Studien und Berichte der Arbeitsstelle Fernstudienforschung
der Carl von Ossietzky Universität Oldenburg

Band 8

Michael F. Beaudoin

Reflections on Research, Faculty and Leadership in Distance Education

Bibliotheks- und Informationssystem
der Universität Oldenburg
2005

**Studien und Berichte der Arbeitsstelle Fernstudienforschung
der Carl von Ossietzky Universität Oldenburg**

Volume 8

Michael F. Beaudoin

Reflections on Research, Faculty and Leadership in Distance Education

Bibliotheks- und Informationssystem der Universität Oldenburg
2004

Studien und Berichte der Arbeitsstelle Fernstudienforschung der Carl von Ossietzky Universität Oldenburg

Herausgeber:

Dr. Ulrich Bernath
Prof. Dr. Friedrich W. Busch
Prof. Dr. Detlef Garz
Prof. Dr. Anke Hanft
Prof. Dr. Wolf-Dieter Scholz

Reprint, November 2007

Publisher: BIS-Verlag
der Carl von Ossietzky Universität Oldenburg
(BIS) – Verlag –
Tel.: + 049 441 798-2261
Telefax: + 049 441 798-4040
e-mail: bisverlag@uni-oldenburg.de

ISBN 978-3-8142-0931-9

Contents

Acknowledgments

Chapter 2.1: "Researching Practice and Practicing Research: A Critique of Distance Education Research and Writing" was first published in American Center for the Study of Distance Education Research Monograph No. 4 (1991). University Park: Pennsylvania State University.

Chapter 3.1: "From Campus to Cyberspace: The Transition of Classroom Faculty to Distance Education Roles" was first published in Educational Pathways 1(6), May 2002. (http://www.edpath.com/research.htm); a version was also published in CONNECTION: New England's Journal of Higher Education and Economic Development 17(1), 2002.

Chapter 4.1: "The Instructor's Changing Role in Distance Education" was first published in The American Journal of Distance Education 4(2), (1990), pp. 21-48.

Chapter 5.1: "Distance Education Leadership for the New Century" was first published in the Online Journal of Distance Learning Administration 6(2), Summer 2003. Slightly different versions were also published in The Journal of Leadership Studies 8(3), Winter 2002, and in M. Moore & W. Anderson (Eds.) (2003), The Handbook of Distance Education. Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Chapter 6.1: "A New Professoriate for the New Millennium" was first published in DEOSNEWS 8(5), 1998.

Series Editors' Foreword

The Arbeitsstelle Fernstudienforschung (ASF) – the unit for distance education research at Carl von Ossietzky University of Oldenburg – is a joint venture of the Center for Distance Education and the School of Education. In supporting research and developments in distance education one of the significant outcomes was the creation of the ASF Series contributing to the overall scholarship in the field of distance education.

Volume 8 with Michael Beaudoin's *Reflections on Research, Faculty and Leadership in Distance Education***,** in addition to being of general interest to practitioners and scholars in the field, also serves as a reader for students in the course *Management of Distance Education 2: Leadership in D.E.* in the online Master of Distance Education (MDE) program, jointly offered by the University of Maryland University College (UMUC) and Carl von Ossietzky University of Oldenburg.

Distance education is a complex approach to provide education for learners in their homes or at their workplace. It includes operational functions such as (i) identifying the target population and their needs, (ii) choosing, managing, and administering the type of system as well as the appropriate technology for the presentation of the course materials and their delivery, (iii) recruiting, enrolling, tutoring and supporting students, (iv) assessing students, (v) evaluating and assuring quality. Successful distance education practices are predominantly large-scale operations and are a significant component of educational and training systems in both developed and developing countries.

In order to allow large numbers of learners to achieve their goals in a distance teaching and learning environment, the provision of this type of educational opportunity indispensably requires strategic planning, leadership and effective management. The rapidly evolving field of distance education has increased the importance and role of leadership in order to overcome barriers and obstacles to change. Despite the relevance of effective leadership it is surprising how few contributions have been made to the literature that address the critical area of leadership in distance education. Michael Beaudoin is one of the few distinguished scholars in this field. From his early works on *The Instructor's Changing Role in Distance Education*, published in the American Journal for Distance Education in 1990 and his *Researching Practice and Practicing Research: A Critique of Distance Education Research and Writing*, published by the American Center for the Study of Distance Education in its Research Monograph series in 1991 the bow can be spanned to his most recent publications *From Campus to Cyberspace: The Transition of Classroom Faculty to Distance Education Role*s, published in Educational Pathways in 2002 and *Distance Education Leadership for the New Century*, published in The Handbook of Distance Education, edited by Moore and Anderson in 2003. The ASF Series'

editors are grateful for Michael Beaudoin's compilation of these important contributions and making them available in this volume, along with several recent additional works and commentaries.

Michael Beaudoin is Professor of Education at the University of New England in Portland, Maine, USA, where he was previously founding dean of a new college offering graduate, continuing and distance education programs and courses. He has held senior administrative positions at institutions in Maine, Massachusetts, Washington, DC and Germany and has written extensively on distance education issues and related topics, has presented at conferences and frequently serves as an evaluator of distance education programs and courses. He is on the editorial board of two distance education journals and is the book review editor for the American Journal of Distance Education. Since 2001 Michael Beaudoin has taught as an adjunct professor in the online Master of Distance Education program.

His contributions on research in distance education, faculty transition from the classroom to distance education environments, and critical leadership issues in distance education invite students as well as all interested practitioners to take part in his elaborated approach to conducting research and reflecting on distance education practices.

Franziska Vondrlik deserves our – the series' editors as well as the author's – gratitude for her enduring editorial assistance.

The Editors
May, 2004

1. Prologue

This introductory essay is intended to set a context and provide a rationale for this volume. Having been involved, over the past twenty years, in distance education activities, as a planner, administrator, course designer, teacher, evaluator, consultant, researcher, writer and presenter, I now find that my practice has evolved from one of primarily an activist in the field to one of increased reflection. This is perhaps as it should be; a generation of educators and administrators labor mightily in a variety of settings to bring distance education to the next phase of its evolution through ambitious program development and implementation, then gradually moves into a mode whereby its contributions are more consultative, sharing experience and insights through reflection, research and writing. It is in this vein that I undertake the present task, in hopes of offering some cumulative wisdom based on my own activities and ideas as these have evolved during two decades of teaching and learning about distance education.

In 1983, I attended a national conference on adult and continuing education, presenting an invited paper on distance education. It was the only paper at this event that focused on any aspect of this topic, and I speculated as to whether or not there would be much interest in such an esoteric area. In fact, there was a respectable turnout at my session, and to my great surprise, it elicited considerable interest and discussion. In 1985, I authored a piece that was featured on the back page of *The Chronicle of Higher Education*[1], long before this publication introduced its weekly segment on Instructional Technology with some half dozen articles on various aspects of distance education.

This "op-ed" essay also generated a fair amount of attention, including communiqués from academics as far away as India, in that pre-Internet era. From these early experiences, as a practitioner and scholar in the field, it occurred to me that perhaps the work I was doing was not quite as unique as I may have thought, and that many other educators were also engaged in, or at least exploring, alternative ways of designing and delivering learning opportunities to those who might otherwise have limited access due to time and place constraints. I was pleased to be making a small contribution to this exciting and emerging area, and eager to acquire additional knowledge and skill related to the theory and practice of distance education. During this period, I also became more exposed to the research and writing of others, and interacted with an expanding network of practitioners attempting with varying degrees of success to advocate and advance these exciting new initiatives.

Now, nearly twenty years since those early efforts to share my own ideas and experiences with other distance educators, I reflect on the research and literature

[1] Beaudoin, M. (1985). Independent Study: A Bum Rap for Too Long. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, April 25, p. 80

that has been added to our repertoire, with modest contributions from myself, as well as from many others who have expanded and enriched the body of knowledge so critical to improving practice in this rapidly evolving field of **"**anytime-anywhere" teaching and learning. Certainly, despite some lacunae, much insightful and useful material has been added, appearing in varied venues that include journals and conferences specifically dedicated to distance education; workshops and programs of study offering training to those who recognize new occupational opportunities in the field of distance education; books based on research and practice; and other professional publications that increasingly include pieces on the application of technology for instruction in diverse community and corporate settings. The proliferation of information related to distance education over just the past two decades has accelerated at an impressive pace, and the appetite for new and more innovative ideas and approaches continues.

In fact, with so much current literature now available, electronically and in print, to both veteran practitioners and student scholars in the field of distance education, it is possible that valuable lessons from the literature of the relatively recent past is now being ignored, with the view that if it hasn't been published within the past five years or so, it really can't be very relevant, except perhaps for its historical perspective. I offer here a case in point to illustrate this phenomenon. I have been privileged, for the past two years, to serve as adjunct faculty in a program offering certificate and master's level credentials, via online study, to students world-wide who are seeking education and training to enter or advance in the field of distance education. One responsibility as mentor of the course entitled *Foundations of Distance Education*, was to select and assign readings that provide students with an introduction, from both theoretical and practical perspectives, to the body of literature in the field. One of those readings is an article that I authored which was published in a 1990 issue of *The American Journal of Distance Education* (cf. chapter 4.1.). While obviously not the most recent work on the topic, I feel it is still a useful piece to expose students to in their initial study of distance education pedagogy. However, in reviewing students' comments on strengths and weaknesses of the course at the end of the semester, I noticed that quite a few of them had observed that this particular reading, along with one or two others I had assigned, were approximately ten years old, causing them to wonder about the value of such "dated" material, especially in a field that was constantly and rapidly changing. Initially, I took some slight offense to these remarks, and even eliminated one or two of the pieces in question from the required readings. Subsequently, however, I realized an opportunity here to test these students' opinion of the 1990 article by attaching a small assignment to the reading: I asked them to specifically comment on the piece's relevance today in view of its publication date. Interestingly, nearly all responded by acknowledging that it seemed to them to be just as germane today as it might have been some ten years ago.

This experience has since caused me to reflect on the larger question of whether the literature in a field of study and practice that is perceived to be so fast-paced retains its currency and usefulness as well as information and ideas in other disciplines. I speculated about this both in terms of my own published work, as well as the much larger body of literature appearing in the field of distance education over the past ten to twenty years. Certainly, there are key concepts in the literature of distance education, as with any other area of investigation, that easily survive the test of time, and continue to be viewed as truly seminal contributions to our understanding. An obvious example of this is Michael Moore's notion of "transactional distance", which has no doubt been cited hundreds of times in the distance education literature since its formulation and promulgation over twenty-five years ago. Such ideas prevail, despite many other new and important contributions presented since, because they are so fundamental to our overall understanding of distance education theory and practice.

But what of lesser known works? Does much worthwhile research and writing in distance education die of loneliness and neglect simply because it is presumed to be passé? In an era when many researchers conduct their literature reviews exclusively in online venues, is a great deal of data important to an overall understanding of the field being largely ignored? This question prompted me to conduct a citation search of some of my own published work since 1990. While gratified to discover that several pieces that have appeared in print since that date have been occasionally referenced, I was struck by how often the previously mentioned 1990 article has been cited over the past dozen years. While not convinced that this particular piece qualifies as a "seminal article," as it was once described by one of the editors of the *American Journal of Distance Education*, I did speculate as to why this article tended to attract more attention then certain others, and also how it managed to gain some notoriety after a decade in print. Why, in view of so much new literature being published in the field of distance education between 1991 and 2003, has an article discussing distance education pedagogy that was written before the Internet was in use, continued to receive a fair amount of attention?

Are these earlier pieces still relevant and useful to practitioners and scholars of distance education at a time when there seems to be, finally, an abundance of new material available in this field? In re-reading my own work some years later, would I still find it worthwhile? Would I be inclined to offer similar ideas and opinions after another dozen or so years of additional experience and reflection in the field? Would I feel comfortable in referring any or all of these pieces to colleagues or students? Or would I be tempted to be my own worst critic, as I often am, and find flaws with what I had articulated at an earlier point in my career? And what of more recent publications, like those of the past four to five years? In re-examining these, would I find them to be acceptable contributions to a maturing field of study and practice? Would I make apologies

for certain statements, and offer caveats, citing circumstances that existed at the time of initial publication that made my comments and conclusions entirely defensible at the time, even though they might seem wanting at a later juncture? Finally, if given an opportunity, would I want to do substantial re-writes of these essays in light of present-day developments in the field?

Certainly, enough has transpired in the field of distance education over the past decade that some might argue that most literature, especially research-based material, that was published ten years ago or more, is of questionable value to today's scholars and practitioners. Thoughtful observers could cite a number of significant developments in the distance education arena that received little if any attention just a few years ago. These include: emphasis on learner-centered teaching; focus on students as consumers; partnerships to launch and sponsor new programs; intellectual property issues; new infrastructures to deliver online products and services; evolving faculty roles; and principles of good practice. The more recent convergence of information and technology has surely changed the circumstances and conditions in which we now do business in many fields, and nowhere more conspicuously so than in the education sector. Despite continuing resistance in many settings, we have nonetheless witnessed that distance education, in all of its permutations, has gone from a peripheral to ubiquitous activity in many educational institutions and training organizations, with the teaching-learning process undergoing profound change at nearly every level of instruction and in nearly every discipline.

Thus, it occurred to me to launch an exercise that has resulted in this publication. I proposed to assemble a number of selected pieces, published in various venues during the past dozen or so years, into a single volume encompassing what I considered to be critical issues in distance education then, and which I contend remain as important topics for continuing dialogue today. Each essay addresses a distinct area of distance education as it relates to students, faculty, organizations, or in some cases, the intersection of all of these. The ASF series on distance education, published by the Carl von Ossietzky University of Oldenburg (Germany) emerged as the ideal forum for the project. Also, as this project was conceived, it gradually occurred to this author and to the editor of the series, that some overarching theme to connect the essays might be an appropriate and useful context. Thus, this presentation has a second purpose - to recognize the relative paucity of material on the topic of leadership in distance education, and to address this lacuna by presenting a deliberate focus on this particular aspect, either by offering essays devoted primarily to leadership, or by showing how leadership is critical to each of the pieces, even if some do not seem to ostensibly address this theme. Through this approach, it is hoped that critical issues in distance education leadership emerge to the fore, and that further attention to this area by scholars and practitioners in the field is encouraged.

Some observers of the education scene still seem to view distance learning as immature and experimental. Certainly, it needs to further evolve and develop, yet its impact on education to date, particularly higher education, has been so pervasive and so powerful, that it can hardly be characterized as a new or unfamiliar phenomenon. It is a process that elicits intense opinions; which is transforming the role of the professoriate and the shape of our institutions; which is generating fierce competition for resources and students; and which is prompting a call for appropriate policies and practices. And although digital resources such as the Internet have now permeated academia as tools for transmitting communications, instructional purposes and for storing information, they remain **"**disruptive" technologies in many educational settings. In such a climate of transition, there is a fundamental need for effective leadership in this arena. This volume identifies, examines and analyzes selected aspects of distance education leadership.

The format utilized in this volume is as follows: selected articles relating to various aspects of distance education, published between 1990 and 2002 in various venues, are presented here as individual chapters and in their entire and original version. Immediately following each chapter, an epilogue appears. These recent essays, all written in the past year, are defined as epilogues because, as in a play or other literary works, the epilogue is intended to comment on the future of characters appearing in the original work. In this case, these epilogues serve somewhat the same purpose; that is, to comment, with benefit of what has since transpired in the field, on why I feel the pieces can be re-affirmed, or perhaps why they ought now to be revised, or at least augmented. Some epilogues begin by describing the context in which each of the earlier pieces was initially conceived, noting the status of distance education at the time, especially as it relates to the particular topic under discussion, and offering a rationale for why the piece was developed, and why it seemed a worthwhile endeavor at the time. In those instances where a piece does not seem to be directly related to leadership, the relevance to leadership of the ideas, observations and references presented will hopefully become apparent. To make the connection more explicit, certain epilogues conclude with implications or advice for distance education leaders. Through the epilogues, I function, in effect, as my own devil's advocate, at times implicitly arguing the point of whether or not the piece is as germane today as it presumably once was and, if not, why not, then offering additional research or commentary I consider relevant at this time. As one who has previously authored articles critiquing distance education research and writing, it only seems appropriate that I now subject myself to this same scrutiny.

The first two companion chapters (2.1. and 2.2.), following the Prologue, critique distance education research and writing, particularly as it relates to the topic of leadership, and considers how, if at all, these contributions have influenced practice in the field. The next chapters (3.1. and 3.2) address faculty

related issues: first, the transition of faculty from classroom to distance education venues and how these faculty perceive their new activities, followed by some thoughts on how best to facilitate this process. Chapters 4.1. and 4.2. offer analyses of changing instructional roles in distance settings. The following dual chapters (5.1. and 5.2.) examine leadership practice in distance education, and argue that effective leadership is critical to the further advancement of distance education. The pair of chapters (6.1. and 6.2.) take a forward look at how educational institutions might function in this increasingly digitized new century. The final chapter (7.) is intended as a culminating essay offering the reflections of a distance educator involved in diverse leadership roles in varied venues over some twenty years. It attempts to sum up where we have been, where we are at the moment, and where those who now lead or aspire to lead might be headed in this important work during the next twenty years or so of distance education.

It is my hope, by engaging in this activity, that I can augment and enhance whatever value may have been associated with the original essays, and thus make a further contribution to the field of distance education as it continues to evolve into a world-wide phenomenon engaging increasing numbers of teachers and learners, and attracting those who will assume leadership roles. This endeavor is dedicated to colleagues, both known and unknown who, through their good work in distance education, have provided learning opportunities to learners of diverse age, ability, experience and location who might otherwise not have been served. The abolitionist Wendell Phillips, when once asked “Why are you so on fire?” responded “I am on fire because I have mountains of ice before me to melt.” Though the barriers to distance education may have receded somewhat, those who lead this effort must continue to direct their fire toward the ice if we are to ultimately succeed in the important work we do. Hopefully, volume 8 of this ASF series provides some ideas and inspiration to achieve this worthwhile purpose.

Cliff Island, Maine
Spring 2004

2.1. Researching Practice and Practicing Research: A Critique of Distance Education Research and Writing[2]

At this juncture in the development and documentation of distance education as an emerging worldwide phenomenon, new contributions to the corpus of research-oriented literature are critical. While intended to provide validated data for additions to the literature in the field, research has important other benefits: it can be useful in setting agendas and focusing issues for practitioners; in generating action strategies through informed discussions; and in providing bases for greater common understanding among individuals and organizations engaged in distance education activities.

Finally, after a long legacy of distance education practice, we are just now beginning to formulate a coherent definition that distinguishes it as a distinct field of educational practice; to recognize that it is a necessary component of state and national educational delivery systems; that it is a normal means of providing access to education for working adults; and that it is a legitimate field of academic inquiry. Despite noticeable gaps, the literature on distance education grows at an encouraging pace. The new Jossey-Bass book, *Distance Education: The Foundations of Effective Practice* (Verduin & Clark, 1991, pp. 241-267), lists twenty-six pages of reference works, most on some aspect of distance education. Still, our imagination in researching and evaluating distance education practice has not kept pace with our innovation in applying distance education principles.

At present, research data remains embarrassingly thin in some areas where there is an especially strong need for convincing evidence to document and demonstrate practice outcomes. For example, in identifying the most essential skill sets for effective distance instruction, we continue to rely largely on anecdotal data based primarily on personal experience, expert opinion, and conventional wisdom rather than on any systematic evaluative data. In documenting the effectiveness of various distance education technologies, little empirical evidence is presented to support claims. Comparative studies on the effectiveness of distance education vs. classroom-based instruction seldom cite criteria used to measure results. A particularly thorough review of distance education literature on the topic of learner achievement at the K-12 level yielded 503 documents, yet only fourteen (14) of these were research-based studies, and even these provided little empirical evidence to support their conclusions (Moore & Thompson, 1990, p. 7).

---

[2] This article was first published in Beaudoin, M. (1991). Researching Practice and Practicing Research: A Critique of Distance Education Research and Writing. American Center for the Study of Distance Education Research Monograph No. 4. University Park: Pennsylvania State University

A review of distance education research conducted by Cookson in 1989 confirmed that descriptive and prescriptive articles far outnumber reports of systematic inquiry. Those reports that can be categorized as empirical research studies largely address two topics: the effects of specific distance education methods and student outcomes as a measure of program effectiveness. The most often studied distance education outcome is attrition in an attempt to identify factors related to student performance. These studies are pragmatic in orientation and seldom utilize previously developed concepts of adult learning theory. Yet to be examined in any detail is the nature of the adult learning process in the distance education context (Cookson, 1989, pp. 22-34).

A computerized national search of all books catalogued under "distance education" (OnLine Computer Library Center, Inc.) published since 1989 yielded fourteen titles that could be categorized as substantive, research-based works. Of these, three were published in 1989, three in 1990, and eight published in 1991. Eight of the fourteen publications presented research data on a single program. The remaining six volumes appear to have examined instructional and distance learner issues from a more "generic" perspective. From this admittedly informal survey we can arrive at two tentative and arguable conclusions: 1) that research-based, book-length works on distance education topics appear to be growing in number judging from the almost 300% increase in titles in 1991 over each of the two previous years; and 2) that a good deal of the research being added to the literature on distance education continues to be confined to findings based on individual programs rather than more comprehensive research studies.

Despite the introduction of several research-oriented journals on distance education which have resulted in much useful and well-regarded writing in the field, a good deal of content still focuses on case studies of individual programs that rely on anecdotal information and observation rather than empirical data. For example, a randomly selected recent issue of *The American Journal of Distance Education* a refereed publication devoted to research and practice, contained five articles of which only two were research based; the others focused attention on practices utilized in a particular program (Moore, 1990).

Most so-called research in distance education is still evaluative or comparative and is often not useful or interesting to others than those connected with the program under review. We are studying distance education to influence decisions regarding practice, policy, strategy; yet, most data has limited external validity, does not formulate hypotheses, and does not offer results that can be reliably generalized to other situations. The practitioners complain that distance education research language is too abstract and without practical value, but scholars argue that practical concerns do not readily lead to important research questions.

Coldeway offers an important distinction between evaluative case studies of individual programs and theory-based research - that the latter is more

generalizable to other programs and practices. He also notes that we are seeing and reading a lot about distance education, but we still do not know much about its quality because we focus on media, on completion rates, on which technology works best, and on how distance education compares with traditional modes of instruction. But we still do not really know much about learners in distance education contexts, or how they learn and how best to teach them (Coldeway, 1990, pp. 387 ff.).

