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entrevistado por

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C1. You have a wonderful and successful career in education, especially in Distance Education. What can you comment about your career and what suggestion would you give for students who want to follow a similar path today?

I think the events that were instrumental in my choice of a career in distance education occurred during 15 years I spent as a “back to the land” farmer/woodworker in Northern Alberta, Canada. During that time I saw the need for education provision that spanned geography and I was fortunate enough to get my first teaching job in an institution that was mandated to deliver education to remote communities. This need to create new educational options was coupled with a personal interest in toys and technologies. Finally, I had the opportunity to be working at a time when DE programs were shifting from exclusive provision of individual study programs delivered by postal print to the possibility of real time, cohort based programming delivered at that time via audio teleconferencing. Seeing and improving this interchange between teaching and learning and technology that I think of as a dance between the technology (the beat and the tempo) and the pedagogy (the choreography and the moves) has been a career inspiration!

I later found myself as the Director of a distance education delivery network (Contact North/Contact Nord), and pragmatically resolving delivery and development issues. I also was called upon to do professional presentations and talks on DE and it became evident that I had never formally studied distance education (I was trained as shop teacher, and later as educational technologist) - so it was off to PhD school for me. At that time (1994) there were no distance delivered PhD's, so I did two years of residence during which I spent a great of time reading in the stacks. My own research agenda focused on tools and designs to establish a community at a distance that later became the Community of Inquiry model.

After graduating, I was fortunate to secure academic positions that called upon me to act as change agent and to support technological and pedagogical innovation. Thus, I went about preaching that the “sky was falling” to my more colleagues at a major research university – with limited success. For the past 13 years I have been fortunate to work at Athabasca University, which is a dedicated online, public university with a large EdD and Masters degree program in distance education.

2. What texts and concepts you wrote and developed that you would highlight and, please make brief comments about each text and/or concept.

Judging by the number of citations (see my profile in Google Scholar), by far the most influential work was that done with my former PhD supervisor D. Randy Garrison, which is well known as the Community of Inquiry Model. We developed the model for two reasons- one to have a conceptual framework for analysis of the newly available text-based, asynchronous conversations we were generating in our online classes, and secondly to regain some of the richness of social constructivist learning that had been lost in earlier eras of individual study. Ironically, my interest in the COI model has faded, as I focus now on more saleable models of education delivery. However, a continuing thread of my career has been the opportunity to research and write with colleagues, many of whom are much more intelligent and better writers than I.

I think my next important work was my “interaction equivalency theory”, in which I tried to argue that interaction is helpful and many faceted – but expensive in terms of time and money. Thus, effective and efficient programs couldn’t just add more and more interaction, but rather had to be selective. The theories and ideas from that work are designed to help designers and researchers create more optimal combinations. My colleague Terumi Miyazoe has created a web site with links to research papers dealing with this ‘theory’ at <http://equivalencytheorem.info>

A few years ago I was able to map my own career and that of our field in the Three Generations of Distance Education Pedagogy that I co-authored with Jon Dron. In this paper we tried to get beyond the technological determinism of other DE generation taxonomies, to talk about the dominant pedagogies employed. These moved through instructivist forms of cognitive behavioural pedagogy, to social constructivism and finally to the current emergent connectivist pedagogy.

I next worked with Olaf Zawacki-Richter to solicit chapters on the 16 most current (and challenging) issues in Distance Education research. In this 2014 book, we asked the grandest of the grand gurus of distance education to create a chapter summarizing the research in each of these areas. This book was published this year in print and for open access download by Athabasca University Press and is titled *Online Educational Research: Towards a Research Agenda*.

Which brings us right up to today, at which time Jon Dron and I have a new open access book – *Teaching the Crowd: Learning and Social Media*. This work, follows from our efforts designing and building a next generation “beyond the LMS” social networking system for distance education. The major theme of the book is that we differentiate three social forms used for teaching and learning - nets, sets, and groups. Each form requires different instructional designs, support and assessment to maximize online learning. In addition we talk about the collective affordances of the

Internet to aggregate, trace and in ways energize learning activities in each of these social forms.

3. This issue of TECCOGs (Digital Journal of Cognitive Technologies) is about Interaction in Distance Education. There is a tradition that starts with Michael Moore's Editorial for the AJDE, includes your texts, Ally, Berge, Bonk, Hilman & Willis, Hirumi, Northrup, Sims, Wagner etc. What authors and concepts would you highlight in this tradition? How important you believe is the discussion of interaction for Distance Education?

I am proud to be included in the list of DE interaction theorists and researchers that you list. As one can glean from my list of works highlighted above interaction has been the focus of my work. Learning socially has been critical to our success as humans. The disproportional size of our brains and our almost unique capacity amongst living creatures for language is a result of evolutionary pressure on us to work and learn together. Thus, I've always resented notions that distance education is confined to independent study, but at the same time I don't think effective learning is necessarily dependent upon tight cohort groups, nor teacher facilitation. We learn different things in different ways using different social aggregations. But interaction (especially with content) is key to engagement, motivation

and even cognition for most of us, most of the time. I am quite enamoured with some of the newer Web 2.0 communication and sense making tools. I believe that we actually very near to designing education programs that are both cost effective, that scale and are able to span not just barriers of time and distance, but of social, language, pace and power that have defined and constrained most forms of education to date.

4. How do you see the future of Distance Education? What technologies, practices, and pedagogies do you believe will influence this future?

My colleague Jon Dron and I are currently working on a book chapter on this topic. We are very mindful of the dangers of miscalculating technological and educational speed of change in both the long and short term, however, we also can't imagine education not making use of these amazing new tools for communication, data management and sense-making. For this chapter we are kicking off with a look backwards to the Edinburgh Scenarios which were created in 2004 to imagine futures of network and technology infused society and education systems. They devised 4 possible futures – "*Virtually Vanilla*" in which large companies and ideas permeate society and education systems (think Google everything); "*Back to the Future*" in which privacy, access and trust issue propel a backlash

against networked learning (think slow learning and email sabbaticals); *Web of Confidence*, in which the power for individuals to work and learn together (or apart) is greatly accelerated (think MOOCs) to *U Choose* in which the capacity of global technologies to focus on local community concerns and issues flourishes – think (Meetups, Flashmobs and salons).

Paradoxically, all of these scenarios have come true during the past decade. Despite the technological homogeneity of the Internet, we are not using it to create a homogeneous world. Rather different cultures, religions, communities and corporations are leveraging newly developed social and network tools to create diverse improvements in our social institutions and communities and expanding their adjacent possibilities.

In education, I expect continued evolution of pedagogies that are intrinsically “net centric” and that make use of these affordances to create artifacts, connections and

sense-making at local and global scale. The term Distance Education itself will likely be dropped as we use similar tools and pedagogies in classrooms, blended and distance contexts – often within the same programs of study. Unfortunately, much of this change requires both students and teachers to walk across new thresholds that are both scary and uncharted. Thus we need to help each other.

Finally, I look forward to a multifaceted “opening” of formal education. Ideas of open scholarship, open textbooks, open publication, open data, open teaching and open resources have propelled my career. The open-access journal (IRRODL) that I edited for 10 years and the recent books and series that I have authored have all been released under Creative Commons license. Likely I wouldn’t have been asked to do this interview, without the exposure presented by these tools- and I look forward to many more similar dividends from net based openness!