning instructional technology in terms of being both a strategic and cognitive tool" (2012, p. 60). Twenty-first century middle school students are technologically sophisticated and have been exposed to a wealth of tools and concepts, thus changing the way they obtain knowledge. Students no longer want the standard static lecture and classroom setting; students are attracted to environments with technology in all aspects. There is a plethora of innovative tools that

furnish relevant educational opportunities; thus, continuing the tradition of distance learning. Distance learning offers a hub of innovation and scholarship, and keep students actively engaged in learning, thereby motivating them to explore online learning in a more profound manner.

Future of Online Teaching and Learning

In the tradition of distance education, as advances in technology are manifested, the needs of the online teacher and learner must be met by new theories of learning. As interaction and resources are emerging, knowledge is distributing rapidly across various networks. Connectivisim is one of the most recent theories paramount in distance education. This pedagogy is revolutionizing the way we function, learn and teach. Connectivism presupposes that knowledge is disseminated through networks and learning entails organizing various networks of connections and recognizing patterns (Siemens, 208b). As such, the tradition of distance education has evolved into pedagogy of knowing where to find information. In the 21st century, teachers and learners experience autonomy and accessibility through the theory of connectivity. Learners are excited about informal tools such as academic resources, Wikipedia, Google Scholar, and social software. Anderson (2010) calls attention to the need for "formal education to expand beyond classrooms and bounded learning management systems to embrace and to become involved with the informal" (pg.31) Connectivism has influenced teaching, course design, learning and educational institutions encouraging informal learning. The growing interest in connectivity opens a new dialogue centered on the difference in learning and knowing. Connectivism fuels the tradition of distance education by offering a change in the viewpoint of online teaching and learning.

Conclusion

The tradition of distance learning evolving with demand continues in the 21st century. Teachers and learners (from the industrial revolution to the digital age) sought to gain information through distance education. Throughout evolution distance education accommodated teachers and learners looking to raise their income or expand career opportunities. In the digital age, it is the adaptation of modernize technology, strong leadership and meeting the diverse needs of students that drives the evolution of online learning. Teachers and learners must follow the steps of past generations and be open to relevant educational tools, and seek opportunities. Connectivism is an innovative theory gaining recognition throughout the online community. Connectivism encourages teachers and learners to seek knowledge through informal networking and online environments. The tradition of distance education set the stage for the future of online teaching and learning by mandating new pedagogical models to correspond with the evolution of technology.

REFERENCE

Anderson T. (2010). Theories for learning with emerging technologies. In G. Veletsianos (Ed.) Emerging technologies in distance education (pp.23-40). Canada: Athabasca University Press. Retrieved from http://www.aupress.ca/books/120177/ebook/99Z_Veletsianos_2010-Emerging_Technologies_in Distance_Education.pdf

Hall, J. (1995). The convergence of means. *Educom Review*, 30 (4), 42-45. Retrieved from http://thejournal.com/Articles/1999/09/01/The-Origins-of-Distance-Education-and-its-use-in-the-United-States.aspx?Page=7#GJhixxbVUvIBixHp.99

Holmberg, B. (2005). Concepts and terminology. Student bodies. The evolution, principles, and practice of distance education. Oldenburg, Germany: BIS-Verlag der Carl von Ossietzky Universität Oldenburg, 9-11. Retrieved from http://www.box.com/shared/y97qyc7m0t

Nworie, J., Haughton, N., & Oprandi, S. (2012). Leadership in distance education: qualities and qualifications sought by higher education institutions. *American Journal Of Distance Education*, 26(3), 180-199.

Privateer, P. (1999). Academic technology and the future of higher education: Strategic paths taken and not taken. *Journal of Higher Education*, 70 (1), 60.

Rodriguez, C. (2012). MOOC's and the AI-Stanford like courses: Two successful and distinct course formats for massive open online courses. *European Journal of Open, Distance And E-Learning*. Retrieved from http://www.eric.ed.gov/contentdelivery/servlet/ERICServlet?accno=EJ982976

Siemens, G. (2008b). Learning and knowing in networks: Changing roles for educators and designers. *Paper 105: University of Georgia IT Forum*. Retrieved from http://it.coe.uga.edu/itforum/Paper105/Siemens.pdf