Research attention to the international context of distance education is particularly lacking. For example, the International Centre for Distance Education undertook a survey of all institutions involved in distance learning, and published its report, *The State of Distance Learning Worldwide* (Perry, 1984); to date, there has been no further research effort by the Centre or by any other individual or organization to update this index. That so few individuals involved in distance education in the U.S. are aware of the long legacy of distance education in several foreign countries suggests that there has been an inadequate dissemination of literature reporting on research and practice outside the United States.

To be sure, the studies conducted by the British Open University documenting its practices throughout the 1970s and 1980s have contributed significantly to the body of distance education literature, and indeed served as a catalyst to draw increased attention to a mode of study which, while it had a long legacy in many other countries for decades, remained relatively obscure until the British Open University began documenting its work and raising important questions about its impact on individual learners as well as the society at large.

The paucity of research-supported writing on key distance education topics contributes to lingering skepticism, prevalent myths, and continuing doubts about the credibility of out-of-classroom instruction. In a recent discussion with an academic colleague, reference was made to an institution that offers graduate degrees in education through directed independent study. When my associate brought up the dreaded "M-O-D" phrase (i.e., mail order degree), I pointed out that there are now well over one hundred accredited postsecondary programs in the U. S. offering degrees through external study. He responded by pointing out how little literature there seemed to be on the subject, even, in the popular professional press, that might make conventional educators a bit more open minded about distance education practices. (Since 1982, I have noted less than a dozen articles related to distance education in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*.)

A good deal of popular writing on distance education learning is still preoccupied with defending out-of-classroom instructional methods as noble and efficacious, but most authors seem to leave it to others to provide the data to support their contentions. Ten years ago the excuse was that there was not yet enough data available; unfortunately, we still do not have at our disposal sufficient evaluation research to document our work. Advancing distance

education demands adaptive policies to meet changing circumstances and new needs; this requires persuasive evidence derived from ongoing research, but we must be willing to document, analyze and understand our failures as much as our successes.

Most distance education literature today follows the pattern of adult education literature in vogue twenty-five years ago (i.e., case studies with little, if any, empirical data). As distance education programs became more prevalent into the 1980s, much of the early research literature was in the form of evaluation studies designed to present data that could be used to fend off skeptics and critics of this growing phenomenon. As was the case with adult educators, planners and administrators attempting to introduce innovation into traditional settings during the "let a thousand flowers bloom" em in higher education during the 1960s and 70s, distance educators in the 1980s were so preoccupied with establishing effective programs and practices, that relatively little attention has been devoted to research. While more insightful writing and analysis supported by data is now common in adult education (e.g., Brookfield, 1988), few distance education authors have moved in this direction.

At the 1991 Research Symposium on Distance Education, current literature in the field was characterized as: descriptive, *ad hoc,* non-generalizable, evaluative, non-theoretical, applied, historical, quantitative and methodologically poor. Perhaps we have not yet adequately discerned what is really important to learn through research, or what theories can be derived from practice. In our zealousness to examine methodological matters, we have largely ignored ideological issues in distance education. We focus on instructional delivery systems, but we eschew contextual considerations, particularly if there are paradoxical or political considerations to address. And we certainly have not integrated much that can be learned from the rich research and writing in the adult education arena. Consequently, we have accumulated much data related to practice, but we have little to guide us in formulating policy. Although ERIC (Educational Resources Information Center) contains 1400 documents relating to distance education, we have yet to create commonly accepted language and definitions governing distance education; we have yet to establish a national agenda or statewide models for distance education; and we have yet to identify the organizing principles and concepts that unify distance education. Hopefully, we are not too far away from agreeing upon and articulating acceptable principles of good practice in distance education that are derived from reliable research in the profession.

Conference presentations and proceedings also reveal conspicuous lacunae. We have observed the proliferation of state, regional, national, and international conferences on distance education with participants representing an amazing array of programs engaged in all manner of education at a distance. Yet, unless it is an event specifically designed to review and report on recent research results, presentations typically are of the "show and tell" variety. For example,

the 1988 and 1989 proceedings *Innovations in Distance Learning* of the Northeast Distance Education Conference (Le Baron, 1991) included thirty-four papers; only fourteen percent of these included research references and forty-five percent of the papers were limited to an overview of a single program. This event was widely attended by distance educators and administrators from the entire northeastern region of the country, yet the overall quality of papers left much to be desired in making a respectable contribution to research literature in the field.

It is not only the lack of adequate attention to solid research in the field that is troubling; there are also very basic issues regarding the soundness of research methods utilized to assess distance learning outcomes. White (1991) has made some particularly insightful observations about the state of evaluation research in distance education, especially with regard to the effectiveness of instruction on student learning. She notes that we do not yet know if technology-assisted instruction aids student learning because it has not yet been tried at sufficiently high enough levels and frequency to test its impact; because the curricula in use today is inappropriate to the skills students need for the future; and because our evaluation research methods are archaic. For example, we teach via imagery then attempt to measure learning outcomes with pencil tests. White argues that because distance education is primarily a visual teaching medium, visual evaluation is most appropriate. In short, she advised that we use the same medium to test as is used to teach. This deceptively simple yet fundamental rule should apply to all our evaluation efforts in distance education-match research methodologies to instructional modalities (White, 1991, p. 285).

Evaluation research needs to address new areas of inquiry and move beyond the standard questions regarding student attrition and which technology works best. Following is a suggested research agenda around instruction-related issues (developed at The Second American Symposium on Research in Distance Education, The Pennsylvania State University, May, 1991):

- How do we best evaluate quality of materials?
- Are certain media more suitable to the learning styles of certain students?
- How do we best facilitate interaction in distance education settings?
- What incentives are most effective to facilitate interaction?
- What facilitates or impedes effective learning regardless of the medium?
- How do we integrate the teacher's dual role of instructing and processing?
- What should we ask distance learners about what is helpful for them?
- What can we learn from the earlier low-technology/external degree/distance education programs?
- What are the critical teacher support systems needed to enhance distance instruction?

- What conditions are essential for creating a supportive learning environment?
- How do we attract non-distant learners and classroom-bound teachers to utilize distance education options?
- What "Principles of Good Practice" for distance educators can we derive from current research?

Despite significant additions to the corpus of literature on distance education during the past decade, there are numerous other critical questions regarding this mode of learning which have yet to be adequately researched. At this stage in the distance education research agenda, questions about which technology works best is not a priority research issue. We need systematic and collaborative research relevant to the future of distance education, and we need to ask new and fundamental questions relating to pedagogy: Can independent learners fully develop the skills necessary for learning without face-to-face interaction with the teacher? If direct experience, augmented by lectures, discussions, and peer interaction is important for learning, can the independent study environment provide the necessary conditions for the learning process to thrive? Does learning at a distance allow for reflective learning which some learners utilize for optimum cognitive development? If face-to-face classroom encounters are increasingly replaced by tutors and students performing their respective roles at a distance, if instructors are steadily replaced by machines, and if learners work in isolation from one another, will the affective skills largely developed through human interaction be lost? What impact will the changing role of teaching at a distance have on the image and status of teachers accustomed to a visible and dominant presence in the classroom?

How can we more reliably assess resources and determine needs in order to effectively implement the most appropriate distance learning approaches in developing countries? Further, once established, do distance education programs have any significant impact in ameliorating social problems and stimulating change in emerging nations? Can such efforts contribute to both individual advancement and social goals? In countries where major distance learning systems have been implemented and have been in operation for some time, have such efforts contributed to greater self-sufficiency and movement away from the oppressive social control that permeates many societies? Or, when linked with pervasive mass media, have such systems become powerful tools to teach people what to think rather than assist them in developing democratic skills? If a primary rationale for distance learning is to increase access to educational opportunity for greater numbers without time and place constraints, yet at the same time requiring the purchase of home-based learning aids well above the typical cost of books and other printed materials, then will technologically assisted learning be limited to the more affluent learners of a society?

It is important to recognize and acknowledge that research in distance education, as in other areas of inquiry, has an action-oriented dimension to it. Through research, we can isolate lacunae and be guided toward new and provocative questions which can ultimately enhance our practice. Even more immediate applications of research findings are possible when we reflect on our current practice, intervening and altering our approaches as appropriate with the benefit of the data at hand. In this way, we are able to research our practice and concurrently practice our research.

This paradigm is convincingly explicated by Donald Schön in his work, *The Reflective Practitioner* (1983). Schön advocates that practitioners in the various service professions "reflect in action" as a dynamic means of enhancing their practice. A practitioner who engages in reflective practice can question the definition of his/her task, the training and the theories he/she brings to it, and the measures and outcomes of performance. In this process, the practitioner reflects on the elements of knowledge and skill he/she brings to bear on practice, and thus may arrive at new insights regarding the assumptions, techniques, values, and purposes imbedded in his/her initial presumptions and ongoing training to function effectively in a particular profession.

Reflection-in-action is an essential process by which professionals can assess the efficacy of their practice and initiate appropriate interventions and adjustments designed to enhance their roles. It can lead to new concepts of how to better integrate research and practice and how to impact upon the learning systems of professional institutions. It is also a means by which the practitioner can identify areas in which continuing professional training and further research is required. Both researchers and practitioners of distance education can make significant new contributions to the field by synthesizing action and reflection.

Although distance learning programs now exist in diverse forms within and beyond the United States, their proliferation still has not led to the establishment of any fully recognized and reliable source of expertise that institutional planners and decision makers may rely upon for guidance. Distance education, as a distinct profession, will remain undefined and undervalued until there exist more widely accepted principles of good practice for distance educators. A more comprehensive theory of distance education must be articulated through additional research and evaluation that is derived from practice if we are to increase the awareness of others to the philosophy, methods, and efficacy of learning at a distance.

References:

Brookfield, S. (1988). Conceptual, methodological, and practical ambiguities in self-directed learning. In H. Long (Eds.), *Self-directed learning: Application and theory.* Athens, GA: University of Georgia.

Coldeway, D. O. (1990). Methodological issues in distance education research. In M. Moore, P. Cookson, J. Donaldson, & B. A Quigley (Eds.), *Contemporary issues in American distance education*. Oxford: Pergamon Press.

Cookson, P. (1989). Research on learners and learning in distance education: A review. *The American Journal of Distance Education 3*(2): 22-34.

Le Baron, J. (Ed.) (1991). *Innovations in distance learning.* Springfield, MA: Northeast Distance Planning Committee.

Moore, M. (Ed.) (1990). *The American Journal of Distance Education 4(2).*

Moore, M., & Thompson M. (1990). *The effects of distance learning. A summary of literature*. University Park, PA: The American Center for the Study of Distance Education.

On-Line Computer Library Center, Inc. (1999). *Literature search: Distance education.* Dublin, Ohio.

Perry, W. (1984). *The state of distance education worldwide. The first report of the index of institutions involved in distance learning*. Milton Keynes: International Centre for Distance Learning of the United Nations University.

Schön, D. A. (1983). *The reflective practitioner: How professionals think in action.* New York: Basic Books.

Verduin, J., & Clark, T. (1991). *Distance education: The foundations of effective practice.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

White, M. (1991). How will we know if distance learning works? In J. Le Baron (Ed.), *Innovations in distance learning.* Springfield, MA: Northeast Distance Learning Planning Committee.

2.2. Epilogue: Reviewing Recent Research and Writing in Distance Education

My preceding critique of distance education research was intended to highlight certain deficiencies in both methodology and content that seemed to this author to detract somewhat from the modest yet noticeable effort made in the 70's and 80's to contribute significant new information and ideas to the corpus of work in the field of distance education. At the time, it was argued that embarrassingly little of the published literature was empirically-based, and that the vast majority of conference proceedings on distance education topics were anecdotal in nature, with almost no data that could be generalized to other situations. The piece also posed a suggested research agenda by identifying an extensive, though certainly not exhaustive, list of questions formulated at the Second American Symposium on Research in Distance Education in 1991. It concluded by citing the need for a comprehensive and recognized set of principles of good practice, derived from experience and supported by research, which could guide further development of the field. It seems worthwhile, at this juncture, to assess what progress has been made in this regard over the immediate past decade or so.

The 1991 article referenced sources dating from 1968 to 1990. Many, if not most, researchers examining distance education theory and practice a dozen years later would very likely disregard as largely irrelevant any material published as far back as 1990, and would almost certainly dismiss entirely work which appeared 35 years ago. It is unfortunate that most current students of distance education are reluctant to search for material in the literature that is even more than ten or so years old, or that cannot be found online. Apparently, the argument is that in such a fast-paced field, where the most significant activity and innovation is occurring in online environments, then surely that electronic venue is the only suitable repository for reliable and valid data.

And what is perhaps most startling is to notice how few recent practitioners seem to have any familiarity at all with distance education literature in general, or even with what is available regarding theory and practice in areas specific to the topic in which they are interested, or the aspect of distance education in which they are engaged. This is conspicuously revealed in one professional arena in particular: the many conferences related to distance education. Unless such a meeting is convened as a research-oriented event, note the infrequency with which authors of invited papers cite any literature in the field, and the absence of any research-based findings that are germane to the material being presented. Indeed, of the 66 papers published in the proceedings of a fall 2002 conference in the U.S. on computer-based teaching, only 9 of these provided any references from the literature. The proceedings of another fall 2002 event billed as a major international conference with some 500 participants and

presenters contained only 17 papers (13%) which reported findings from primary research activity; the remaining 125 presentations were mainly devoted to anecdotal reportage of a specific program or course. Many such presenters and authors very often sound or write as if what they are sharing with their audiences represents rather profound new revelations as yet unknown to most others in the field. Audiences who pose thoughtful questions frequently discover that these new experts possess a conspicuously shallow repertoire of ideas and information to expand and enhance the discussion. One session scheduled for 45 minutes at a 2003 conference attended by this author consisted of a ten-minute PowerPoint presentation during which the earnest young presenter prefaced most of his embarrassingly simplistic points with "I've noticed…"

The question arises then, as to who is, in fact, reading the growing body of knowledge in the field of distance education? And this is where the current situation becomes truly troubling. Are we at a point in the development of this field where we now have a large cadre of newer practitioners generally unaware of the literature, or unwilling to be informed by it, while at the same time, former practitioners are reflecting and writing on their prior experiences, but are communicating primarily with other scholars in the field? If so, we may be at somewhat of an intellectual impasse here with regard to distance education theory, wherein one generation practices it, while the other thinks about it, yet neither is interacting very much with the other in a way that contributes to the further articulation and dissemination of theory informed by research and practice. Indeed, there are more than a few distance education scholars who have reluctantly concluded that the advances in instructional technology we now enjoy have far surpassed the progress made in instructional theory.

Scholars of distance education continue to bemoan the absence of adequate attention to theory, especially as it relates to learners and learning in the distance education context. Gibson (2003) reports on content analyses of three major distance education journals that revealed that research-based articles on learning ranged only from 17% to 21% of the total number of articles reviewed. She goes on to note that most research is focused on individual learners, and the variable attracting the most attention is interaction between learner-learner and learner-instructor. With a growing emphasis on learning communities, Gibson agrees with those who advocate for more research on the group as a distinct phenomenon for study. She further contends that, even as distance education researchers have gradually embraced theory, they still seem reluctant to borrow ideas from related disciplines.

This raises an interesting question: should those engaged in the study of distance education as a distinct area of inquiry, be primarily involved in theory testing, or rather in theory generation? In other words, does the field of distance education, as a sub-set of education, warrant its own unique theories on learning and learners, or is it sufficient, perhaps more productive, to build on existing

theories in other related areas, such as adult education or educational psychology? (Gibson, 2003). If the latter approach is utilized, do we attempt to modify current theories in the literature and apply these to distance education? And, if so, why would we not construct a set of separate theoretical positions exclusive to distance learning and learners? In my earlier piece on research, I too suggested that the extensive body of knowledge already developed in other areas (e.g., continuing education) not be overlooked. In this way, the process of theory development in distance education might best be approached as a combination of arriving at new theories, as well as deriving from older ones.

As we scrutinize recent literature on leadership in education, we occasionally come across a promising new title that we hope augurs well for increased attention to this area of study, especially as it might apply to distance education. Latchem and Hanna's 2001 work *(Leadership for 21st century learning: Global perspectives for educational innovators)*, though consisting primarily of interviews of selected distance education practitioners, offers useful insights. Duderstadt, Atkins and van Houweling's *Higher Education in the Digital Age* (2002) discusses the impact of instructional technology and suggests how institutional leaders might respond strategically. There is now also a journal dedicated to administrative issues: *Online Journal of Distance Learning Administration*[3] which, though it seems to include articles that have little ostensible connection to leadership, does attempt to draw attention to managerial rather than instructional aspects of the field.

But, alas, more widespread evidence remains quite difficult to detect. An example is Shoemaker's 1998 work with the rather unwieldy title: *Leadership in Continuing and Distance Education in Higher Education*. Despite some chapters with useful, though generic, observations (e.g., distinguishing between management and leadership), there is nothing in the single chapter dedicated to distance education that offers anything helpful to those seeking insights into the topic suggested by the book's title. The chapter consists primarily of a brief description of selected distance education programs and websites, plus a bibliography without a single title pertaining to leadership. One closes this volume with an all-too-familiar reaction that one is also likely to have after attending conferences claiming to focus on distance education themes (i.e., that is has now become a quite common ploy to promise much on distance education, because of the perceived growing interest in the field, but what is actually delivered is so minimal that it serves no useful purpose, even for those content to acquire modest resources in this area of study).

Certainly, much quality research and evaluation has emanated from the distance education community of scholars and practitioners, particularly in the past ten to fifteen years. The advent and advance of the World-Wide-Web has obviously

[3] The Online Journal of Distance Learning Administration: http://www.westga. edu ~distance/jmain11.html

had a dramatic impact on the availability of and access to vast amounts of information that has enhanced what we now know and continue to learn about the field of distance education. And the Internet now facilitates the exchange of ideas among scholars and practitioners across international frontiers that previously served to impede collaboration. We now have several new journals devoted exclusively to distance education, and *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, which previously might have carried an occasional story related to out-of-classroom instruction, now features a weekly section on Instructional Technology, usually with several articles on various aspects of distance teaching and learning. Ten years ago, academic conferences might include a presentation or two by maverick educators discussing their efforts to teach asynchronously; today, there are dozens of meetings worldwide that feature distance education as the lead topic for professional discourse.

During these past ten years we have also witnessed the articulation, promulgation and adoption of various versions of "Principles of Good Practice" applicable to distance education, as well as proposed standards for evaluation of distance education programs. Initially, these were formulated by the various regional accrediting groups in order to accommodate the growing number of their member institutions establishing distance education offerings, and to aid review teams conducting accreditation site visits. These various documents were eventually incorporated into a set of standards developed under the auspices of the Western Interstate Commission of Higher Education (WICHE)[4], which are now in wide use and generally well accepted. These documents, which are straightforward descriptions of what constitutes a preferred profile of an acceptable distance education program, should be recognized as valuable resources and references for those providing leadership in the planning and implementation of such offerings. In some settings, where little or no expertise in the design and delivery of distance education resides, and the institution may not be inclined to engage outside expertise, these guidelines can be extremely useful as a beginning point, to aid an institution to at least identify essential elements and formulate appropriate questions before proceeding too precipitously into unfamiliar territory. These resources, though a far cry from more theoretically-based materials, may be the closest that some of distance education practitioners get to any literature in the field; and attention to these standards can have a useful impact on practice.

Beyond the proliferation of "how to" writings in various newsletters aimed at faculty who have just recently discovered instructional technology, distance education research and writing can be said to now be changing some basic theoretical underpinnings of pedagogy by drawing greater attention to learner-centered instruction, and to the distinction between knowledge transmission and

[4] Western Interstate Commission in Higher Education: http://www.wiche.edu/

knowledge construction. It may be that the "golden age" of distance education research is just now on the verge of manifesting itself more prominently. With so much activity in this arena, and with increasing venues for sharing both practice and scholarship, we should surely witness an expansion of the body of knowledge in this field.

Areas for further research in distance education abound, some curiously neglected. A persistent theme in this volume is the lack of attention to leadership issues. But many other topics warrant far greater interest than they have elicited thus far. As just one example, conventional wisdom suggests that, given the option, most distance education students will eschew an opportunity to participate in face-to-face sessions, and would be quite happy to complete all course or program requirements entirely at a distance. Yet, there are also examples of high participation in non-mandatory residency sessions. Is this due to favorable word-of-mouth reviews from past participants? Is it seen as a valued means by which students can bond with one another, the faculty and the institution? Is it an indication that, as much as students may appreciate the convenience of anytime-anyplace learning, they nonetheless still feel that there is no substitute for classroom-based learning? Does the on-site experience somehow give their distance learning program more legitimacy? New data on such questions can be useful to distance education decision makers who must choose among competing models with major implications regarding quality and cost.

But old questions persist, and many now attempting to make a foray into distance education scholarship are asking perennial questions (e.g., the **"**No significant difference" discussion). Is this really a useful dialogue to continue among the proponents and skeptics of distance education? The advocates cannot resist presenting new data proving that instruction at a distance is as good as, or better than, face-to-face instruction, while its detractors will no doubt dismiss the validity of such evidence because it is compromised by questionable research methods or other flaws that make any claims of either superior or similar outcomes suspect. To some extent, this debate continues to be fueled by many of the very faculty who are now enthusiastically involved in online teaching, but who insist on trying to replicate what they typically do in their classroom courses, perhaps as a way of convincing both themselves and their potential critics that their new methods meet the "no significant difference" criterion. Russell's annotated bibliography of 355 studies conducted over 70 years entitled *The No Significant Difference Phenomenon* (1999), makes a compelling case that, despite the seeming insistence among academic planners to adopt synchronous accouterments to asynchronous communications technology, no one medium of instruction or interaction is inherently superior to another.

Still, the temptation remains strong to conduct studies comparing outcomes between the two modes of delivery. One 2002 study, of online students and their classroom counterparts enrolled in the same Economics course, reported

that online students don't fare as well on tests (Brown & Leidholm, 2002; http://www.msu.edu/~brownb/vstudy.htm). While the researchers hasten to add that their study doesn't prove that online education is no good, that many other similar studies show equal learning outcomes in both environments, and that other factors (such as younger students in the classroom course having more structured and deadlines), the findings that are inevitably highlighted seem to be those that make invidious comparisons between the two modes of instruction, often at the expense of the online option.

Then, there are interest groups that continue to question the value of any distance education research. Phipps and Merisotis (1999), with support, not surprisingly, from the American Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association, found that, while original research in this field is not insignificant, many questions educators have regarding distance education remain unanswered. These authors, while acknowledging that most research on distance education concludes that it compares favorably with classroom-based instruction, contend its methods are questionable and its findings inconclusive. One wonders perhaps if this judgment reflects a bias against the subject matter rather than an assessment of the research itself. A personal experience reinforces my suspicion in this regard. A faculty colleague politely inquired recently as to my current research and writing projects; when I replied by briefly describing two studies related to distance education, he replied, "Oh, that stuff huh?" It was clear that he saw no useful purpose or worthwhile contribution to scholarship resulting from work in an aspect of educational practice that he did not view as legitimate.

Occasional rants by powerful interest groups representing large constituencies of traditional faculty are to be expected. Less predictable, and perhaps even more egregious when they do appear, are publications on the subject of distance education by organizations that invite high profile academic pundits to expound on a topic on which they may have relatively little expertise, but an abundance of opinions. These works too often tend to offer commentary that is superficial and which serve little obvious purpose or reveal a clear agenda. A recent example of this sort of oeuvre is a publication by the American Council on Education and Educause, entitled *Barriers to Distance Education* (2002), the sixth in a series on distributed education, co-authored by Arthur Levine and Jeffrey Sun, both of Teachers College, Columbia University. The stated intent of this widely distributed piece is to provide senior decision makers with a sense of the distance education 'landscape' and the means for making wise strategic choices. The 22-page document does cover a number of critical topics important for addressing distance education issues but, overall, it delivers a message that this field is still in its infancy; that it has failed to take effective advantage of the Internet as a new medium; that training to prepare teachers to use the medium is nearly non-existent; that evaluation protocols for accrediting distance education

are unclear and inconsistent; and that lack of funding is a serious impediment to the further advance of such initiatives. While it is true that the focus of this writing is on barriers to distance education, the publication seems to try very hard to convey a sense that, on the one hand, distance education is fraught with difficulties and, on the other, if distance education is allowed to develop, it cannot do so wholly unchecked. This concluding comment implies that such has been the case up to this point in its evolution.

When prolific authors write under the auspices of recognized educational organizations with broad distribution of its publications, rank and file teachers and administrators exposed to such reporting and commentary regarding as aspect of education with which they may have little familiarity, can easily conclude that it represents the definitive word on the subject, and thus be influenced in their opinion and action without benefit of more valid and reliable sources of information regarding distance education theory and practice. Worse yet is the opponent of instruction without face-to-face contact who manages to gain enough notoriety (e.g., David Noble) to be viewed as an authority in the field rather than be recognized for what he is (i.e., simply an arch enemy of distance education who rails against it at every opportunity).

Since my earlier appraisal of distance education research and writing, a subtle but significant shift in the focus of research can be discerned. In the period preceding about the mid 1990's, it seems that both camps (those who were generally favorably inclined toward distance education and those who harbor doubts about the efficacy of using technology in lieu of face-to-face teaching) engaged in studies that attempted to reinforce their inherent pre-disposition toward the issue. Since then, we see in the literature, especially in venues dedicated to the study of distance education, an increased interest in analyzing various aspects of distance education without the previously obligatory comparisons with classroom-based pedagogy. Scholars of distance education now seem more willing to examine this phenomenon in its own right. On the other hand, education researchers who are more recent converts to distance education, as well as the continuing cadre of skeptics, are more likely to undertake comparative analyses, perhaps in some instances, to reinforce their opinion that neither they nor any other self-respecting educator probably ought not to have anything to do with distance education.

Despite lack of progress in some areas, this brief summary of recent activities and accomplishments related to research and writing in distance education would seem to auger reasonably well for new and accelerated scholarship in the field. But does what we have described, in fact, represent substantive progress in crafting a new agenda for distance education that has brought it to higher level of recognition and acceptability as an established, or at least a maturing field with its own identifiable body of literature, its own defining principles, its own theoretical constructs to guide practice, and its own distinct place in the profession? As of

yet, it is unclear if we have attained this status. The editor of a leading distance education journal published in the US recently bemoaned (off the record) the huge number of manuscripts submitted for consideration to that publication that lack any empirical grounding, or that offer material that contributes anything useful to the further development of distance education theory.

There is perhaps a lesson here for distance education leaders. While not realistic to expect everyone involved in some aspect of planning, management, evaluation, etc. to become intimately familiar with much of the latest distance education literature, or to become fully conversant in major theories in the field, we ought to expect, nonetheless, those in these roles to be aware that there is a sizeable repertoire of material available to them and to practitioners they direct or influence, and that they should make some reasonable effort to become knowledgeable of at least key issues and trends currently attracting attention in the field. And those who represent the leadership of distance education programs that employ significant numbers of full-time and part-time faculty should make some effort to be vigilant about identifying items of interest regarding distance pedagogy, or other topics useful to faculty and others who may not be especially familiar with venues where information and ideas can be obtained.

Until recently, faculty loyalties were primarily to one's own special area of academic interest, with ideas and information shared within one's department or selected colleagues at other institutions known to one another through professional meetings and publications. But increasingly, intellectual intercourse among faculty is occurring throughout a much broader scholarly community, now more easily and widely dispersed through cyberspace. A small example of this is an experience I had when the *Chronicle of Higher Education* cited a recently published journal article I had authored. I received several e-mail messages from individuals on three continents whom I did not know and with whom I had not previously corresponded. It is also of some significance, I think, that this particular article was published in an online journal and, in this venue, elicited noticeably more response than other articles I had authored in paper-based journals. This suggests that, not only is the proliferating online medium creating new avenues for asynchronous teaching and learning, but it is also allowing and encouraging greater academic discourse among the professoriate which, until recently, has remained quite parochial. This phenomenon is likely to encourage and enhance collaborative research and writing and elevate distance education scholarship to a new status in the body of work in the field of education.

But the availability of a convenient medium for the exchange of information and ideas cannot, by itself, ensure a more sophisticated and more credible research agenda in distance education. A recognizable, coordinated and sustained effort at an international, or at least national level, with sufficient funding, is needed to advance this work. Despite its ambitious name and its significant contributions, the Center for the Study of Distance Education at the Pennsylvania State

University, is not in a position to provide the leadership and resources at the level required. Ideally, a research-oriented organization should advocate for increased scholarly activity in distance education, assist in securing funds, disseminate findings, and generate greater awareness of, and involvement in, theory-based practice. Distance education is today an integral aspect of teaching and learning worldwide; it will be tragic if another decade of intense engagement in this exciting enterprise results in nothing more than still more reportage of "best practices" without achieving more insight into the phenomenon.

References

Brown, B., & Leidholm, C. (2002). *Can web courses replace the classroom? Lessons from microeconomics.* Retrieved April 3, 2003 from: https://www.msu.edu/~brownb/vstudy.htm

Duderstadt, J., Atkins, D., & van Howeling, D. (2002). *Higher education in the digital age*. Westport, CT: Praeger.

Gibson, C. (2003). Learners and learning: The need for theory. In M. Moore & W. Anderson (Eds.), *Handbook of Distance Education*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Latchem C., & Hanna, D. (2001). *Leadership for the 21st century: Global perspectives for educational innovators.* London: Kogan Page.

Levine, A., & Sun, J.C. (2002). *Barriers to distance education.* Washington, D.C.: American Council on Education.

Phipps, R., & Merisotis, J. (1999). *What's the difference? A review of contemporary research on the effectiveness of distance learning in higher education*. Washington, DC.: Institute for Higher Education Policy.

Russel, T. L. (1999). *The no significant difference phenomena.* Raleigh, N.C.: North Carolina State University.

Shoemaker, C. Jones (1998). *Leadership in continuing and distance education in higher education.* Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

3.1. From Campus to Cyberspace: The Transition of Classroom Faculty to Distance Education Roles[5]

The Changing Professoriate

In an increasingly digitized society, both the profile of colleges and universities, as well as the role of its faculty, are experiencing profound changes, as both providers and consumers of educational products and services adapt to new ways of teaching and learning across time and space. As busy working adults seeking additional credentials through part-time study demand convenience and flexibility, academic planners and decision makers now worry as much about which buildings to wire for Internet access as they do about where to build new parking lots. There will, of course, be a continuing market for the traditional campus-based experience for large numbers of recent high school graduates, yet a larger percentage of even this population is now taking advantage of computer-assisted courses, whether they live on campus or 1,500 miles distant.

New England represents a market place that is especially well suited for distance activities. With a large land area, many small rural communities, difficult driving conditions over long winter months, the lack of a well developed community-college system in some states, and many technical colleges filled to capacity, there is urgent need for increased access to post-secondary education opportunities. New England institutions of higher education would do well to consider partnerships with one another, and with regional businesses and industries to collaboratively design and deliver additional distance education initiatives. If this does not occur soon, more and more enterprising out-of-region institutions with entrepreneurial capability will move into the region, knowing that there are lucrative markets for learners who, rather than come to campuses for classes on fixed schedules, will search and satisfy their needs via education that can be delivered anytime, anywhere.

Despite heightened interest in distance education nationally and globally, New England institutions still lag behind their counterparts in other regions of the country. Even national surveys reveal continued reluctance on the part of much of the professoriate to utilize any form of technology. The Campus Computing Project found in its most recent survey that many college instructors still don't even use e-mail to communicate with their students, much less integrate online features into their courses (Green, 2000). Only twenty percent of the faculty make use of electronic course management tools made available to them by their institutions.

---

[5]This article was first published in Educational Pathways, 1(6), May 2002. (http://www.edpath.com/research.htm); a version was also published in CONNECTION: New England's Journal of Higher Education and Economic Development, 17(1), 2002.

But what about those faculty who do become actively engaged in alternative modes of teaching students at a distance? Although they still represent a minority of faculty on campus who make some use of computer assisted tools to teach asynchronously across time and space, their numbers are steadily increasing at public and private, large and small, rural and urban, prestigious and lower-tier institutions. The transition of faculty from face-to-face classroom teaching at a fixed time and place to asynchronous mentoring from a distance is being played out at hundreds of academic institutions worldwide. How are they making this transition from the classroom to cyberspace? Considerable attention has been given to comparisons of the efficacy of distance education and more conventional classroom-based instruction. Less evident at this point is data on how faculty are responding and adjusting to this burgeoning phenomenon.

The role of instructional personnel is inevitably changing, and significant numbers of faculty, whether by individual choice or institutional direction, are now engaged in, or at least flirting with, some aspect of teaching at a distance. Most are doing so after some years in the more familiar and comfortable role of content expert delivering lectures and dispensing assignments at the front of a classroom to a group of students assembled at a fixed time and place. While many now elect to integrate some form of instructional technology designed to augment their classroom teaching, others are faced with the prospect of adapting to instructional duties that may eliminate the need for any face-to-face encounter between teacher and learners.

Following are highlights of a research study I conducted (Beaudoin, 2002) which yielded some interesting data regarding this phenomenon which may be instructive to both faculty experiencing this role change and to administrators who oversee institutional adoption of distance education formats. This research activity studied the transition and self-perception of a sample group of faculty currently teaching in distance education programs, all of who have taught previously (or still are teaching) in traditional campus-based academic settings. The study examined and analyzed how these faculty have adapted and adjusted to their new teaching milieu, how effective they feel they are, what tools they utilize, how satisfying this different role is compared to their earlier instructional tasks, and what their perception is of their students' satisfaction with them and with courses delivered in a distance learning context. Approximately 100 faculty currently teaching full-time or as part-time adjunct at six institutions (two in New England and four in other regions of the U.S.) which offer graduate degree programs delivered through distance education modalities, were asked to complete a 35 question survey in fall, 2001. Criteria for participation were a minimum of two years teaching in a classroom environment, and a minimum of one year of distance teaching experience. Fifty respondents completed and returned the instrument, which was sent to them either electronically or via the mails.

Faculty Profile

As expected, the classroom teaching backgrounds of respondents varied, with 50% indicating they had more than ten years of classroom experience, while the other respondents were evenly divided between 2-5 and 6-10 years of traditional teaching. Not surprisingly, their teaching experience in distance education venues is considerably less, with 62% having 1-5 years background, 20% with 6-10 years, and only 12% reporting more than 10 years of distance teaching. At the time of the survey, three-quarters of them were teaching concurrently in both environments, and nearly 50% reported that they were teaching three courses at a distance within a single semester. While this latter number might seem somewhat high, it should be noted that many are teaching as adjuncts, and several are recently retired educators, thus for some, this is their primary professional activity at the moment. Slightly more than half indicate they have between 26 and 50 students in each of their distance courses, about one quarter have 51-100 students, and the other respondents claimed to have enrollments of 100 or more per course (it is possible that some aggregated the number of students in all of their courses).

Resources Utilized & Time Spent Teaching at a Distance

Because all respondents teach at institutions using primarily print-based instructional materials (augmented by electronic media such as video-tapes), there is a high incidence of correspondence delivery. In fact, 92% exchange printed materials with students; forty-six percent reported use of tapes (a medium used by several of the institutions represented); eighty-eight percent use e-mail, 50% correspond via regular mail, 34% use the telephone, and 18% use the Internet (presumably through a course web site). Although a majority (56%) felt they had less interaction with students enrolled in distance education courses than in classroom-based courses, nearly one-quarter felt their communication with students at a distance was greater than with those in face-to-face settings. Exactly half of the faculty surveyed stated that they spent about the same amount of time teaching in each format, and about one-quarter of them spend more time on their distance teaching duties. The average number of hours per week usually spent to provide instructional support for a three-credit distance education course is nine hours.

Training for & Transitioning to Teaching at a Distance

Thirty-two of the fifty faculty reported that they had received some type of training for their new roles as distance educators, but approximately one-third of the respondents did not receive any training from their institution or from elsewhere. A few indicated that they did obtain a general overview of the program from administrators, and a few others said they simply spoke with experienced

faculty already involved in the same program. When asked what sort of training might have been helpful, orientation to the use of technology was cited most often.

The most frequently cited challenge, indicated by one-fifth of them, is adjusting to the lack of face-to-face contact with students. Since none of the distance education programs these faculty members are associated with currently include a visual two-way medium, faculty awareness of students' comprehension is determined through verbal and written communication. The second most common issue (identified by 8%) is difficulty adjusting to and becoming facile with the technology used in their courses. Other factors cited include: slow turn-around time of materials between students and faculty; the time-consuming process of mentoring distance education courses, and a few complained of having too many students and too little compensation. Despite the time involved in these activities, some stated that they did not feel they were making a significant contribution to their students' learning. A few respondents also expressed frustration at the lack of communication and feedback from program administrators. Two respondents indicated that making the transition from teaching younger students to older adult learners was actually a more difficult adjustment for them than the change from the classroom to a distance teaching role.

Roles and Rewards of Teaching at a Distance

Despite some persistent challenges for faculty increasingly involved in this mode of instruction, they have a sense of their new roles, and articulate significant satisfaction with these roles. The role of 'mentor' was selected most often (by 38%) from a list of five options; 32% chose 'facilitator'; about one quarter (26%) felt their role was to provide feedback, answer questions, and offer encouragement, support, guidance and constructive criticism. Twenty-two percent identified themselves as teachers; and 14% viewed themselves as content experts. When asked if they felt their students recognize the importance of their role and its contribution to their learning, a substantial majority (92%) said yes, while only 4% replied no.

Asked about their own level of satisfaction with their distance teaching, a slight majority (54%) replied that they are about equally satisfied with their classroom and distance teaching. Thirty-four percent indicated they were more satisfied with classroom teaching, and only 8% felt generally more satisfied with their distance teaching. When asked to explain their response, 16% identified aspects of classroom dynamics they felt to be preferable to teaching at a distance, primarily related to the ability to have visual, face-to-face contact with students. But to the question regarding the most rewarding aspects of their distance teaching, many positive experiences were cited. Sixteen percent felt they had a positive impact on students; 13% were gratified by the mentoring relationship established with students; an equal number cited the satisfaction of witnessing self-directed learning taking place; 8 % felt they were providing an educational

experience not otherwise available to these students; and 8% noted the rewards of working with motivated students.

Another tangible reward associated with distance teaching is, of course, compensation. To the question asking them to compare their salaries for teaching distance education vs. classroom-based courses, 56% replied they are paid less for teaching distance education courses; 32% indicated they receive about equal pay for both types of teaching; and only 4% report they are compensated at a higher rate for teaching at a distance.

Student, Colleague & Self-Perceptions of Distance Education

The study sought information not only about the respondents' own perceptions of distance teaching, but also what they perceive to be the opinions and attitudes of their students and colleagues toward distance education. Eighty-four percent reported that their students completed a faculty/course evaluation at the completion of their online course(s), yet only slightly more than half (54%) felt that it was an appropriate instrument. When asked to characterize their distant students' satisfaction with their online teaching, compared with evaluations by their classroom-based students, 43% felt there was a comparable level of satisfaction among both student cohorts; 20% felt that distance education students were generally more satisfied; and only 8% were of the opinion that their classroom students were more satisfied.

To a question about their colleagues' perception of distance teaching, nearly half of the respondents felt most other faculty considered distance teaching less important than classroom instruction. Only one responded that colleagues considered distance teaching equal to class-room teaching, yet 12% indicated colleagues felt distance teaching was more difficult. Just over one-quarter perceived their colleagues to be largely indifferent to distance education. Reasons cited for why many of their colleagues did not view distance education favorably are: it is too impersonal, it is too new; it is not effective. Several felt their classroom counterparts underestimated the time involved in distance teaching, or did not recognize the rigor of this form of education. The survey asked respondents if they believed their respective academic department and/or institution recognized their impact as distance educators on their students. Fifty-eight percent feel they get some acknowledgment for their role from their organization, and 22% replied they did not get any sense of recognition. A few who did sense some positive recognition made a distinction between their department and the overall institution, with most indicating that their own academic department was more attuned to their distance education roles and responsibilities.

A question was posed asking faculty about their perceptions of students' most positive and negative experiences with distance education, based on feedback they had received. Sixty-eight percent felt their students were about equally

satisfied with courses they had taken in class and at a distance. Eighteen percent felt their students were more satisfied with their distance education experiences, while only 6% thought students were more satisfied with classroom courses. Nearly one-third (30%) thought that relevance and applicability of the curriculum was what their students considered to be the most positive aspect of their distance courses; the same percentage believe that convenience and flexibility of the distance format was what appealed most to students. Twenty-two percent identified faculty feedback as the feature students valued most. Other positive aspects cited were the opportunity provided to students to learn from one another, and to reflect on their learning. Distance education is not, of course, immune to criticism from its consumers. Sixteen percent of these faculty felt that the aspect of distance learning their students considered to be most negative is the slow response time in getting faculty/mentor feedback on submitted course work; 14% cited that poor administrative support was their students' major criticism. Lack of interaction with faculty (10%), lack of interaction with other students (8%), and too much work (8%) were other negative aspects cited by students.

Faculty were also asked to assess the quality of instructional materials utilized in their distance course compared to what might typically be used in classroom courses. Two-thirds considered quality to be about the same in both teaching venues; 16% felt distant students had better materials available to them; and 10% thought classroom-based students benefited from better materials. As with classroom courses wherein some students maintain a low profile (e.g., frequent absences, minimum participation), so too can distance educators typically expect 'low visibility' students (e.g., little or no contact with faculty, minimum participation in online discussions with other students). This behavior is compounded by the fact that distance students cannot be seen by faculty. When asked if they thought these minimally active students were still engaged in the course and learning from it, a surprisingly high number (70%) responded affirmatively. Only 16% believe these students are compromising their learning by low participation. We also wanted to know if those teaching at a distance feel that the achievability and quality of learning outcomes is similar to what they expect in a classroom teaching environment. Slightly more than half rate learning outcomes about the same in either instructional setting; 22% think it is higher with distance learners; and 16% rate this higher in the classroom.

The survey included a question asking if faculty had changed their opinion of distance education in any way since they had acquired more experience teaching in this medium. Nearly sixty percent acknowledged that changes had occurred, all reporting a more positive opinion. Most who responded affirmatively indicated that they now took distance education more seriously as a viable alternative (to classroom teaching). Comments included: more impressed with materials; more respect for students; courses more challenging; more impact on students; more time consuming. Twenty-two percent now realize that this mode of teaching is

much more labor intensive than they had initially thought. Several expressed much less skepticism now that they had experience in this mode of instruction.

Faculty Recommendations for Improved Distance Teaching

Finally, respondents were invited to recommend one change that they felt would improve their current distance teaching situation. The most frequent cited suggestions were: enhanced electronic systems for faculty-student contact (22%); improved administrative procedures to support faculty (16%); the inclusion of some face-to-face contact with students (14%) and increased compensation (12%). Other comments included more input in course development; more technology training; smaller numbers of students per course, and quicker turn-around time of material between students and faculty. Ten respondents chose to offer a final remark in the open-ended portion of the survey instrument. All but one of these, who was critical of the quality of instructional materials, made highly positive statements about distance education in general, expressed high regard for their particular program, and wanted to make clear what a positive experience their involvement in distance education has been for them.

Analysis & Implications

The research findings highlighted above, though preliminary, are helpful in identifying and understanding the attitudes, perceptions and behaviors of a professoriate whose role is fundamentally changing at a rapid pace. Can we discern useful implications and applications for those moving into distance teaching roles as well as for those supporting these faculty? In view of the dramatic changes and adjustments involved in moving from a classroom setting to a distance format, it appears from our study of fifty faculty at six different institutions, that training, monitoring and evaluating faculty to function effectively, and to enhance their skills in this new environment are not seen as particularly high institutional priorities. This is evident in the fact that one-third of our respondents received no training whatsoever as they assumed these new functions, worked with new technology, and often shifted from faculty-driven instruction to student-centered learning. The same number do not even see results of student evaluations, nor do they receive any feedback regarding their teaching. It may be that some program administrators are reluctant to impose training on faculty for fear of offending experienced teachers. Yet, many of these same faculty indicate assistance with instructional technology, guidance on effectively mentoring adult learners, and adjusting from being content experts to facilitating the learning process for adult learners, are all aspects of this transition where support would be welcome.

Nonetheless, a clear majority has a solid sense of their new roles; nearly three-quarters of the respondents refer to themselves as mentors or facilitators of their students' learning progress, and nearly two-thirds see their main function as

providing feedback. Surprisingly, even though a few express some frustration that they do not feel they really contribute much to their students' learning, over 90% feel that their students recognize and appreciate the role they play. And nearly three-quarters of these faculty felt that even those students who maintain a low profile in their courses are nonetheless still learning and benefiting from it. It seems that most of these faculty have come to recognize that facilitating self-directed learning is as critical to students' success as disseminating content. This study also confirmed findings of many other research activities that have concluded that quantity and quality of interaction between students and faculty and students with other students are the qualities most closely associated with faculty satisfaction with distance teaching. A strong sentiment expressed among our sample of distance educators was that this work is very labor intensive, that they receive little appreciation from their colleagues or institution for their efforts, and only two respondents stated they were compensated more for their distance teaching than for their classroom instruction.

How satisfied are these faculty once they have acclimated somewhat to teaching at a distance? Since 58% stated that they felt more positive about distance education now that they had acquired some experience and familiarity with distance education, it seems somewhat surprising then, that only 8% felt more satisfied with their distance teaching than with their classroom work. Despite increasingly favorable attitudes toward distance education, many still miss the visual, face-to-face, live contact with students. This is reflected in what they say they want changed to improve distance education. The most frequently cited recommendation is for increased interaction through various media; several even would like to have live, synchronous sessions with students to complement the interaction achieved via distance modalities (even though most institutions delivering distance education do not require any on-site sessions for degree completion). Another key area where faculty express need for improvement is increased administrative support. Just as students in some distance education programs suffer the fate of being 'out of sight, out of mind' apparently so too do many faculty experience a feeling of being some-what abandoned by their institution. This, of course, is exacerbated by the fact that most of these distance education programs are serviced by part-time adjunct faculty, who have little or no presence on campuses.

Although this study did not specifically address the issue of how the use of instructional technology affects faculty prospects regarding promotion and tenure decisions, this is an increasingly important area that demands urgent attention. Currently, many distance education programs are serviced by large cadres of adjunct faculty not involved in tenure considerations, but as more full-time tenure track faculty engage in teaching with technology, institutions are well advised to address the issue thought-fully and soon. There are other intriguing questions which this study did not pursue, but which warrant further attention and action:

- What role does gender play in satisfaction levels of distance educators?
- Do faculty who miss face-to-face contact with students make optimum use of online communications tools?
- Does reduced satisfaction levels of faculty who miss face-to-face contact make any difference in their teaching effectiveness?
- Is the transition from classroom to distance venues easier for adjunct faculty than for full-time academics?
- Do faculty who avoid distance teaching opportunities do so because of doubts about how to teach with technology, or doubts about the efficacy of the medium?
- How do distance teaching experiences influence instructional approaches when faculty return to classroom settings?
- How do distance faculty interpret (and grade) the behavior of online students who participate only minimally in their courses?
- Do distance faculty expect more interaction in distance settings than they do in classroom venues?
- Will faculty whose work in distance education is not rewarded seek alternative employment in corporate e-learning settings?

These and other important questions regarding distance education and training, both in education and in the for-profit corporate sector cannot be ignored. The continuing skepticism of this burgeoning phenomenon by the traditional academic establishment does a disservice to those who have launched innovative programs utilizing technology to provide increased access to educational opportunities for those seeking anytime-anyplace learning. Despite the fact that, in 1998, 1,690 post-secondary institutions enrolled 1.6 million students in 54,000 distance courses, there are still too many who believe that only fringe institutions desperate for new enrollments engage in such practices. Although there exists substantial and credible research documenting the efficacy of this mode of teaching and learning, the argument persists that it is not as good as face-to-face education. This implies that what goes on in a typical classroom is what should be emulated. Further, despite evidence to the contrary, the critics maintain that teaching at a distance is too impersonal for students and therefore is not satisfying to them.

The results of this study, as well as other ongoing research in the field, reveals that computer-assisted teaching and learning does not compromise teaching goals or learning outcomes, despite geographic distance and time differences. After all, it is to be remembered that technology is merely a tool to facilitate the process, and that simply because a student is not visible to the instructor, does not mean that learning is lacking. John Dewey (1938) observed that a critical element of the teaching process is to create the conditions for ‘productive inquiry’ that takes place independent from the teacher. In the distance education environment, this

inquiry is indeed occurring, however invisible it may be. Faculty who make the transition from the classroom to teaching at a distance have an opportunity to not only foster and facilitate their students' learning, but also to reflect on and enhance their practice in both instructional settings.

References:

Beaudoin, M. (2002, November). *The transition of classroom faculty to distance teaching roles.* Paper presented at the Sloan-C Conference on Online Learning. Orlando, Florida.

Dewey, J. (1938). *Experience and education.* New York: Collier Books.

Green, K. (2000). *Campus computing project*. Claremont Graduate School: Claremont, CA.

3.2. Epilogue: Facilitating the Evolving Role of Faculty

When the "Transition" piece was authored just two years ago, I was able to locate relatively little related research and writing on this topic though, of course, this movement of faculty from synchronous, face-to-face teaching to asynchronous, distance mentoring had already been a prevalent trend for some time. Yet, even into the early 90's, faculty issues had been largely ignored in distance education literature. I recall delivering a paper on *" Receptivity Toward Distance Education"* (Beaudoin, 1981) at an adult education conference in the late 1980's that elicited considerable interest; I suspect this was primarily because it was seen as such a novel topic to consider at the time. By the late 90's, Wolcott was still one of the few who had contributed any substantive work in this area. But, as she points out, much of what has appeared is anecdotal, and suffers from the lack of a theoretical perspective (as is the case, frankly, with much distance education literature, regardless of its focus). Also, she observes that studies of faculty frequently document how satisfying distance teaching can be, but the research seldom arrives at more specific findings as, for example, such key concepts as barriers, motives and incentives (Wolcott, 2003).

Now, it seems that there is some attention being given to these more discreet phenomena, presumably fueled in part by faculty researchers who are themselves participants in the process, and so are interested in implications and applications for themselves, as well as for others. Wolcott provides an extensive and impressive list of references with her 2003 article, and rightly points out that much of the theoretical basis for writing on this topic has relied on Rogers' work on innovation (1995), which first appeared over thirty years ago. His classic work on the adoption and diffusion of innovation is especially helpful in that it contributes to an understanding of what influences faculty decisions to venture into distance education. Chances of adoption are increased when the innovation is perceived to be an improvement over what exists; when it is compatible with the adopter's needs and values; when it is easy to comprehend and utilize; and when it can be tried without too much risk and results can be observed. When these characteristics are considered against the prevailing climate within most academic settings where comfort and convention are more prized than innovation and risk, it becomes apparent why Rogers' strategy of identifying early adopters to introduce a change can be so critical in proposing alternatives in typical educational settings.

Two recent studies produced remarkably parallel findings as those in my research on faculty role transitions, and suggest that this area is generating increased attention. Christine Uber Grosse (2002), of Thunderbird, The American Graduate School of International Management, found, in a preliminary study of colleagues

at her institution, that respondents' favorable attitudes toward distance teaching had dramatically increased through their involvement in it, and also that the experience had a highly positive impact on their teaching, scholarship and service. They were impressed with technology's ability to deliver learning value, and recognized that synchronicity in time and distance is not necessary for effective teaching. Further, they reported that newly acquired experience and expertise allowed them to move into active leadership roles, provided increased contacts, made them more prolific in their scholarly endeavors, produced teaching awards and provided them with a greater sense of achievement.

Two other faculty researchers at Bar Ilan University in Israel, Gila Kurtz and Rachel Sagee, translated the questionnaire I had designed for my study and administered it to nineteen Teacher Education faculty integrating online teaching with campus-based teaching (2003). There were quite similar results with the Israeli faculty as with my own group of respondents. Seventy-three percent of the Israeli faculty spend more time teaching online (average of 5.6 hours per week per course) compared to face-to-face teaching and have greater communication with their online students. The Israeli faculty was more satisfied with their distance teaching than their American counterparts (and were also paid more), and they had a favorable opinion of the achievability and quality of distance learning outcomes. The Israeli faculty view their colleagues' and their institution's opinion of online teaching more positively than do the American faculty. And, as was a key finding in both the Beaudoin and Grosse studies, Kurtz and Sagee also reported that a significant number of faculty (60%) involved in distance teaching changed their opinion of it for the better.

Such studies, documenting positive experiences and opinions of faculty now engaged in distance teaching, are encouraging and suggest that familiarity contributes to a marked lessening of teachers' earlier animosity toward distance education. Yet, before we are lulled into a sense of false optimism here, we should remind ourselves that for every educator who becomes enthused with new ways and means to teach, there is another whose experience provides ammunition to condemn the use of computers for instructional purposes. The January 3, 2003 issue of *The Chronicle of Higher Education,* for example, contained an essay by Ellen Laird, documenting the many pedagogical challenges she encountered in teaching a web-based course, including students cavalierly missing deadlines, using atrocious grammar on online writing, and other transgressions she attributes to the medium. This writer goes on to concede that there are strategies and features to manage the situations she describes, yet apparently she uses none of these, nor does it occur to her that perhaps the difficulties she encountered are more a reflection of her course management than the course environment.

Why even note of this rather uninspiring essay authored by a disgruntled pedagogue who may harbor the same views of her classroom courses and

students as she does regarding their online counterparts? It is of some significance only because it illustrates all too well the widespread hostility that persists toward distance education, not only from those who have never tried it, but also from those who have tried it and found it suspect (perhaps an even more damaging cohort of critics), not so much due to the shortcomings of the medium, but rather more likely due to the ineptness of those attempting to utilize the medium without adequate training or skill in making optimum use of the online resources available to them. And no doubt, for some, it becomes a self-fulfilling prophesy: "Well, I didn't think it would work in my discipline, and now I know it doesn't."

But despite a formidable army of passive doubters and active obstructionists, we are, in fact, seeing increasing numbers of faculty at many institutions now moving into the cyberspace environment to undertake all, or at least part of their teaching responsibilities. A US Department of Education survey of 1,000 institutions (2003), reported that total enrollment in distance education was estimated at 2,876,000 in 2000-1, a fourfold increase since 1994-5. It is interesting to speculate about how the cumulative effect of this phenomenon might impact the level of "best practices" in online teaching. One view is that this trend will quite soon not only elevate the overall quality of online pedagogy, but will also create a critical mass within the professoriate which has the potential to influence, perhaps even pressure, others within the academy to also engage in similar instructional approaches. The most optimistic viewpoint is that the likelihood of more widespread use of technology for teaching at a distance can also result in the adoption of best practices in classrooms as well, thus "raising the bar" regardless of the medium or the venue.

The more pessimistic version of the possible consequence of this faculty transition to distance teaching roles is that it will have relatively little impact on improving pedagogy in either format. This is seen by, some observers, to be so because this movement is not occurring in any systematic fashion that facilitates widespread professional development in this area for faculty. Rather, most faculty who do utilize instructional strategy do so in a largely idiosyncratic manner, occasionally experimenting with electronic resources, but with little sense if what they are doing is any more effective than their traditional approaches to teaching and, if it is, how or why this is so. The most cynical perspective on this is that too many faculty are still "tinkering around the edges" of computer-mediated instruction and, despite all the attention and activity we might observe and chronicle, the great majority of the professoriate will continue with conventional practices, largely uninterested in, and immune to the forces at play around them that are now made possible by an astounding array of digital resources.

Technology itself does not improve teaching and learning, though it can and does, at least in the hands of skilled distance educators, facilitate the process. Yet,

greater acceptance by faculty does not necessarily foster increased investment in instructional technology by institutions, especially in an era of diminished resources. High start-up costs, return-on-investment issues, and questions of scalability all give pause to decision makers. *The Chronicle of Higher Education* frequently reports dramatic reductions in technology-related expenditures on most campuses. Ironically, this is occurring just at the point when many faculty on those campuses are finally recognizing the value of technology for teaching, and so are demanding more resources at a time when their institutions are least able to accommodate their growing interest and demand.

As distance teaching options become more commonplace, will faculty be as mobile as students? I had suggested in the Millennium article (see chapter 6.1.) that, just as students in the new millennium would have less allegiance to any particular institutions, and instead would gravitate to those most accessible and affordable, so too would faculty seek affiliations with more than one employer, especially as such opportunities for supplementary income were made possible without necessitating any geographic mobility. The notion of faculty who may become affiliated with several distinct institutions in entirely different regions of the world is an intriguing one, but is it really a scenario that is likely to soon become more prevalent in this century, or will it be a modus operandi limited to a few educational mavericks? The image of the peripatetic professor brings to mind the noble Aristotelian practice of many great teachers who took the vow of transience, and who chose to deliberately place themselves in new and unfamiliar situations requiring them to re-establish, re-organize and re-create themselves at more or less regular intervals. Some academics do seek new opportunities, through changes in occupational venue, but this movement subjects the itinerant instructor to new personalities, politics and protocols. While this process may not necessarily represent radical transformation of self at each juncture, it typically does involve a certain degree of temporary disruption, and may bring with it challenges that the most risk averse will choose to avoid. Instead, many remain fixed in place, all the while railing against their employer because they feel undervalued and, of course, always underpayed.

While it is likely that the great majority of full-time faculty will continue to remain associated with one primary employer, every new distance education provider presents a temptation for overload teaching elsewhere, especially for those faculty who have already made the transition from the classroom to cyberspace. The dramatic increase in the use of adjunct faculty, some wholly employed by teaching part-time at several institutions, will likely now become even more prevalent, as they are attracted into the distance education arena, where one can be teaching for three institutions with students on three continents, all accomplished from a home base. My own situation offers an illustration of the sorts of employment arrangements that are becoming more commonplace. I presently hold a full-time, year-round faculty appointment at a

private university in Maine where I serve as senior faculty in a distance learning Masters in Education program. I also teach one face-to-face course on my university's urban campus some 20 miles from the main campus. In addition, I serve as adjunct faculty in another distance education masters degree program, jointly offered online by a public university in another state partnering with yet another institution in Europe.

Despite such new arrangements and opportunities for alternative teaching situations, there is a long way to go yet before we can boldly state that an academic's efforts as a distance educator are now being rewarded handsomely, but we can witness some encouraging advances in this area. Indeed, it was not too long ago that faculty seeking a new employment opportunity would downplay, or perhaps even conceal, their efforts at incorporating instructional technology into their courses. Now, this experience is increasingly touted by peripatetic professors in hopes of making themselves more marketable, especially as they see more frequent advertisements for faculty positions requiring experience with online course design and delivery. Wolcott and Betts (1999) offer some useful data regarding the distinction she and others make between intrinsic and extrinsic motives that drive faculty to become involved in distance teaching. Surprisingly, certain intrinsic reasons, such as intellectual challenge, reaching new students, developing new ideas and teaching techniques, are frequently cited by faculty moving into distance education. But not surprisingly, most extrinsic factors, such as institutional expectations to participate, or prospects of rewards such as promotion, tenure or increased pay, actually became disincentives (Wolcott & Betts, 1999).

Perhaps one of the strongest indicators of whether or not distance education has found an accepted place within the higher education arena, is in the area of promotion and tenure. Even in this sacrosanct domain, where tradition tenaciously prevails, there is evidence that candidates who have been engaged, however minimally, in distance education can now, at least in some quarters, safely include this activity in their portfolios submitted for peer review. If we could find increased evidence that faculty who teach with technology are rewarded for such efforts by their peers with positive decisions regarding promotion and tenure, then we might have some confidence that distance education has "arrived." A *Chronicle of Higher Education* cover story (Young, 2002) gave a mixed review in this regard, citing as many faculty who were harmed as were rewarded for online course development and teaching.

Even in settings where distance education programming has a relatively strong presence, it is rare for faculty seeking promotion and/or tenure to be comfortable in chronicling distance teaching as their primary area of effort and expertise. Department chairs are still likely to counsel candidates to continue with some classroom teaching just to "play it safe." In preparing my own portfolio for tenure candidacy not long ago, despite strong documentation in the areas of

teaching, scholarship and service (almost exclusively in distance education related activities) I must confess to making the point that I have also regularly taught one face-to face course each term. And it is interesting to note that the review committee's letter endorsing my tenure made reference to my work in the "new field" of distance education.

Willis (1994) has identified several areas in addition to promotion and tenure that are critical to effective faculty development. These include: release time, course load, course revisions, publishing, mentoring, and compensation. Ultimately, all of these dimensions of academic practice and policy relate to rewards and incentives for participation in innovative approaches to teaching, scholarship and service. Though not widespread, there are a few encouraging examples of traditional institutions that are attempting some rather bold approaches at fostering faculty interest in innovative new teaching modes via computer-assisted instruction. As is the case at increasing numbers of institutions, the faculty using technology to teach at George Mason University (GMU) is rewarded through grants for course re-design and technological support. But less common is another means GMU utilizes to reward its faculty: they must compete for the privilege to teach in a new technology-rich facility named Innovation Hall by demonstrating expanded use of technology in their courses (Carlson, 2003).

The dominant academic culture greatly influences how educational institutions address innovations such as distance education, how faculty respond to new options for teaching and the fashion in which the two chose to adopt or adapt to new opportunities to arrange and deliver instruction. Some countries have a long and notable history of institutions offering instruction via correspondence (e.g., the U.K. and Canada), so the introduction of new entities exclusively designed to function as distance education providers (e.g., the British Open University), was not viewed as being a distinct departure from some of their antecedents. In the U.S., extension services and continuing education divisions serving adult, part-time learners, were well established, so the notion of life-long learning was not a novel idea. Yet, as Guri-Rosenblit (1999) observes, for most European universities, these roles were relatively uncommon, and so the introduction of distance education initiatives, especially if for revenue generating purposes, was generally seen as a quite radical departure from mainstream activities.

Further, the relationship of faculty toward their institutions has frequently differed, influencing the practices of faculty as well as their attitude toward distance education. In most European countries, perhaps even more so than in the U.S., the principle of academic freedom is so strong that any movement on the part of their institutions to promote teamwork or quality control measures, as is often the case among larger distance teaching entities, would be strenuously resisted by faculty (Guri-Rosenblit, 1999). Thus, although faculty might be willing to incorporate some IT into their courses as add-on features, they would not be so receptive to using technology as replacements for face-to-

face encounters. In those institutions where new IT resources are added "piecemeal" rather than used to replace much of the apparatus of traditional teaching methodologies, faculty are better able to venture more cautiously into distance education, or avoid it altogether. And if they do use some IT components in their courses, they generally do not regard such teaching as equivalent to distance teaching. Indeed, probably many faculty in traditional institutions would argue that distance teaching should be distributed from institutions exclusively set-up for such purposes, rather than encourage their organizations to house both classroom and distance teaching.

Faculty newly involved in online instruction who do not get the benefit of adequate training are susceptible to misuse of platform features at either end of the use continuum. There are those who make use of only the most basic functions available to them (e.g., e-mail), either because they do not know how to use others, do not even know they are available, or simply don't recognize how valuable these can be to enhance the teaching-learning process in an online environment. At the other extreme are those who become so enamored of all the electronic features offered, that they want to be sure to make maximum use of each of these, and so tend to overload the course with too many activities and assignments, both for individual students and groups. One example of how faculty sometime feel obligated to provide their students with online services, which may not be as essential to students as they are perceived to be by faculty, is the chat room function. It is generally assumed that a mix of realtime (synchronous) and asynchronous opportunities for interaction are characteristic of "best practices" for online teaching and learning. Thus, regularly scheduled synchronous chat rooms may be expected of students, despite a pattern of frequent asynchronous interaction that makes realtime exchanges a superfluous and often onerous activity. Anecdotal data suggest that many online students will elect to use a chat room function in the early stages of an online course, assuming it is the most efficient means to ensure meaningful dialogue with peers and to accomplish group goals, only to abandon this feature once they discover that asynchronous interaction is frequent and timely, and eliminates the scheduling constraints invariably imposed by realtime arrangements.

The pull of the face-to-face teaching-learning relationship continues to plague many faculty adopting IT, because they still feel obligated to replicate the face-to-face culture rather than replace it with an online culture. It may be that this tendency surfaces because the instructor wants to assure both himself/herself, as well as the students, that this mode of teaching and learning is just as rich as what they might all experience in a face-to-face environment. As a result, the course becomes cluttered with competing demands, and students may become frustrated trying to master both format and content, meeting deadlines, completing readings, group projects, submitting papers and final assignments, etc. What was intended as a diverse mix of meaningful learning experiences turns into

a protracted exercise in incessant busy-work. This danger can be illustrated in an online course I have been involved in, which requires that students complete both a substantive research project, as well as design an electronic portfolio, all within a 15-week term. It usually becomes apparent, about halfway through the term, that these two activities compete with one another for the students' time and energy. In this instance, it is clear that mastery of the software necessary to put together a professional portfolio should not be expected within the same time frame in which other demanding tasks, such as researching and writing a graduate-level research paper, must also be completed.

The consequence of infusing interactive technology into the academic arena - a rapidly changing work environment for those employed in the teaching profession, particularly those in higher education - requires that further attention to, and analysis of, the transition of faculty roles be cast in a broader context in order to more adequately address issues that have for too long been overlooked. As distance teaching increasingly merges with classroom instruction, many of the questions posed regarding faculty recruitment, roles, rewards and retention should apply equally to all faculty, regardless of the instructional format(s) they use. In addition to looking at what strategies to use to attract top teachers into distance education, how to reward and retain them, and which mix of classroom and distance teaching works best, institutional leaders must also address issues of mission, priorities, equity in pay and workload, scholarship, intellectual property, and other matters that go beyond any particular cohort of instructional personnel. In this way, leaders begin to understand the new academic culture in which all faculty now must learn to function effectively in the new century.

References

Beaudoin, M. (1981, November). *Developing faculty receptivity toward distance education.* Paper presented at the National Conference on Adult and External Degree Programs. American Council on Education: Columbus, Ohio.

Carlson, S. (2003, April 18). A $20 million carrot. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, A39.

Grosse, C. (2002, November). *The aftermath of distance education: How faculty change.* Invited paper presented at Asynchronous Learning Networks Conference, Orlando, Florida.

Guri-Rosenblit, S. (1999). *Distance and campus universities: Tensions and interactions – A comparative study of five countries*. Oxford: Pergamon Press and the International Association of Universities.

Kurtz, G., & Sagee. R. (2003). *From campus to web: The changing roles of on-class faculty to online teaching.* Unpublished research study. Bar Ilan University, Israel.

Laird, E. (2003, January 3). I'm your teacher, not your internet service provider. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, B5.

National Center for Educational Statistics. (1999). *Distance education at post-secondary educational institutions (1997-98)*. U.S. Department of Education, Washington, DC.: Government Printing Office.

Rogers, E. (1995). *Diffusion of innovations* (4th edition). New York: The Free Press.

U.S. Department of Education (n.d.). *Distance Education at Degree-Granting Postsecondary Institutions: 2000–2001*. Retrieved May 6, 2003 from http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/ pubsinfo. asp?pubid=2003017.

Willis B. (Ed.) (1994). *Distance education: Strategies and tools.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Education Technology Productions.

Wolcott, L. (1997) Tenure, promotion and distance education: Examining the culture of faculty rewards. *American Journal of Distance Education 11*(2), 3-18.

Wolcott, L. (2003). Dynamics of faculty participation in distance education: Motivations, incentives and rewards. In M. Moore & W. Anderson (Eds.), *Handbook of distance education* (pp. 549-565). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum Associates.

Wolcott, L., & Betts, K. (1999). What's in it for me? Incentives for faculty participation in distance education. *Journal of Distance Education 14*(2), 34-49.

Young, J. (2002, February 22). Ever so slowly, colleges start to count work with technology in tenure decisions. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, A25-27.

4.1. The Instructor's Changing Role in Distance Education[6]

The emergence of increasingly student-centered learning activities in the 1970s, facilitated by new instructional technology introduced in the 1980s, is contributing to a dramatic evolution in faculty roles, and raises fundamental questions within the professoriate about how it will contribute to the teaching-learning process in the 1990s and beyond. In particular, the likelihood of significant increases in distance learning enrollments within the next decade will have a profound impact on faculty members' instructional roles.

Distance education revolves around a learner-centered system with teaching activity focused on facilitating learning. The teacher augments prepared study materials by providing explanations, references, and reinforcements for the student. Independent study stresses learning, rather than teaching, and is based on the principle that the key to learning is what students do, not what teachers do. It is a highly personalized process that converts newly acquired information into new insights and ideas. The institution's function, and the task of its instructional personnel, is to facilitate and enhance that process - despite the distance - to achieve optimum learning outcomes.

Rather that transmit information in person, many faculty will have to make the adjustment to monitoring and evaluating the work of geographically distant learners. Those faculty accustomed to more conventional teaching modes will have to acquire new skills to assume expanded roles not only to teach distance learners, but also to organize instructional resources suitable in content and format for independent study. A course previously designed as an intimate round-table seminar involving a dozen students known to the faculty member will have to be reconfigured for use by perhaps several hundred students who may never meet the instructor or one another, although all will be exposed to the same course material and will complete the same assignments and tests through the use of distance media. Further, faculty engaged in distance education must be adept at facilitating students' learning through particular attention to process, unlike classroom-based teachers whose traditional role is largely confined to selecting and sharing content.

This represents a major shift from the European model of the teacher as the exclusive source of information to being one of several resources available to learners who become more active participants in the process. This is a difficult and threatening situation for teachers, most of whom are themselves products of classroom-bound education and whose professional identities are linked to the

[6] This article was first published in The American Journal of Distance Education, 4(2), (1990), pp. 21-48.

traditional image of the teacher at the front of the classroom and at the center of the process.

The teaching function is not becoming obsolete, but the role is being transformed dramatically. In addition to being adept at both content and process, faculty must recognize the role of instructional technology as a learning resource. The teacher is increasingly an intermediary between students and available resources. Teachers must know something about the potential of technology to facilitate learning and to enhance their own effectiveness. They must come to recognize how technological applications can create greater access to education by overcoming time and distance problems, and how it provides for diverse learning needs because it has the capacity to deliver material in many different formats.

Information technologies can assume many of the roles that instructional staff have traditionally played, thus freeing them for new roles in assisting students. But faculty often do not understand partnership roles they can play when allied with technology in the teaching-learning process. Indeed, many simply conclude that technology has usurped their function as educators. Faculty need assistance in order to understand and adapt to new roles; if they resist, the technology probably will not be used effectively and learning goals will be compromised.

Despite significant progress in the use and suitability of technology for educational purposes-computers are more user friendly and more compatible; there is more available software and increased access, etc. - technology still remains complex, especially when media are combined (e.g., visual, text, audio, data). Significant difficulties remain, particularly for those new to these modes of instruction, in effectively integrating the latest technologies with pedagogy and curricula. Most educational administrators have no sense of the implications of, or possibilities for using technology to teach, and the majority of faculty remain resistant to, or ignorant of, the computer as an instructional tool (McNeil, 1988). Conversely, some faculty become overly dependent on technology. For example, some typically overuse tape or broadcast video, or do not know how to meld such resources with their own materials in a planned, purposeful way that supports their learning objectives. The medium too often assumes a causality of its own, supplanting the teacher and resulting in technology-bound activity that is debilitating to both teaching and learning.

The task of the distance instructor or mentor is much more than merely grading students' submitted material. Ideally, the instructional process involves:

- Diagnosing the student's readiness to learn,
- Monitoring student progress toward objectives sought,
- Recognizing and discovering a student's learning difficulties,
- Stimulating and challenging students to further efforts,

- Evaluating the quality of a student's learning, and
- Assigning a grade to estimate learning outcomes (MacKenzie, Christensen & Rigby, 1968, p. 137).

Because the distance factor minimizes dialogue between teacher and learner and imposes a relatively high degree of structure in order that learning goals be met, it is alleged by critics of independent study that distance education fosters dependence rather than develops critical thinking and self-directed learning as claimed by its proponents. Some argue that the chief skill acquired by the distance student is the ability to provide perfunctory answers based on readily apparent information contained in the course material. One view contends distance education is rigidly prescriptive and creates dependency; another argues that it promotes autonomy and encourages self-directed approaches to learning.

There are many prevalent myths that haunt distance educators and serve to call their credibility and effectiveness into question: distance learning is too impersonal, there is minimal need for faculty, and there is an absence of quality control, to name a few. In fact, despite the distance factor, off-campus students are much more likely to develop a productive one-to-one relationship with a teacher than is the average student attending campus-based classes. Students studying independently, but receiving periodic contact from support staff as well as detailed evaluations and feedback from instructors supervising their work, are far more likely to feel a bond with their institution than is the student commuting to a campus one or two evenings a week, sitting anonymously in a classroom of 40 or 50 students where interaction with the teacher is limited despite their physical proximity to one another.

Although independent study is subjected to a good deal of criticism within the academic community, the auto-didactic mode of learning is typically the most common means adults utilize for acquiring information. Given proper resources (e.g., effective instructional guides, appropriate texts, adequate faculty communication, and strong support services), independent study is actually a comfortable mode of learning for most adults who have been long absent from any formal educational situation.

Facilitators of self-directed learning must understand their role at the outset of the process and make it clear to learners. Self-directed learning does not mean that learners have complete control over the choice of content, methods, purposes, and criteria. If this were so, the educator would play no meaningful role in the educational equation, becoming only of marginal value in learners' efforts. Instructional personnel must interact in a transactional manner if a genuine teaching-learning process is to be present. Because the concept of self-directed learning implies empowerment of learners through lessened dependency on teacher direction, skeptics assume this mode of teaching is less time consuming than the traditional lecture-discussion format. However, instructional tasks

associated with self-directed learning are generally more time consuming than working with standardized curricula and learning formats.

Adult educators who readily subscribe to the aim of increasing learners' self-direction will be most effective in contributing to that goal if they ease participants into self-directed modes of study, rather than presuming that this capability already exists. Students may have only vague notions of what self-directed study means and of their own capacity for working within such a format.

Learners are in varying stages of cognitive and psychological readiness for self-directed learning activities and, while for some the format seems familiar and comfortable, for others the prospect of studying in this way is intimidating. Urging them prematurely to become immure independent will likely serve as an impediment rather than as a stimulus for their learning (Brookfield, 1988, p. 30).

To provide the critical elements of dialogue and direction essential to support and sustain the distance learning process, most educational institutions that sponsor independent study programs utilize some combination of full- and part-time faculty, although few distance education programs employ full-time instructors exclusively engaged in supervising off-campus learning activities. Many programs also employ appropriately credentialed practitioners who may have little previous teaching experience. Although the acceptability of utilizing practicing professionals as distance learning mentors is increasingly recognized, the credibility of such programs still rests upon involvement of "regular" faculty, even if only in limited capacities and in small numbers.

It is unlikely that independent study programs will be able, for the most part, to recruit more than a few faculty who have previous experience teaching within a distance learning context. Accordingly, it becomes necessary to provide orientation and training to enable new instructors to become acclimated to the unique requirements of distance teaching. Attempts to provide faculty with assistance or advice designed to acquaint them with program procedures and student needs may be resisted by some faculty who will interpret such efforts as telling them how to teach. But, it is essential that expectations be made clear from the outset, lest faculty assume whatever previous experience they may have had with adult learners will carry them through this new assignment when, in fact, their new instructional roles may require drastically different activities and approaches.

Administrators seeking resources for the establishment of a distance learning program must take pains to cultivate the support and interest of faculty. Many educators are familiar with the concept of independent study, but may be unfamiliar with how it actually works. They may be especially skeptical about how distance learning approaches can be properly arranged in such a way as to create an academically sound, degree-granting program. Indeed, the idea of anyone actually acquiring a baccalaureate degree through off-campus study is

outrageous to many traditional educators. A common refrain is: "Well, those new techniques may work in some other disciplines, but they certainly won't in mine."

Various studies conducted for the purpose of ascertaining faculty receptivity toward external degree programs have determined most respondents were either apathetic or hostile toward such non-traditional programs. Participating faculty tended to be positive, while skepticism tended to increase with lack of experience with such programs, especially among tenured faculty. Even among those who were inclined to support off-campus study, the majority still had reservations about correspondence courses and other independent study approaches (Johnson, 1981, p. 229). Such alternative delivery systems are generally misconstrued as guises to make college-level work easier for adults.

Among specific approaches to consider in attracting faculty and increasing their effectiveness as distance educators are:

1. Involving faculty in program planning and curriculum development: Their input can be encouraged through meetings, committee work, and contact with teaching colleagues, administrators, and others who plan, manage, and evaluate new program initiatives.
2. Training faculty to work effectively with adult learners: There is little, if any, orientation provided in mentoring techniques for supporting distance students or in the psychology of adult learning. Exposure to recent literature in the distance learning field can also be helpful.
3. Developing more adequate support systems and a more equitable salary structure for faculty. Instructional and operational costs are generally lower for distance education units, yet their faculty receive less; their unique role and contribution must be recognized and rewarded.

What Do Faculty Do?

The question is frequently asked, "Just what do faculty teaching at a distance do?" The teacher's or tutor's role depends on how a distance learning unit decides to define this particular function. Among the decisions to be made with respect to instructional personnel are (1) should they be employed full- or part-time, (2) are they to be centrally or regionally based, (3) are they to be contracted on a long-ten-n basis or paid for each course on a "piece-work" basis, (4) what is the appropriate teacher-student ratio, (5) will faculty have a counseling role or will they provide instruction only? (Kaye & Rumble, 1981, p. 151).

Typically, duties of faculty supervising and evaluating independent study work include the following activities:

1. Grading, after evaluating all student materials, preferably within three to five working days after receipt of students' work;

2. Maintaining regularly scheduled office hours once or twice weekly to initiate, receive, and return messages to and from students;
3. Collecting incoming assignments and returning corrected assignments. at least on a once-a-week basis;
4. Advising program staff of any problems requiring follow-up action;
5. Maintaining current course materials (i.e., syllabi, videotapes, exams) and updating course content as appropriate;
6. Preparing suitable supplementary materials to accompany course text(s) and other learning resources;
7. Developing alternative syllabi and examinations as needed.

The phenomenon of syllabism is an ever-present threat to the success of independent study outcomes. Syllabism is the tendency for students to work in a "syllabus bound" manner (i.e., to focus study only on what is prescribed in the syllabus rather than pursuing new ideas). Isolated learners working with printed instructional materials are particularly vulnerable to this approach to studying as they may feel obligated to follow the prescribed content and format without any deviation. The outcome may be a series of assignments that satisfy course requirements, but which have resulted in very little actual learning. Students may be tempted to be only superficially involved in the ideas and issues of a course, or they may become so dependent on its content as to develop a rigid and mindless compliance to what is presented. Students thus develop perfunctory answers to questions based solely on self-contained knowledge of the material, in which case the teacher is simply paid to check that the rules of the exercise are adequately followed.

Despite the distance, students should see the teacher's comments as a dialogue rather than a directive. This exchange between student and tutor should reflect not only how the student comes to adjust his or her views in light of the tutor's comments, but also arrives at clearer reasons for keeping his or her own views (Harrison, 1974, p. 4). When real learning takes place, a tension is felt between the learner and the source of new information - a dynamic that demands an engagement between student and stimulus, which is at the very crux of the learning process.

Effective instructional materials assist the distance learner, having reflected on acquired knowledge, to proceed independently to the next stage. If independent study resources do not develop in participants the capacity to carry on self-directed learning, then this particular method of study has failed to meet the basic goal of producing a truly educated person able to function effectively in his or her respective environment (Kaye & Rumble, 1981, p. 57).

Changing Faculty Attitudes

What can be done to aid faculty in modifying conventional teaching behaviors and acquiring the skills necessary to become effective distance educators? First, the transition to alternative delivery systems must be aimed at securing a commitment from all levels, especially top administration, to overcome resource limitations, remove structural constraints, and combat attitudinal barriers. Second, in-service programs must offer convincing, no-nonsense and ongoing training that deals with how to teach at a distance, not merely how to manipulate new instructional technology.

Specific content areas might include: methods to establish and maintain effective communication between teacher and students and increasing interaction among students; strategies for encouraging individual and group motivation to learn at a distance; planning and managing organizational details, and developing an awareness of the time demands of distance delivered courses; techniques for adding visual components to audio courses; how to access information from various sources, e.g., external data bases, library resource systems; training in desk-top publishing, spreadsheets, data bases, and word processing (Office of Technology Assessment, 1989, p. 95).

Other approaches (noted from the growing number of in-service programs offered in the United States) that can reduce faculty resistance and enhance receptivity toward distance education technology, materials, and methods are (1) permitting faculty to take computers home, allowing them to test the functionality of pre-packaged products and to develop facility in producing their own courseware, thus developing a sense of ownership in both process and product; (2) exposing faculty, who are accustomed to working alone, to collaborative teaching arrangements, including team teaching with some combination of master teachers, student teachers, paraprofessionals, and others who can serve as classroom facilitators; (3) involving faculty, as their expertise increases, in previewing, purchasing, and evaluating materials appropriate to the instructional technology available to them; (4) engaging them in pilot projects to test alternative delivery systems; (5) exposing them to case studies of successful distance education activities; (6) encouraging faculty to attend state, regional, and national distance education conferences and familiarize them with the increasing number of new journals specializing in distance education; and (7) establishing an academic computing services team or advisory board across departmental lines to keep information and training current.

In addition to on-going training opportunities for distance educators, adequate support services must be in place to sustain faculty motivation and satisfaction. This is especially critical for computer-assisted programs. These services include information about updated hardware and software, technical assistance, maintenance and repair of equipment, communication with vendors, acquisition

and cataloging of materials, demonstrating new hardware and software, and establishing standards and procedures (McNeil, 1990, p. 13).

Ultimately, it is the opportunity for meaningful involvement, professional development, and institutional support that are the key factors in promoting faculty receptivity and significant contributions to distance education programs. A national system of teacher training emphasizing distance education should be considered, and mandatory training in distance education theory and practice should be instituted as a condition of employment for new and continuing faculty. The myth that there is a minimal need for strong faculty in such programs must be dispelled. It is precisely in the design and delivery of these new learning modes where the participation of competent and committed faculty, whether full-time or part-time, is most critical.

As a profession, distance education has not been clearly defined and established. Educators are not likely to consciously plan a career as teachers or administrators within distance learning programs. Additional job opportunities are essential if this is to become a recognized field with expertise that is valued and accomplishments that are rewarded. Distance educators must also establish linkages with corporate, political, social, and educational sectors and increase awareness of the philosophy, methods, and efficacy of distance learning and its suitability for diverse segments of the adult population.

Thousands of adults worldwide have already been served through distance education for many decades. But there are countless others who could also benefit from such efforts, and it is the further growth and systematic development of credible distance education programs that will best meet the need. This goal can be achieved only if distance educators are strengthened through a more distinct identity within higher education, and if faculty and staff now engaged in this important work arc able to establish principles of good practice through increased collaboration, advocacy, and articulation of their past accomplishments, present roles, and future goals.

References

Brookfield, S. (1988). Conceptual methodological practical ambiguities in self-directed learning. In H. Long (Ed.), *Self-directed learning: Application and theory* (pp. 11-37). Athens, GA: University of Georgia.

Harrison, B. (1974). The teaching-learning relationship in correspondence tuition. *Teaching at a Distance l* (November): 2-8.

Johnson, L. (1981). *Analyzing faculty receptivity to an innovation. The role of faculty in maintaining quality.* Washington, DC: American Council on Education.

Kaye, A., & G. Rumble. (1981). *Distance teaching for higher and adult education.* London: Croom Helm.

MacKenzie, O., Christensen, E., & Rigby, P. (1968*). Correspondence instruction in the United States: A study of what it is, how it functions, and what its potential may be*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

McNeil, D. R. (1988, Summer). *Status of technology in higher education: A reassessment.* Paper presented at Second Annual Conference on Interactive Technology and Communications at University of Maine, Augusta, Maine.

McNeil, D. R. (1990). *Wiring the ivory tower: A round table on technology in higher education*. Washington DC: Academy for Educational Development.

Office of Technology Assessment (1989). *Linking for learning: A new course for education.* Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

4.2. Epilogue: The Professoriate in the New Century

When the companion article (chapter 4.1.) was first published in the *American Journal of Distance Education* in 1990, it seemed to me to be a modest effort to describe what I considered to be some rather self-evident observations regarding how those teaching at a distance might function effectively in that milieu, and why certain familiar instructional roles and relationships needed some modification to accommodate differences in the relationship between teachers and learners distant from one another. While gratifying to know, on the basis of an anecdotal comment from the editor of the journal, that it has become one of the most frequently cited articles in that publication, I must confess to being truly surprised at its resiliency over these dozen years. The cynic might argue that this is so not because the article is especially profound, but rather that our attention to, and understanding of, distance education pedagogy has made such meager progress. In either case, this article apparently remains useful to some scholars and practitioners.

If recent readers of the piece still can gain some insight into how teachers and learners interact, it is all the more surprising when we consider the enormous changes that have occurred during this period in terms of communication across time and space, particularly with the advent of the Internet. Although available media in the mid-80s allowed faculty to teach online, by the early 90s instructors were truly able to customize interactive learning experiences in an electronic environment. Yet, however more elaborate the modes of computer-assisted communication have since become, there are certain fundamental principles applicable to academic discourse at a distance that seem to prevail. And perhaps we shall conclude that these tenets apply, as well, to fact-to-face instruction.

When I initially wrote about the instructor's changing role, I perhaps was too focused on the solo practitioner model, and argued that the teacher's role would primarily become one of selecting and organizing appropriate materials, creating a supportive environment, and facilitating the learning process, whether in a distance context or in a hybrid arrangement with a combination of classroom and distance teaching. But this does not adequately take into account other possible roles and divisions of labor, as an industrialized or systems approach to distance education has become more prevalent. For instance, while some educators serve as content experts in selecting suitable instructional materials; others design those presentations for delivery via multi-media formats; and some facilitate the interactive process between teacher-student, student-students, students-media and students-content. Thus, though certainly not universal, a shift from the craft model, wherein faculty are responsible for all functions related to their instructional roles, to increasingly specialized and more limited roles, has become more commonplace.

One of these roles, that of instructional design, has long been taken for granted by faculty, as they have always quite naturally assumed the lead role in organizing and constructing course content for classroom delivery. Faculty are generally reasonably competent in instructional design, though most are probably not capable of articulating principles of instructional design. However, as the environment in which they teach changes, whether through their own initiative or through institutional mandates, it becomes critical that they acquire a more conscious knowledge of instructional design suitable for online delivery, and that they receive more support to assume that role. This can be a notoriously sensitive issue, since most faculty function, in effect, as independent contractors, and are loathe to have anyone intrude into their teaching domain. As a consequence, a typical pattern for faculty moving into online teaching is to simply export content in its existing format for use in the online environment with little awareness of design considerations that might make that material, with just a modicum of alteration, more user-friendly for both themselves and their students.

Otto Peters (2002) writes of the intuitive and coincidental aspects of learning at a distance, pointing out that face-to-face instruction is typified by a linear approach, wherein students follow a prescribed and progressive program of study via orderly lectures delivered in a pre-arranged sequence. Distance learning formats permit students to proceed at a pace appropriate to their needs and circumstances, and allow a certain degree of flexibility and autonomy compatible with their respective learning style(s) which, in the case of many distant learners, may be minimally dependent on the role of an instructor. This self-directed approach, which typifies adult learning in most circumstances, is compatible with the instructional style which Börje Holmberg (2001) labels as "guided didactic conversation," which he views as the essential ingredient for distance teaching.

Sadly, and ironically, whether it is called teaching, mentoring, or tutoring, the instructional support role in distance education has historically been undervalued. It is especially de-valued in many traditional academic settings where research earns greater recognition and rewards. In many distance education settings, the perception persists that the instructor's role is primarily one of grading or marking student work that is completed with minimum support from faculty. Paradoxically, as the quality of materials developed for self-directed distance learning has improved and the independent nature of distance students has been emphasized, the allegation that faculty are somewhat superfluous has strengthened. Yet, anecdotal reports and research studies from many programs continue to reinforce that premise that it is the human connection that consistently determines distant students' satisfaction. As Helen Lentell (2003) declares, "It is the tutor who individualizes and mediates the mass produced product of distance education. It is only to the tutor that the distance education

learner exists as an individual." A study of distance students in South Africa (Corry & Lelliott, 2003) is representative of most research on the impact of faculty; they found that accessibility of tutors, for their comments, interest and emotional support, was the most help. Other than library services, which were used by one third, less than 15% reported benefits from any of the other types of services set up for distant student.

Greville Rumble (2000) observes that distance educators have far surpassed their colleagues in conventional institutions when it comes to defining and delivering student services. This has been made necessary by the enormous pressure placed on planners of distance education to demonstrate and document that instruction and other support services are equal to those for campus-based students. This is perhaps nowhere more apparent than in library services for distant students. Because accrediting agencies have been especially demanding in this area, most institutions have done a quite remarkable job in re-engineering and implementing infrastructures to provide library support to this clientele. Yet, there are those who suggest that perhaps institutions are overly concerned with the provision of an extensive battery of services to support distant learners. Robin Mason (2003) asks if it really should be a concern of online course providers how many students are inactive in a course, or drop out, or experience crises that impede their academic progress? Is it the business of the university to ensure that learning actually occurs, or is it to simply market and sell high quality educational products? Some online services to support learners may be best delivered by consortia and other arrangements outside any individual institution. The Southern Regional Education Board, for example, is implementing a battery of centralized online services (e.g., record keeping, transfer of credits, financial aid) for students enrolled in some 350 colleges in the South. It is likely that these non-academic services can be coordinated more efficiently and cheaply by a single provider than by 350, allowing the participating institutions to focus their resources and expertise on academic functions.

Michael Moore, in an *American Journal of Distance Education* editorial (2003a), maintains that most support services to learners at a distance are ultimately the responsibility of the sponsoring institution, and should be dispensed by those with special training, particularly in such areas of technical support, and should be administered in cooperation with the instructor. He argues that the teacher is already heavily engaged in attending to the academic progress of each student as well as the dynamics of the virtual learner community within the course, and so should not also be depended upon to also address malfunctions generated by administrative or technical systems.

Aside from the issue of the importance of student support in distance education, there are still many who even question just how critical the role of the instructor really is in a learning environment where computer-mediated activity exerts such a powerful presence that it immediately creates the context for all that

ensues over a course's duration. However, a recent study (Thurmond, Wambach, Connors & Frey, 2002) suggests that what transpires over time in an online course environment contributes to students' satisfaction. In short, what happens as a course progresses has a greater impact than student characteristics at the start of the course. This has important implications for educators, as it indicates that good instructional practices in virtual classrooms truly are critical to the ultimate success of the course and the satisfaction of participants.

These findings suggest that online instructors must adopt a highly flexible teaching style to be responsive to their students' needs and preferences. But in a related research study, Kanuka, Collett and Caswell (2002) concluded that even experienced distance educators are often not especially flexible, despite the fact that these same instructors recognize that the technology available to them can accommodate greater flexibility. Ironically, though many skeptics see technology as a constraining element in the instructional process, it is, in reality, a liberating resource that actually allows the instructor the opportunity to introduce greater flexibility in both teaching and learning processes. As students demonstrate the ability to assume more responsibility for their own learning, the instructor can accordingly allow for greater autonomy, and this can be accomplished just as easily within an online setting as in a classroom.

Unfortunately, the "anytime-anyplace" connotation of asynchronous learning implies that the most effective distance teaching is loosely structured, with minimum involvement of faculty. But I remain convinced that it is critical that the very best teachers play a lead role in innovative pedagogical practices to advance distance education to the next stage of its development. Techniques for online teaching need to receive ongoing attention, not simply with the premise that instructional strategies must be student-centered and provide adequate opportunity for dialogue, but also for the broader purpose of creating new paradigms that enhance the teaching-learning process at a distance, and with the goal of contributing new knowledge to inform theory and guide practice.

Anderson and Garrison (cited in Sims, 2003) write of communities of inquiry characterized by cognitive presence: the extent to which participants are able to construct meaning; social presence: the ability of learners to project themselves into a community of inquiry; and teacher presence: the facilitation of the above dimensions of inquiry to achieve desired outcomes. Each of these elements is dependent on the pedagogical and support resources made available to participants, and within the expanding portfolio of distance education options available today, these resources vary considerably. This variation exists even within a single institution providing diverse and distinctly different distance education programs.

At my own university, three options are available to teachers wishing graduate-level continuing professional education, each representing a different level of

the resource hierarchy noted above. One consists of stand-alone video-based courses: students study the materials independently, complete a series of exercises and assignment, and submit all completed work for the three-credit course at the end of the semester, at which time it is graded by adjunct faculty paid on a per-student basis. The second consists of a 33-credit masters degree program of study, primarily offered via a hybrid format of videos, print material, e-mail interaction with faculty, and a series of submissions, each critiqued and graded by faculty before students move on to the subsequent assignment. In this model, collaborative group work is also encouraged and is generally practiced. The third example is a fully online certificate program, with a learning platform that facilitates synchronous and asynchronous dialogue between students and faculty and among students. This format also includes group work, emphasizes reflective thinking and practice, provides a Webliography and other features typical of pre-designed electronic learning environments.

On the basis of this summary description of the characteristics of each of these three programs taught at a distance, it is quite easy to determine where each falls in the hierarchy of inquiry and support as defined by Anderson and Garrison. The first of these (video courses) may be assumed to establish a modicum of cognitive presence, as the materials do provide possibilities to construct meaning by applying information to practice settings. However, social presence is non-existent, and teacher presence is negligible. In the second case (hybrid masters), cognitive, social and teacher presence are all in evidence to some degree, though compromised somewhat by the limited communication features of the technology in place. The third offering (fully online program), allows for a more robust presence of all three communities of inquiry, because its interactive resources enable a diminution of transactional distance and, as Sims (2003) might describe it, provides for more engagement and meaning.

In my 1990 article, many of the instructional strategies suggested as appropriate for distance teaching situations, though not based on research studies, seemed to the author to be rather obvious at the time. In rereading MacKenzie, Christensen and Rigby (1968), it is interesting to note that, despite being written more than thirty years ago, their recommendations regarding instructors' tasks in correspondence education are surprisingly current, and seem to apply just as much to online courses as to so-called "on-ground" courses. Since then, a number of studies have specifically addressed various teaching methods utilized in online formats and have assessed their efficacy. A primary focus of the 1990 piece was its attention to process over content, and this aspect of distance teaching has gained particular prominence in recent studies. Tu and McIsaac, writing on Social Presence and Online Classes (2002), report on their own research and that of others. All indicate that instructors with higher social presence (e.g., posting timely responses, adopting an informal communication style, facilitating threaded discussions, building trust, encouraging minimally

active participants) were viewed as more positive and effective. These instructional strategies all contribute to creating a social presence that becomes the vital element in influencing widespread and consistent interaction within an online community of learners, even in situations where the course content may not always be viewed favorably by all participants.

Much criticism of online study focuses on what is perceived to be the Internet's adverse effect on social involvement, psychological well-being and, ultimately, on retention and academic performance. This argument is strengthened if there is minimal evidence of academic support services, of immediate access to faculty contact and feedback, and other features that, theoretically at least, generally exist in face-to-face settings. Thus, mentoring in an online learning environment requires a delicate balance between developing learner independence, and establishing a supportive context for learning through guidance, advocacy and reinforcement. In the absence of most of these conditions, the transactional distance between student and institution increases, to the overall detriment of both the process and outcome of the entire distance education experience, and is likely to be felt by both teacher and student. Massie's research (2000) indicates that those e-learning courses that garner the strongest interest from prospective learners are those that offer tutorial support. It seems that, regardless of instructional medium and learning styles, a delicate mix of technology and humans is essential to maintain connectivity.

This suggests that the lack of social presence in online courses, whether real or imagined, can contribute to lowered student interest and persistence. Stein and Glazer (2003) reported on a case study of doctoral level distance learners to determine how they maintained a high degree of persistence at a point in their studies when graduate students are typically quite isolated. The researchers found that persistence is enhanced when the mentor develops a meaningful, personal relationship with the adult learner. Specifically, three themes emerged from their analysis to indicate what elements were crucial to persistence among the learners: responsiveness to learner inquiries, reassurance to learners that they can complete the program, and respect for adult life situations. It is interesting to note that all of these mentor behaviors contributing to student persistence have actually nothing at all to do with course content, but rather relate to procedural aspects of the course.

Building online **"**learning communities" has certainly become a primary area of interest of late; indeed, this is perhaps one of the main issues in the literature dealing with topic of interaction. Karen Swan (2002) and others stress the importance of interaction for the purpose of building learning communities in online courses, and note that voluntary dialogue beyond course requirements is critical to promoting community. She and her collaborators found that interaction, and the value placed on participation, were the factors most significantly related to student perceptions. Early communication by faculty with students to impress

upon them the benefits of community is essential, lest participants develop the attitude that elective discourse is superfluous and even dysfunctional for purposes of completing course requirements. Researchers are now finding that as verbal immediacy behaviors increase, so too does social presence in online milieus and this, in turn, contributes to a supportive environment that enhances the teaching-learning process (Swan, 2002). Indeed, the asynchronous nature of online discussion is a significant factor in the success of online courses because, unlike face-to-face discussion, it provides students an opportunity to reflect on their course mates' contributions, as well as reflect on their own ideas before writing and posting. This habit of reflection**,** coupled with active discussion, appears to encourage the projection of personalities into the course environment, further reinforcing social presence and a sense of 'immediacy'(Swan, 2003).

Despite the absence of the usual visual and contextual cues, online participants have the ability to establish social presence by projecting themselves into a textual environment, provided that faculty foster a constructivist and collaborative ethos into the course from the outset. Individuals acquire knowledge and understanding by constructing meaning from various stimuli. This process is further enhanced when individuals collaboratively construct common understanding and meaning through shared activities within an interactive context (Stacey & Smith, 2003). Stacey's research found that the collaborative group develops a consensus of knowledge through communicating different perspectives and ideas, receiving feedback from one another and faculty, and finally negotiating until a common understanding is reached. This socially constructed environment is essential for effective learning as it provides a supportive context and stimulus for thought and expression, and thus becomes a means by which the group contributes more to each learner's new understanding than they are likely to be able to do individually.

It is this milieu in which faculty play a critical role in fostering socialization. There is debate regarding the advisability of attempting to promote this concurrently with and through learning tasks and thereby develop a community of practice, or if it is more effective to set a tone through some sort of informal socialization prior to actual course assignments. Some faculty and programs schedule a pre-week orientation or tutorial to allow students to become familiar with the course template, technological features, exchanging bios and other messages with peers to get acquainted, identify common interests and experiences, etc. This device can be helpful to create a sense of belonging to a cohort that then carries over into a community of learners, hopefully encouraging collaboration rather than competition in the early stages of the course.

John Dewey's writing (1967) on interaction**,** though articulated long before the era of online interaction, offers us insights that are remarkably applicable to online environments. Dewey believed that effective educational experience requires two essential processes: interaction (unique to individual learners) and continuity of interaction (whereby each learning experience builds upon previous

experience). Ironically, it has been noted that Dewey's goal of individualization and customization of learners' experiences was less possible during his own time than it is today with the attitudes and tools that encourage students' constructive participation in what and how they learn, both individually and collaboratively, across time and space.

While much has since been written on the topic of interaction in online learning environments, there is still relatively little attention given to the lack of interaction, and its consequences on the teaching-learning dynamic. If it is an accurate assessment that a primary role of the distance educator is to manage the interactive process (between student-teacher, student-student, student-content, student-medium, and in some instances, student-practice environment), then it may also be true that situational course management is most appropriate (i.e., adopting instructional styles that are compatible with students' current learning styles). This requires excellent diagnostic skills to discern, at any given point, where students may be on the continuum of online dialogue, from inactive to reactive, proactive, and interactive. And each learner's primary mode of acquiring information may evolve as a course progresses, presenting a further challenge to instructor attempting to accommodate varied styles.

Certainly, the compatibility of learning styles with course structure and format, as well as with instructor attitudes and approaches, influences and affects all that ensues. One study (Aragon, Johnson, & Shaik, 2002) indicates that online students exhibit a higher preference for abstract conceptualization (learning by thinking) compared to face-to-face students, while classroom students preferred active experimentation (learning by doing). Michael Moore and Greg Kearsley (1996) posit that introverted individuals are more predisposed to distance learning than are extrovert personality types. The sensitive distance instructor, wishing to accommodate this latter style, may create an environment that facilitates reflective, intuitive ways of knowing, but might do so just at the point in the course when the more introverted and invisible learners are finally becoming more comfortable and increasingly participatory.

In the distance educator's well-intended effort to promote and facilitate interactive and collaborative online behavior, the environment that is created can unintentionally cause some students to feel a loss of independence. The privacy afforded by more autonomous means of studying at a distance might be preferred by those students who, because of various attributes, simply feel less comfortable in more public modes of cooperative study based on intense dialogue and group interaction. But, it can also be argued that students best acquire the skills needed to be autonomous learners by first becoming adept at collaborating with peers and interacting with all the learning resources available to them. Knowledge of self as a learner comes, in part, from engaging with others; through this process, one's strengths and weaknesses can be revealed and addressed, hopefully in a reasonably supportive learning environment (Pennells, 2003).

This phenomenon has also been observed by Lee and Gibson (2003), in their study of computer-mediated interaction, wherein self-directed activities of control, critical reflection and responsibility where evident online, and these behaviors were closely associated with a high level of interactivity with faculty and student peers, coupled with flexibility.

In short, paradoxical though it may seem, independent learning and self-direction can be fostered via interactive participation in a learning community. By committing oneself to shared purposes of an interactive learning group, the individual can experience intrinsic rewards that lead to greater confidence and competence to then proceed more autonomously with the next stage of learning. This increased awareness of self also aids in arriving at a sense of identity as a learner. While, in the past, students typically self-identified on the basis of a region of origin, affiliation with an institution, student and/or program cohort, etc., the electronic environment now makes students more location free in terms of where learning opportunities emanate from. Now, one's home can also become one's campus and library, and the PC one's office. Thus, adult students now focus more on the workplace as a setting for learning and for the meaningful application of new knowledge and skills.

Beyond the more obvious methods of tracking how active students may be on the basis of frequency of postings, there is the more subtle issue of how engaged online students may actually be with course related activities, even if not visibly present in a course's discussion areas, and how their level of participation may influence their final course grades (cf. Beaudoin, 2003). Suffice to note here that, in the context of this discussion regarding instructional tasks, this is yet another illustration of how the instructor's critical role revolves primarily around process skills, rather than content expertise.

So, what does this discussion of pedagogical issues have to do with distance education leadership? Despite a significant increase in attention and activity now evident in this field, its very popularity is alarming to some close observers of this phenomenon. In another *American Journal of Distance Education* editorial (2003b), Michael Moore revealed his concern that the current flurry of distance education practice is too often uninformed by research and theory. He argues that too many administrators and planners have put their faith in technologies, yet miss the point that quality distance education requires *changes* in organizational structure and pedagogical practices. At the point in its development when distance education has the potential of delivering more learning opportunities to more people in more situations than ever before, at lower cost and higher quality, we aren't doing it because practitioners are confused about what distance education is and how it can be used optimally. Moore contends that much of what is now happening in the name of distance education is simply traditional instruction within conventional structures, but with the infusion of new communications technology. The 1990 piece asserted that, as

a profession, distance education had not yet been clearly defined or well established, that few were consciously planning for a career in distance education, and that accomplishments within the field needed to be better recognized and rewarded. It is encouraging to note some modest, but steady progress in this direction. There now are several graduate level programs of study (certificate, masters, and doctoral) offering curricula fully devoted to the study of distance education theory and practice; the Distance Education Clearinghouse lists 17 certificate programs (http://www.uwex/edu/disted/certificates.html). There are also a growing number of workshops and institutes with content that goes beyond the standard training session on how to use a particular instructional software program claiming to make one an instant expert in the field. While it may be that most of these programs of study are designed to attract and prepare enrollees primarily for roles as distance education managers, comprehensive curricula include courses that give students the opportunity to acquire pedagogical techniques appropriate to distance teaching, which they can then apply themselves, or impart to those teaching in the programs they oversee.

Those in administrative as well as distance instruction roles must recognize and respond to subtle but significant issues, as it is informed understanding and insight that guides policy and procedure in such critical areas as faculty development, online interaction, structure and flexibility, student support and other areas that make the difference between not only those programs and services that succeed or fail, but also those that function at a level of mediocrity, and so do a disservice to their students, as well as to the overall reputation of distance education.

References

Aragon, S., Johnson, S., & Shaik, N. (2002). The influence of learning style preferences on student success in online vs. face-to-face environments. *The American Journal of Distance Education 16*(4), 227-244.

Beaudoin, M. (2003). Learning or lurking? Tracking the 'invisible' online learner. In U. Bernath & E. Rubin, (Eds.), *Reflections on teaching and learning in an online masters program.* Oldenburg, Germany: Bibliotheks- und Informations-system der Universität Oldenburg.

Corry, N., & Lelliott, T. (2003). *Supporting the masses? Learner perceptions of a South African programme. Rethinking learner support in distance education: Change and continuity in an international context.* London: RoutledgeFalmer.

Dewey, J. (1967). *Experience and education.* (Reprint from 1938). New York: Collier.

Distance Education Clearinghouse (n.d.). Retrieved November 9, 2003 from http://www.uwex.edu/disted/certificates.html

Holmberg, B. (2001). *Distance Education in Essence: An overview of theory and practice in the early twenty-first century.* Oldenburg, Germany: Bibliotheks- und Informationssystem der Universität Oldenburg.

Kanuka, H., Collett, D., & Caswell, C. (2002). University instructor perceptions of the use of asynchronous text-based discussion in distance courses. *American Journal of Distance Education, 16*(3), 151-168

Lee, J., & Gibson, C. (2003). Developing self-direction in an online course through computer-mediated instruction. *The American Journal of Distance Education, 17*(3), 173-87.

Lentell, H. (2003). The importance of the tutor in open and distance learning. In A. Tait & R. Mills (Eds.), *Rethinking learner support in distance education: Change and continuity in an international context.* London: RoutledgeFalmer.

MacKenzie, O., Christensen, E., & Rigby, P. (1968*). Correspondence instruction in the United States: A study of what it is, how it functions, and what its potential may be.* New York: McGraw-Hill.

Mason, R. (2003). Online learning and supporting students: new possibilities. In A. Tait & R. Mills (Eds.), *Rethinking learner support in distance education: Change and continuity in an international context.* London: RoutledgeFalmer.

Massie, E. (2000). *Survey results: roles and expectations for e-trainers.* Retrieved July 7, 2003 from http://www.techlearn.com/trends168.htm.

Moore, M. (2003a). Editorial: The handbook of distance education. *The American Journal of Distance Education 17* (2), 73-5.

Moore, M. (2003b). Editorial: Learner Support. *The American Journal of Distance Education, 17*(3), 141-3.

Moore, M., & Kearsley, G. (1996). *Distance education: A systems view.* Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company.

Peters, O. (2002), *Distance education in transition. New trends and challenges.* Oldenburg: Bibliotheks- und Informationssystem der Universität Oldenburg.

Pennells, J. (2003). Challenges in Adjusting to New Technology in Supporting Learners in Developing Countries. In A. Tait & R. Mills (Eds.), *Rethinking learner support in distance education: Change and continuity in an international context.* London: RoutledgeFalmer.

Rumble, G. (2000). Student support in distance education in the 21st century: Learning from service management. *Distance Education, 21*(2), 216-235.

Sims, R. (2003). Interactivity and feedback as determinants of engagement and meaning in e-learning environments. In S. Naidu (Ed.), *Learning and teaching with technology: Principles and practices.* London: Kogan Page.

Stacey, E., & Smith, P. (2003). Socialization through CMC in differently structured environments. Learning & teaching with technology. In S. Naidu (Ed.), *Learning and teaching with technology: Principles and practices.* London: Kogan Page.

Stein, D., & Glazer, H. (2003). Mentoring the adult learner in academic midlife at a distance education university. *American Journal of Distance Education, 17*(1), 7-23.

Swan, K. (2002). *Building learning communities in online courses: The importance of interaction.* Invited paper presented at the 8th Sloan-C International Conference on Asynchronous Learning Networks. Orlando, Fl.

Swan, K. (2003). Developing social presence in online course discussions. In S. Naidu (Ed.), *Learning and teaching with technology: Principles and practices.* London: Kogan Page.

Thurmond, V., Wambach, K., Connors H., & Frey, B. (2002). Evaluation of student satisfaction: Determining the impact of a web-based environment by controlling for student characteristics. *American Journal of Distance Education, 16*(3), 169-189.

Tu, C., & McIsaac, M. (2002). The relationship of social presence and interaction in online classes. *The American Journal of Distance Education, 16*(3), 131-150.

5.1. Distance Education Leadership for the New Century[7]

A new role for the professoriate in the new millennium has been recognized and encouraged, especially as technology-assisted instruction has proliferated and changed the way teachers and students interact, as well as the manner in which educational entities must now do business to meet the demands of a digitized society. The literature describing the rapid evolution of distance education delivery systems over the past twenty years has frequently categorized it into three stages, from correspondence education, to technology-assisted education and, more recently, networked education. Although all three remain, and there are variants on each of these models, the theme is consistent that we are now witnessing dramatic changes in how instruction is designed and delivered across time and space. As this dynamic becomes more frequent and more pervasive, faculty have been admonished to be more receptive and adaptive to opportunities for playing exciting new roles in the distance education arena.

But it seems we have not yet paid adequate attention to new roles required of leaders within those institutions. Schools and colleges in the new millennium need leaders who have reflected on their experiences and internalized understandings about their own capacity to lead. This should apply no less to those in leadership roles in distance education settings within those institutions. The intended purpose here is to better understand the role and impact of leadership in distance education settings, examine recent research and writing in this area, and identify research lacunae needing further investigation; offer insights and suggestions for "Best Practices" to those involved in, or aspiring to leadership roles; and generate increased interest in the study of distance education leadership.

For purposes of this appraisal, leadership in distance education, as distinct from managerial functions in a variety of settings, is defined as a set of attitudes and behaviors that create conditions for innovative change, that enable individuals and organizations to share a vision and move in its direction, and that contribute to the management and operationalization of ideas. It is possible to play a leadership role without necessarily being an expert in the field. A university president or elected public official (e.g., William Rainey Harper, founding president of the University of Chicago, or Gov. William Leavitt of Utah, instrumental in the creation of the Western Governors' University), who endorses, articulates and facilitates distance education goals crafted by others, can have widespread

[7] This article was first published in the Online Journal of Distance Learning Administration. 6(2), Summer 2003. Slightly different versions were also published in The Journal of Leadership Studies, 8(3), Winter 2002, and in M. Moore & W. Anderson (Eds.) (2003), The Handbook of Distance Education. Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

impact. It is also important to note here that effective leadership practice is not confined to those in administrative roles; indeed, there are leaders without portfolio who, as influential thinkers and theorists, have significantly impacted their organizations and the field.

However persuasive the arguments might be that fundamental changes are occurring in the digital age that will profoundly impact the academic workplace, many still believe that there are too many alarmists who insist that the teaching/learning environment must be dramatically restructured, and they point out that the academy has been educating the citizenry in essentially the same fashion throughout other significant periods of change. But the issues to be addressed in order to remain competitive today are not quite so simple anymore. Institutional decision makers need to be informed and enlightened enough to ask fundamental questions that could well influence their institution's future viability. How many faculty will we be needed in ten years? Will the notion of classrooms survive? Is the present structure of the institution viable? Will teachers and students need to meet on campus anymore? Can the organization's decision makers respond to new competitors?

The changing context of education and the aggressive encroachment into their domain by the powerful forces of digital commerce makes it impossible to ignore these questions. The confluence of competition, cost, technology and new consumer demands has insinuated new rules of engagement into a historically placid environment that has derived its strength from tradition rather than change. This set of circumstances is going to force all academic enterprises to rethink their place and purpose, not just in philosophical terms, but in very pragmatic ways as well. Indecision and immobility during these tumultuous times could prove fatal to a number of institutions, and it is the presence of effective distance education leadership in such an uncertain milieu that could well make the difference between success or failure.

Whether or not it embraces the trend, the academy is shifting from a campus-centric to a distributed education model, and while the administrative and instructional infrastructures that presently characterize most of our institutions won't necessarily disappear, they will be utilized in different ways. Those who dismiss this as a passing phase, perhaps do not recognize how pervasive these changes already are even within their own institutions, however mainstream they may still appear to be. In increasing numbers, students now simply want access to learning resources and an accepted credential to verify their learning, both commodities that have typically been aggregated and self-contained on a campus. But because distance education technologies now make it possible for students to get what they need while geographically separated from a fixed location, and with less human mediation, educational administrators continue to carry the burden of a bureaucracy and physical plant that are becoming increasingly vestigial and costly.

Thus, as the boundaries and distinctions between traditional and so-called non-traditional education are blurring, there is need for leaders able to function effectively in both contexts, and because many distance educators are among the few who have already moved within these overlapping circles, they are well positioned to play key roles. Many, having succeeded to some extent in "institutionalizing" open and distance education, are now able to move from the margins to the mainstream of their organizations, and assume new roles. However, for those now willing to enter, or who are thrust, into this milieu, is it readily apparent what attitudes are best suited to manage these distance education endeavours, what techniques are effective in directing this burgeoning phenomenon, and what type of leadership might be most appropriate to move the field to its next phase? It seems that we have yet to offer much guidance to educational administrators about how they can best contribute to this inexorable trend in their midst.

Certainly, we have chronicled the activities and accomplishments of several early pioneers as correspondence study was incorporated into the extension units of a few institutions, and we have recognized and recorded the efforts of a few influential activists, such as Lord Perry of Walton, and Charles Wedemeyer, who advanced the notion of this new form of educational practice. Eventually, some of those who began teaching in this mode, and who directed the first distance education units being established at a few bold institutions, reflected on those early experiences, and began to articulate ideas and ideologies around the practice of teaching and learning at a distance. Based on their observations and experiences, a new body of literature gradually took form, mostly around pedagogical issues.

As the field took shape as a separate and distinct area of academic activity and academic inquiry, and more programs began to emerge, experientially based accounts of program activities and accomplishments proliferated. Great efforts were made during this era to legitimize distance education by offering evidence that it was comparable to classroom-based instruction. As new technologies rapidly emerged to facilitate delivery through a variety of media, increased attention was given to analyses of which delivery system was most effective in aiding teachers to teach, and learners to learn, and to the impact of certain delivery systems on the nature of the interaction between teachers, students and the medium they utilized. Some attention was also given to case studies of various approaches to planning and management of selected programs, both successful and unsuccessful ones, and to evaluation methods appropriate to measure the outcomes and efficacy of these ventures. Yet, largely absent throughout this period of research and writing in this emerging field was any focused consideration of the dimension of leadership and its impact on the obvious growth and apparent success of distance education at literally hundreds of institutions worldwide.

Although educational structures often appear to be relatively static, they do gradually accommodate selected change, usually in response to external factors that eventually force decision makers to consider new strategic initiatives. Few institutional leaders today would not acknowledge that technological innovation is perhaps the single most compelling factor that is driving them toward new organizational structures and new pedagogical models. For many, these represent the most significant change since their institution was established. Despite its seemingly inherent resistance to change, and an historical unwillingness to keep pace with the larger society, higher education has itself entered an industrialized phase, and the resulting changes in structure and systems will demand compatible leadership styles, including approaches that have not typically characterized educational management.

Otto Peters, one of the first to make important contributions to distance education theory, believes this industrialization is nowhere more evident than in this field. He has written extensively of how distance education practitioners have necessarily incorporated entrepreneurial elements such as a division of labor, marketing, management, quality control, and other measures that are more akin to operating a business than overseeing an academic enterprise (Peters, 1994). To be sure, such characteristics exist in many educational organizations, but they are far less evident there than in most distance education environments. Indeed, Peters and others have often chosen to establish entirely new and distinct distance education entities based on an industrial model, such as the British Open University, rather than attempt to transform existing institutions. Ray McTarnaghan, founding president of Florida Gulf Coast University speaks insightfully, in an interview by the *American Journal of Distance Education* (Beaudoin, 1998), of establishing that distance education institution in 1997, noting that such large-scale endeavours must create a distinctive culture with a clearly articulated mission that is shared by all stakeholders, especially faculty, if they are to succeed.

James Hall offers a thoughtful analysis of what new institutional structures are emerging within which leaders will be required to function. As traditional and distance education institutions converge, leaders who have been dealing with discreet programs identified with their institutions, will now have to manage networked institutions where proprietary lines between programs and students are merging, and participants shift among multiple formal and informal learning venues, with no single institution as a point of reference. As alliances develop and networking expands, to increasingly include for-profit entities, the mega-university is evolving toward what Hall defines as the meta-university. He argues that bold and creative leadership is required to manage as well as evaluate these emerging new structures, driven in large measure by networking technology (Hall, 1998).

Typically, those suggesting ways to attract and develop new leaders into distance education might encourage mentoring by senior administrators, attendance at professional meetings, seeking out relevant graduate courses, and keeping current with literature in the field. But this latter suggestion of consulting the literature as a source of guidance for aspiring leaders, presumes that there is a worthwhile body of work available. Ten years ago, Duning undertook an in-depth review of the literature on managerial leadership in distance education. At that point, she asserted that this area had attracted far less attention than other dimensions of the field. While there have been descriptions of program planning processes, little examination had occurred of leadership, however defined, within a larger distance education context. Duning (1990) also noted that, while there is a substantial body of knowledge about non-traditional settings, it is almost entirely unknown to academe. As might be expected, much distance education literature that does gain attention is denigrated. For example, a 1999 report entitled *"What's the Difference: A Review of Contemporary Research on Effectiveness of Distance Learning in Higher Education"* (not surprisingly, sponsored by the American Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association, both long time opponents of distance education and its perceived encroachment into the domain of the professoriate), argues that the overall quality of distance education research is questionable, and does not ask the right questions.

A decade ago Duning and others assessing the status of scholarly inquiry into the area of distance education management concluded that the field lacked a theoretical framework to guide our understanding of distance education practices, and that of all the areas of study in distance education, management still appeared to be the most neglected. We now undertake the task of re-examining the status of this vacuum to determine if it has been filled; to ask, if not, why; and if it has, is it a useful contribution to theory and practice in the field?

This author dutifully reviewed more recent literature in the field by conducting a content analysis of titles and abstracts of articles appearing in two American publications during the past four years; the *American Journal of Distance Education (AJDE)*, and *DEOSNEWS*, an electronic journal, both published by the American Center for the Study of Distance Education at Pennsylvania State University. Also examined were the 1998 and 1999 issues of a European journal, *Open Learning*, edited by Greville Rumble, and the contents from 1997 through 1999 of *Distance Education*, an international journal published by the Open and Distance Learning Association of Australia. Volumes 10 through 13 of the AJDE revealed that, with the conspicuous exception of one issue (Summer 1998), which was devoted entirely to distance education leadership (edited by this author), no other authors wrote specifically about activities and outcomes that seemed to have any obvious connection to leadership. Volumes 6 through 10 of *DEOSNEWS* contain only two titles that have any leadership connotations. It is of some interest to note that one issue contained a review of

literature classified as "administration and organization," offering the possibility that leadership would be addressed, even if only tangentially. But this was not the case. Although the titles in the European and Australian journals included several articles related to staff development and the economics of distance education, no articles appeared on the topic being searched. Thus, we conclude that over a four years period, several widely read sources of research and writing in distance education theory and practice offer us very little indeed on the topic of leadership.

We can optimistically take note, however, of a new journal introduced in January 1999, the *International Journal of Leadership in Education: Theory and Practice*, published by the Taylor-Francis Group (London), and edited by Duncan Waite. Although the first three volumes seem to favor school leadership issues, and a few titles suggest leadership in this particular venue is rather broadly defined, it nonetheless provides a promising new forum wherein distance education practitioners and researchers may now make contributions in a professional publication dedicated entirely to educational leadership.

Another useful device for gauging how popular a specific topic seems to be at a given moment is to conduct a content analysis of presentations at major national and international distance education conferences. A number of these papers eventually find their way into the published literature in the field, and can thus serve as indicators of what topics are currently in vogue. This activity was undertaken through an examination of titles and abstracts of papers presented at the European Distance Education Network, Bologna, Italy (1998); the distance education conference sponsored by the University of South Australia (2000); and the ICDE World Conference on Open Learning and Distance Education in Düsseldorf, Germany (April, 2001).

Not unexpectedly, the interest and attention focused on the general theme of distance education management in general and leadership in particular, was conspicuously thin. The Bologna conference, entitled *"Universities in a Digital Era-Transformation, Innovation and Tradition,"* offered 137 papers and workshops on a wide range of topics, including several under the category of organization and policy. Although several of these referred to various approaches used to plan and implement particular projects, none directly addressed matters concerning leadership per se. The Australia conference program, entitled *"Distance Education - An Open Question?"* listed 133 presentations. Again, of these, not one, based on a reading of the abstracts, appeared to address issues related to leadership. One keynote address did discuss technology driven change in education and did contain a few comments germane to distance education leaders. The world conference in Germany, entitled *"The Future of Learning-Learning for the Future: Shaping the Transition"*, received a total of 624 proposals for presentations. From this enormous body of work, it could be presumed that certainly a few authors would likely contribute to the leadership theme as their

area of special interest. Several of these proposals were placed in the categories of Strategies and Policies, and Management and Logistics and, no doubt, a reading of full texts would reveal some content related to the leadership theme. (Interestingly, the one session dealing specifically with the topic discusses an online course on the subject of leadership).

Finally, with respect to the current body of written work, there is, of course, an increasingly steady supply of new books on distance education, many offering a chapter or two on aspects of administration and organization. For example, Moore and Kearsley's volume (1998) on a systems approach to distance education does contain a chapter on administration with brief but useful discussions on such topics as staffing and planning, but nothing specifically on leadership. An examination of new books on open and distance learning reviewed and/or received by the journals noted above, yielded no titles that deal primarily with organizing and leading distance education activities. Also, the subject index of ten prominent books on open and distance education published since 1993 were reviewed; none contained any listings under the subject of leadership, and only two listed administration or management.

If the literature on the management of distance education is relatively thin, we can hardly be sanguine about the prospect of finding much on the more specific aspects of leadership in this field. Yet, it is encouraging to observe that there are now occasional volumes appearing that focus more exclusively on topics that flirt with the leadership theme. For example, a review of several data bases listed three book titles devoted to open and distance education leadership and management (Paul, 1990; Duning, van Kekerix & Zabrowski, 1993; and Freeman, 1997). A recent addition to this genre is *Leadership and Management in Open and Flexible Learning*, edited by Latchem and Hanna (2001). And while these works are mainly intended to offer strategies for developing and directing open learning initiatives, rather than formulating more theoretical constructs, this material will nonetheless certainly help close the gap in the literature on leadership.

In summing up this brief review of scholarly presentations and writing, it should be acknowledged that, within the body of work receiving this cursory examination, there may well be more attention given to the leadership theme than we were able to discern, and no doubt some authors would protest that their contributions do address, at least in part, some dimension of leadership. We suspect that this may be a legitimate claim, yet we can state with some degree of confidence, that at least 70 percent of the work reviewed and noted here, in both conference and publication venues, falls into the domain of case studies of specific programs; a great many, in fact, use the case study nomenclature in their titles. Yet, it must be asked, even if some content related to leadership is included, how useful this reportage is in contributing to the body of work on leadership theory and practice or, in truth, to any other important aspects of distance education?

We should also inquire at this juncture if the paucity of scholarly material related to leadership in distance education is compensated for, to some extent, by the availability of material in other areas of educational theory and practice? It is within the area most closely aligned with distance education (i.e., adult and continuing education) that we can find a somewhat promising answer. As with distance education, there is a long and impressive history in continuing education, but in this particular area, we find a considerably more developed and rather impressive portfolio relating not only to the planning and management of continuing education activities, but also focused attention to the area of leadership. Simerly (1987) and others have contributed a number of accomplished studies that, in the absence of, and until there is, a more fully articulated body of work on distance education leadership, can be quite useful to distance educators. Simerly and his associates have identified the following attributes as critical to effective continuing education leadership, and these seem no less applicable to distance education: analyze systems and conduct environmental scans; be aware of power; manage both conflict and agreement and reach consensus; understand the impact of institutional culture; function with ambiguity, complexity and decentralization; utilize tactical and strategic planning; and demonstrate the value of the educational organization to multiple constituencies.

It will be interesting to observe if some contributors to the literature on continuing education will now offer similar insights in distance education where these endeavors intersect. This is quite possible since many distance education initiatives are spawned within continuing education units where there is often a spirit for entrepreneurial and innovative practices. It is also worthwhile to note that, in the area of elementary and secondary school administration, there is now a considerable amount of attention given to leadership topics in the literature frequented by these educators, and this could influence greater awareness by those in other areas.

One is tempted to conclude, from this review, that the subject of leadership in distance education is being actively avoided, in favor of the usual fare - reports and case studies of specific projects and programs that go into excruciating detail about the life (and sometimes death) of particular initiatives at selected institutions. Unfortunately, the typical treatment of these accounts seldom offer any useful insights about distance education practice that might be generalized for possible relevance and application in other similar settings, and almost never is there any thoughtful analysis about the impact of leadership, or the lack of it, in affecting the outcomes chronicled in these studies.

What might be some plausible explanations for this paucity of interest in an area of study that, until now, seems to be largely neglected while, in other organizational settings, most notably the for-profit corporate sector, there is enormous interest in topics related to organizational leadership, as seen in best selling books and high priced seminars? First, those researching and writing in

the field may just now be getting beyond the phase in its history where there has been an inordinate amount of interest focused on analyses of how distance instruction compares with more conventional methods and, as new technologies were rapidly deployed, how these various learning environments worked compared to one another. A related factor may be that most who have written in the field thus far have themselves been academics who preferred to devote their writing to pedagogical issues rather than administrative matters.

Second, there has been, in fact, a reasonable amount of attention given to the planning and administration of distance education programs for quite some time. And although most of this work to date has been confined to accounts of specific case histories, this treatment has perhaps been considered adequate enough without getting involved in the more esoteric domain of leadership. Related to this is the fact that the concept of "leadership" is not widely recognized as a separate and distinct element of administrative practice or study. This is especially so outside of the U.S. In Germany, for instance, where what is referred to as the "Führer Complex" is still prevalent, leadership is not discussed, or at least, not studied in the field of education. Prominent European theorists such as Otto Peters and Börje Holmberg have made important contributions to the organization of distance education, but they and others have not identified leadership as a discreet topic for analysis.

Third, there are those who simply dismiss the concept as one that is not especially useful for advancing the study or the practice of distance education. It is seen as an elusive idea that does not readily lend itself to reliable analysis, or to a universal set of desirable behaviors safely applicable to the idiosyncrasies of each situation. Further, just as some argue that there are no characteristics attributable to distance education that are uniquely its own within the field, they likewise believe the question of leadership within distance education merits no special scrutiny or analysis as a distinct area of study.

What, ultimately, is the usefulness of the body of work accumulated thus far on the subject of distance education leadership? Although most of the work that does exist is largely confined to an occasional book chapter, conference presentation, journal article, or "Principles of Good Practice" lists, perhaps it can be stated with some confidence that distance education practitioners currently in, or moving toward leadership roles do have a variety of growing resources available to guide their practice. Assuming that there may be some value for the field of distance education if there is increased attention to leadership issues, what can be done to generate more interest in the topic? At the very least, those planning publications and meetings related to distance education could actively solicit contributions on the subject, and dedicate entire conferences, journal issues, or books to Leadership in Distance Education.

Beyond some useful literature in continuing education, as previously noted, are there resources from other areas of study that could compensate for this void we allege still persists in distance education? We suggest that Donald Schön's (1983) important study of reflective practice has significant implications for distance educators, no less so than for the several professions Schön uses to illustrate his theories. Schön makes a provocative case for developing mature practitioners by insisting that they actively engage in a process of on-going systematic reflection of their work during their practice, rather than at a later point when they may no longer be able to make appropriate interventions to enhance their effectiveness. This seems an especially worthwhile process for an entire generation of distance education practitioners who now have substantial personal and institutional experience, and are still highly active. By engaging in **"**reflection in action," these veterans have the opportunity, as Schön aptly describes it, to define new truths, not only for their own benefit, but for the entire profession as well. This effort and its results have the potential to make important new contributions to the field and offer insights into its leadership.

Is there, in fact, any value in attempting to craft, if not a bona fide theoretical framework for leadership practice that is unique to distance education, at least a set of guiding principles that, at this moment in which distance education has evolved to a new role and status, can well serve its providers and consumers? Those responsible for mapping new directions for moving distance education practice to the next stage of its development might be somewhat heartened by the recent attempts by several groups, including professional associations and accrediting bodies, to define so-called "Principles of Good Practice." The New England Association of Schools and Colleges (1998), for example, has developed and promulgated a "policy for the accreditation of academic degree and certificate programs offered through distance education". These standards for quality are certainly useful in providing suggested criteria by which we can plan new programs, measure what we are doing in such areas as matching technology with needs, providing appropriate student support, implementing evaluation measures, and the like. In the absence of a more precise theoretical framework, such principles do offer, at least, some insights about what constitutes effective leadership practice, and how it ultimately impacts the success or failure of our collective efforts. But producing checklists of helpful hints about what to do and what not to do hardly seems adequate to the tasks ahead.

While the most common mode of assessing progress in the development of a body of knowledge in an area of study is the usual review of the literature, it is possible that a brief survey of other activities related to distance education leadership may yield some useful information that could compensate for the apparent lack of any substantial corpus of written work thus far on the subject. For example, there are a number of centers for distance education housed at colleges and universities (e.g., the American Center for the Study of Distance

Education at The Pennsylvania State University) which sponsor symposia, workshops, publications and programs of study which, while not necessarily activities focused entirely on leadership, do contribute to greater awareness and understanding of distance education practice. Also, professional development sessions on distance education administration are increasingly in evidence. Several institutions now offer week-long summer institutes that do, in fact, specifically address distance education leadership (e.g., the Institute for the Management of Distance Education, offered by the Western Cooperative for Educational Telecommunications; see http://www.wiche.edu/telecom/Events/). These are presumably serving a useful purpose in providing experienced and aspiring leaders with insights and guidance. More importantly, a number of institutions, particularly in the U.S., now offer certificate and graduate level programs of study with curricula in distance education, including courses specifically designed to prepare leaders for the field. Just one example of this newly emerging field of study is a Master of Distance Education offered online by the University of Maryland University College, which also offers a related Certificate program in collaboration with Oldenburg University's Center for Distance Education (Germany). This degree program is attracting an international cohort of students, and has waiting lists for admission
(See: http://www.umuc.edu/mde).

It is interesting to speculate on what impact these curricula might eventually have in creating a distinct body of work that offers a more theoretical approach regarding leadership, rather than the prevailing emphasis on practical applications of administrative techniques. Preparing candidates for careers specifically in distance education through professional education programs has potentially significant implications as, for the first time, the field will acquire a new generation of individuals in leadership roles who did not "come up through the ranks" during a period when the field was just emerging as a recognizable and viable area of professional practice. In addition to introducing new leadership styles and strategies in their chosen field, this cohort might contribute important new theoretical perspectives as well.

Having now entered a new millennium in which the promise of ever advancing technologies is likely to present provocative new challenges as well as opportunities, it is tempting to ask if there is perhaps a leadership style that is most appropriate for distance education. While it may be too bold to suggest a single best approach, it might be useful to at least identify those situations where distance education leaders are most likely to find themselves in the near term, and consider those strategic perspectives that might be most compatible and productive in those settings. These include more collaborative partnerships, such as alliance building with for-profit companies more typically seen as competitors; more meta-university arrangements, where networking structures make parochial interests a handicap; more expansive markets requiring a truly

global view well beyond one's usual environs; more free-standing virtual entities utilizing asynchronous formats; and more exclusively online delivery systems rather than mixed-media approaches. These would seem to be a few of the venues in which there will be need for high performing leaders.

While we should perhaps avoid committing to any particular leadership style as the most suitable, certainly the concept of transformative leadership advocated by Bennis and Nanus (1985) remains a particularly compelling model for distance education leaders today because organizational practices long entrenched in educational entities urgently require reshaping to adapt to environmental changes, most notably the emergence of a worldwide market for students, but also an exponential increase in potential competitors for those students. Transformational leaders in education must be capable of helping its stakeholders (e.g., administrators, faculty, students, trustees), recognize that there are obvious benefits in doing business in new ways, and that they can no longer afford the luxury of adopting new ways of teaching and learning in an incremental fashion to which academics are so accustomed and comfortable in doing. To be sure, there are no facile formulae that can be matched with particular settings that will ensure infallible leadership performance; ultimately, a sense of vision, resoluteness, and the ability to operationalize concepts are requisite to succeed.

Advocates and initiators of distance education no longer need be seen, or to view themselves, as mavericks on the fringes of their institutions, but rather as contributors who can play a key role in bringing their institution to the next stage of its development. This new status among those responsible for "alternative" programs is now more common, as institutional decision makers become more aware, often with some alarm, that they may not be as relevant and responsive as their competition is to the demands of diverse new market segments seeking access to learning opportunities. Leaders can capitalize on their institution's growing need to remain competitive in a broader arena, by demonstrating how distance education offerings, once relegated to the margins, can now be central to an institution's strategic planning for success and, in some cases, even survival in the new global marketplace. And while some might object to the notion of appealing to an organization's self interest as a means of advancing distance education, the fact is that an innovative new idea very often succeeds, not because it is noble, but because it can serve a useful purpose, both for the larger system as well as for its proponents.

Leaders must create conditions conducive to energy, initiative and innovation in their particular milieu, and bring others along, both above and below them in the organizational hierarchy. This requires, in addition to transformational leadership, what Hersey and Blanchard (1977) call "situational" leadership, with its ability to diagnose the organization at that moment and determine its stakeholders' readiness for moving in a new direction. In fusing these two approaches, the leader diagnoses the unique situation in the immediate

environment, and then transforms it as far along the change continuum as necessary, through a collaborative style. In this way, a climate less resistant to, and more receptive toward distance education is created, often in an incremental fashion as the situation is gradually transformed.

Since few distance educators have the opportunity to create entirely new free-standing entities exclusively designed for online or other delivery systems, but rather labor within institutions positioned somewhere along the continuum between conventional and alternative infrastructures - what might be called a hybrid model - most eventually face the conundrum of whether or not to promote the notion of a central unit to coordinate distance education activities, or at least to foster new initiatives. One argument is that, in the absence of a focal point for such endeavors, individual faculty will likely tinker indefinitely and inefficiently on their own with a variety of instructional technology options intended to augment their classroom-based courses, but this approach will not ultimately result in a system-wide adoption of distance education in any comprehensive and cost-effective manner. And those institutions that do incorporate small-scale distance education initiatives, but contract out many specialized functions that allow them to retain their existing infrastructure, are often seen as suspect because they can conveniently tout their involvement in distance education without any real institutional shift in its direction.

Another view is that this incremental process of individual initiatives becoming increasingly prevalent within an institution is what will eventually lead to a critical mass of participation which ultimately creates the demand for more institutional commitment and support. Proponents of this latter strategy maintain that it is the pattern that typifies most institutions' progression toward distance education today, and that premature administratively driven initiatives will only generate further faculty resistance and impede any prospects for longer term change. Bernath (1996) provides interesting insights into this dilemma, using various European models to illustrate the positive and negative forces at play when attempting to integrate distance education into conventional universities. For opinion leaders in distance education, this particular issue can be one of the most critical, and their insights and advice on the best option will test their credibility and influence within their organizations.

To succeed in any of these contexts, a macro view is critical. Distance education leaders must not be overly preoccupied with nurturing their own existing programs, and providing the horsepower for only their initiatives; they must also insinuate themselves into the academic mainstream and the inner circle of decision makers responsible for bringing the entire organization to a new place. Distance educators should no longer see themselves as protectors and survivors of isolated programs for which they have labored mightily, but rather as valued strategic partners who can enable the larger institution, often long seen as the enemy, to catch up with them and emulate their practices and successes. In

short, distance education managers must see themselves, and be seen, as educational leaders who, through less directing and more motivating, facilitate the articulation, development, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by a wider academic community.

But leaders must disabuse themselves of the idea that their programs, however more widely accepted and adopted within their institutions than in the past, are now seen as more legitimate (i.e., more equivalent to classroom-based instruction). It is more likely that, in most instances, these alternative delivery methods are now more widely recognized as effective means of capturing a larger market share of prospective consumers and generating additional revenues. Distance education activists can be convincing advocates because colleges and universities, as in the past, must still plan their future in a continuing context of uncertainty. Since much of that uncertainty in this era has been brought about by the rapid emergence of instructional technology, this phenomenon positions experienced open learning practitioners to be far more influential in shaping a strategic agenda for the next decade than was usually the case in the past.

If their institutions still do not "get it", then distance education planners must diligently seek opportunities to convey a sense of urgency that what they currently are doing, perhaps somewhat unnoticed and serving a relatively small proportion of overall enrollments, nonetheless represents a model for replication elsewhere if further institutional growth and success is to be realized. But this requires that past successes be touted. By doing so, distance education can now, more convincingly than ever before, be cast as an activity to be emulated elsewhere in the organization. This is already happening in the area of instructional design, where many faculty may be unaware of just how much learning from a distance is taking place through their own institution, and who could perhaps care less about it, but are nonetheless eager to acquire new technology tools and training to augment their classroom-based courses.

Much of higher education is still characterized by "Old Millennium" thinking that has functioned for a long time in an old economy in which decisions are made regarding the number of sections required for a particular course to optimize faculty workloads. In the new economy, where information is the product to be delivered to a broader market in less time and at lower cost, distance education activists must help their organizations ask the right questions and to see that both the institution and its teaching personnel can thrive if they are willing to find their appropriate niche through "New Millennium" strategic thinking. In an earlier era, distance educators typically assumed a warrior mentality to advance their cause; today, they can be more effective as brokers facilitating the expansion or replication of programs and services they championed during more contentious times.

Although effective distance education leadership requires a presence and participation in a wider arena, playing a role in the macro environment cannot

be at the expense of attending to the details of this complex enterprise. The tasks to be overseen by managers of both small and large, new and established distance education projects, represent a formidable repertoire of skills which need constant attention and refinement. To identify but a few areas: needs assessment, market analysis, strategic planning, fitting technology to needs, operationalizing ideas, resource mobilization, introducing online infrastructure, policy formulation, training and support for faculty, collaborating with partners, program evaluation and accreditation, and mentoring the next generation of leaders - all are tasks requiring vigilance and guidance.

The presumed dominance of online teaching-learning environments for the foreseeable future raises a further question: will a particular style of leadership be more effective in this milieu than in earlier ones? Are there any "best practices" for leading distance education initiatives and activities in the online domain? Are some of the complex roles exercised by the previous generation of leaders less relevant now than in earlier periods of the movement? Regardless of the medium in use, it would seem that the roles of conceptualizer, implementor, and evaluator are still viable ones to play. Perhaps less critical in the repertoire of today's leaders are the roles of advocate, reformer and technician that occupied so much time in the past. Too often, those presiding in decision making forums engage in deliberations long on complex technological options, but bereft of fundamental pedagogical issues. The distance education leader, whatever other roles he or she may assume, must always maintain the essential role of educator.

As we conclude this appraisal of leadership in distance education and the study of it, we would do well to briefly examine the distinctive and distinguished leadership of two seminal figures in the field, in hopes of identifying those aspects of their personality and practice that contributed most to their near legendary status. While we might agree with Otto Peters' characterization of Charles A. Wedemeyer as the great visionary and Lord Perry of Walton as the great pragmatist of distance education, we can also safely state that both shared an overarching trait of leading by emphasizing the implementation of innovation. Wedemeyer had the capacity to conceptualize, synthesize and intersect earlier philosophies with emerging new ideas, and articulate their implications and applications. Perry was able to translate those concepts into a new institution, the British Open University, that has had enormous influence on the evolution of much subsequent distance education practice.

Can it be said too that leaders such as Wedemeyer and Perry were especially effective in having their ideas adopted around the world because they were charismatic? Certainly yes, at least in the sense of charismatic leadership as defined by Conger and Kanungo (1987), whose list of traits most surely apply to them: to focus primarily on a vision and mission; to develop a unique and inspirational view of the future; to empower and energize others to implement their vision; to press their organization to continuously improve; to widely

communicate, and live that vision; to integrate congruent values into the culture they are influencing; and to profoundly inspire and affect their followers' aspirations.

Now that we have offered a number of attributes for successful leadership, a final caution is perhaps appropriate, particularly for those who may feel best equipped to provide the creative new leadership the field warrants. Paradoxically, it seems that the past experience and longevity of some distance educators actually works against them in providing leadership for a new age of learning. Ever more powerful interactive technology has resulted in the diminution of distance, and it has reduced the decision-making window demanded of institutions to respond to a new class of educational consumers who are willing to spend money to save time. Yet many who may have pioneered distance education at their institutions may still be preoccupied with bridging the distance gap which effectively no longer exists. Distance education advocates who, in the past, put their energy into debating the virtues of out-of-classroom learning, must now play a more valuable role in facilitating discussions and decisions of much wider scope and more profound consequences for the future of their institutions. There must now be a shift in leaders' focus from the micro issues around technology and its impact on learners to a more macro view of institutions and the impact of technology in this larger context. Thoughtful attention to issues in this wider arena will contribute to appropriate action that will ultimately impact the teaching-learning process, regardless of what technology is utilized.

It is essential that veteran as well as emerging leaders be prepared for these new roles, not just by relying on instinct derived from past experience, but also from new insights acquired through greater attention to leadership as a discreet area of study and practice for the important work ahead. The potential contribution of distance educators in a widening sphere of influence is too significant at this juncture to relegate to the periphery of others' thinking, and of our vision of where we want to go and where we want to take others.

References:

American Federation of Teachers and National Education Association (1999). *What's the difference? A review of contemporary research on the effectiveness of distance learning in higher education.* Prepared for American Federation of Teachers, National Education Authority [prepared by R. Phipps & J. Merisotis]. Washington D.C.: Institute for Higher Education Policy.

Beaudoin, M. (Guest Ed.) (1998). Interview: speaking personally - with Ray McTarnaghan, *The American Journal of Distance Education 12*(2), 73-78.

Bennis, W., & Nanus, B. (1985). *Leaders: The strategies for taking charge.* New York: Harper and Row.

Bernath, U. (1996). Distance education in mainstream higher education: strategic issues at conventional universities. In M. Thompson. (Ed.), *Internationalism in distance education: A vision for higher education.* Selected papers from the first International Distance Education Conference, The Pennsylvania State University, June 1994 (ACSDE Research monograph #10). University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University.

Conger, J. A., & Kanungo, R. N. (1987). *Charismatic leadership: The elusive factor in organizational effectiveness.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Duning, B. (1990). The literature of management. In M. Moore (Ed.), *Contemporary issues in American distance education*. Oxford: Pergamon Press.

Duning, B., van Kekerix, M.J., & Zabrowski, L.M. (1993). *Reaching learners through telecommunications: Management and leadership strategies for higher education.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Freeman, R. (1997). *Managing open systems.* London: Kogan Page.

Hall, J. (1998). Leadership in accreditation and networked learning. *The American Journal of Distance Education 12*(2), 5-15.

Hersey, P., & Blanchard, K. (1977). *Management of organizational behavior.* Englewoood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Latchem, C., & Hanna, D. (2001). *Leadership and management in open and flexible learning.* London: Kogan Page.

Moore, M., & Kearsley, G. (1998). *Distance education: A systems view.* Belmont, CA: Wardsworth.

New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Commission on Institutions of Higher Education (1998). *Policy for the accreditation of academic degree and certificate programs offered through distance education.* Bedford, MA: NEASC.

Paul, R. H. (1990). *Open learning and open management: Leadership and integrity in distance education.* London: Kogan Page.

Peters, O. (1994). *Otto Peters on distance education – The industrialization of teaching and learning* (ed. by D. Keegan). London, New York: Routledge

Schön, D. (1983). *The reflective practitioner: How professionals think in action.* London: Temple Smith.

Simerly, R., & Associates (1987). *Strategic planning and leadership in continuing education.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

5.2. Epilogue: Distance Education Leadership – Appraising Theory and Advancing Practice

A prominent point made in my 2002 article on leadership was the paucity of work to date on this aspect of distance education practice. It seemed to me at the time that relatively little attention was being given to leadership related issues as a discreet element of distance education practice, and certainly there was minimal evidence of any attempts to craft a theoretical framework which might begin to fill this lacuna. The piece bemoaned the seeming lack of interest and attention to what, at least to this author, is a critical element in influencing the future direction of the field. I also suggested that this inattention to leadership contributes to the conventional wisdom that the future of distance education ultimately depends on the role of technology and the reaction of faculty, rather than on other variables such as creating the conditions for change and effectively managing the transition from the classroom to cyberspace. Our purpose here is to re-examine the leadership dimension of distance education in order to determine if there is now any discernable increase in the current level of interest in research and writing in this area, and to ascertain if recent leadership practice in distance education has assumed a more recognizable and respected role.

Why is it that distance education, despite its obvious success in many quarters, has not yet established a stronger presence at so many institutions of higher education, including those that would seemingly benefit from it? Why is it that one institution with no previous interest or involvement in distance education, can suddenly move into this arena and, within a relatively short time, boast of many faculty and departments offering dozens of online courses? And why do certain institutions, with little or no existing infrastructure for developing and supporting distance education, recognize the need for establishing some form of coordination to advance these initiatives, and are able to move quickly to implement appropriate structures and strategies that enable them to gain momentum and establish a competitive advantage? Yet, why do institutions with considerable resources and seemingly astute leadership often choose to ignore opportunities for success in the distance education arena? And why do some institutions that have achieved noteworthy progress with a pioneering distance education initiative, fail to replicate this success elsewhere in the organization?

I have frequently argued that far too much attention has been given to the technological side of the distance education enterprise, and not enough to the pedagogical. I continue to feel that, when we consider the qualitative aspects of the field, this position remains as valid today as it was in an earlier era when electronic and digital media became such a dominant force in the design and delivery of instruction at a distance. But as we consider the further development of distance education, especially its future impact on academic institutions and

their constituents, it seems quite apparent to me that the future of distance education is ultimately not so much about enhancing technology or improving pedagogy, but rather about managing change.

A study of distance education roles and competencies in higher education by Williams (2003) supports this contention. The purpose of his research was to identify competencies considered to be most important in implementing and managing Internet-based distance education programs in higher education. It attempted to compare results to an earlier parallel study conducted in 1995 that, among other findings, emphasized that communication and technical skills were critical competencies. Williams' research identified thirteen roles and thirty competencies; although communications-related competencies were necessary across all roles, the roles of leader/change agent and trainer emerged as the most significant for successful implementation of distance education programs. What is especially noteworthy, in this regard, is that leadership is seen as distinct from the administrative role, and is considered necessary for both organizational and individual change. While these findings underscore a continuing need for manipulating new technologies and for achieving sound pedagogy, it is the recognition that leadership is a discreet role as well as competency that educational institutions can now use to advantage as they implement and staff distance education programs.

It is easy to point to the lack of in-house leadership or expertise in the field of distance education at many academic institutions as a primary reason for little or no progress in this area. But, upon closer examination, we can find evidence that even in some institutions where certain administrators and faculty think "outside the box", movement into distance education ventures remain modest at best. There is perhaps a useful lesson to be learned here by looking a bit further into this cliché that alludes to outside-the-box thinking. Could it be that too many well-intentioned educational reformers, in distance education, as in other ambitious endeavors, are so far beyond the boundaries of conventional thinking in our inherently conservative academic institutions, that their message is not seen or heard by their more cautious colleagues who function safely and comfortably within established parameters of thought and action? If so, those who aspire to influence a change in thinking, attitude and behavior, especially among faculty, might reconsider how best to bring others along. Perhaps expanding boundaries within the "box" is a more viable strategy, as it offers a more palatable option for those who are reluctant to leave its familiar confines. It may be easier to convince followers to move closer to the outer edges of the existing box (which is then incrementally enlarged) than to step outside it where the reformer would eventually like to take them.

Planned change is a complex process and requires a systematic approach. The notion that the distance education activist need only to identify and engage one or two faculty who are so-called "early adopters" as exemplary users of

instructional technology to get their colleagues to follow suit is a bit naive. It may be more effective to attract a critical mass of slightly less enthusiastic colleagues who, although they might proceed somewhat more hesitantly and skeptically, and their progress may be less dramatic, could still have a more pervasive influence on the organization than a very few innovators who often pursue their newfound ways relatively unnoticed. This incremental strategy is well advised, especially in the context of distance education where overly aggressive approaches by its advocates usually invites more resistance from those who still believe distance education to be an untested option to which fringe institutions desperate for new tuition dollars succumb.

Most organizations have some members who lead and others who follow. It is a situation analogous to the westward expansion of the US, with its mix of pioneers and settlers. Pioneer types are motivated to seek the new for the sake of the adventure and excitement that they associate with change. Others, typically the majority, have a much lower threshold for ambiguity and risk, will always weigh the costs and benefits, and so seldom aspire to be the first to try anything. Only after an initiative has established some degree of familiarity and stability will the rank and file be willing to participate and go there, just as the early pioneers had to tame the landscape before the masses followed. Those who see themselves as distance education leaders in educational organizations must be mindful that there are usually pioneers and settlers in both administrative and instructional roles. And, perhaps just as important, they must assess whether they are seen by their constituencies, and consider themselves to be pioneers or settlers.

Duderstadt, Atkins and van Houweling, in a useful volume entitled *Higher Education in the Digital Age* (2002), suggest that many institutions have effectively made the transition from an entirely campus-centric modus operandi to a hybrid model that utilizes both conventional and alternative delivery systems. But the question persists: why is it that one institution may demonstrate awareness, interest and even enthusiasm to engage in distance education activities yet, year after year, does little or nothing in this arena, while a sister institution is able, with little or no apparent advantage over the other, to make quite impressive gains in distance education in a relatively short time-frame? Leadership seems to me to almost always be the critical element that influences these outcomes the most. In the earlier leadership essay, I suggested that, while no single style of leadership was foolproof in facilitating how educational products and services could be altered to reach new student markets across time and space, I did reveal a bias toward an approach which Bennis and Nanus (1985) refer to as transformative leadership. I am not the only one who has recognized the compatibility of this strategy with the needs of distance education. More recently, Sonja Irlbeck (2002), writing in the *International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning,* also argued, as do others she cites, that the

changes now occurring in higher education, precipitated especially by technology, require a shift in leadership that reflects greater expertise in understanding and managing change (i.e., transformative leadership).

It may be useful here to point out a particular dilemma related to the practice of transformative leadership in academic settings. Although we have espoused this approach as a useful strategy to advance distance education causes, it is in many respects, not especially compatible with the higher education environment. The transformative leadership model is based on the leader motivating others by exposing them to intriguing new ideas, and inspiring them by appealing to their professional ideology (Bennis & Nanus, 1985). The paradox in this is that nearly all faculty are invested in their own discipline, area of research, and current courses and students, and so are often loathe to engage in intellectual discourse that is intended to shift their attitudes and actions as educators to more macro issues, such as alternative ways of teaching. Whereas transformative leaders serve as mentors to move followers to new ways of thinking and doing, faculty types, though they themselves ideally function as mentors to facilitate development of their students, are typically highly resistant to any efforts to alter their views, especially anything related to the realm of teaching.

In fact, a case can be made that the most effective leadership style in academia is transactional leadership, wherein a leader interacts with others in the organization via an exchange of mutually valued ideas or resources, usually with somewhat related purposes. In these settings, even if some bargaining is involved, the status quo remains, at least to a great extent, relatively intact. This suits the academic enterprise quite well, in that its participants, whether managers or teachers, satisfy each others' needs without disrupting the prevailing equilibrium. Since faculty function, in effect, as independent instructional contractors, they generally feel little pressure to adopt new ways advocated by administrators, who are seen primarily as carrying out the business side of the enterprise. The point here is that, while transformative leadership is arguably an ideal style for introducing and advancing distance education or other innovative initiatives, transactional leadership, which tends to minimize any innovation that is potentially disruptive, more commonly prevails. This would suggest that a suitable leadership model for encouraging distance education is least likely to be present in the very milieu where it is most needed. Or, if transformative leadership does exist, it is likely to be least compatible with the prevalent style of management.

In those organizational settings where distance education has become relatively well accepted, and where any pioneering activity in this direction has largely been completed, then a transactional approach may, in fact, be quite useful. If the task remaining is not so much to "sell" distance education, but rather to expand its reach within and beyond an institution, a transactional mode could very well be appropriate. In this case, a leader's function may be primarily one

of reinforcing and rewarding instructional personnel who have already moved into this new arena, to facilitate the transition of others now ready to also move in this direction, and to mobilize resources adequate to support a growing cadre of distance educators. In this milieu, a transformative process has already occurred (perhaps effected by someone who has since moved on to other realms where change is needed), and so effective transactional skills may now be most appropriate to successfully sustain those previous efforts that have come to fruition. At the risk of putting too fine a point on these distinctions among leadership approaches, it could be argued that between the transformative and transactional styles, there is yet another that might be useful: transitional. The transitional leader is one who, as the name suggests, manages the transitional phase which occurs after the environment has undergone a transformative change process, but has not yet reached equilibrium wherein new structures and/or operations have yet stabilized, and so require efficient transactional leadership in this interim phase. Identifying the most suitable leadership style for given organizational situations requires good diagnostic skills, especially by those at the apex of the decision making pyramid who are responsible for appointing personnel to serve in distance leadership positions. And, of course, securing a leader who can effectively function in all three realms (transformative, transitional and transactional) is the greatest challenge.

Duderstadt et al. (2002) maintain that any meaningful institutional progress in the area of information technology ultimately depends on leadership at the executive level. I would offer a slightly different opinion on this point. I believe that it is more likely that leaders at senior levels of the organization, but just below the president's or chancellor's post, are those who generally determine if and when innovation will occur. Rather than depend on the executive officer for initiatives in this area, it may be more crucial to create the conditions for minimizing resistance from the top. In other words, don't count on the most senior person in the organization to make things happen; just be sure that he or she doesn't sabotage the efforts of others in key leadership roles who have the ability and inclination to move ahead.

I have suggested that regardless of the particular duties for which distance education leaders are responsible, they should still see themselves and be viewed by others in their institutions as educators. Yet, it is curious to note that nearly all positions related to distance education that are advertised in the Career Network section *of The Chronicle of Higher Education* are listed under Business Affairs. If those defining roles for such positions as Director of E-Learning, Director of Educational Technology Services, and Director of Distance Education request that these job postings be placed alongside ads for Director of Budget Services, Director of Facilities Maintenance and the like, and consider them to be similar positions, then we do indeed have a long way to go before distance education leadership assumes its rightful place in the academic life of our colleges and universities.

Two factors mitigate against those in distance education leadership roles assuming the mantle of educator. The first is that institutional decision makers too often deputize non-academics to plan and administer instructional technology activities on their campuses. The same supervisor who overseas media services may also be responsible for supporting faculty in designing and delivering online courses. If these functions are primarily seen as managing technology-based activities, as distinct from supporting teaching and learning at a distance, the task may fall to a technician rather than an academician. Second, even if a faculty member is delegated the responsibility to oversee distance education, that individual is likely to have considerably less distance teaching experience than does his or her counterpart who oversees classroom instruction has teaching in that more traditional milieu. Accordingly, it should not be too surprising that some distance education administrators may be quite reluctant to counsel or question online teachers if they themselves have little or no experience with the medium.

But it is also possible that too much familiarity with technology can be a liability. There is an inherent danger that the newest technology can distract the emergent distance education leader from making good use of high quality, cost effective combinations of older media (e.g., print, video). In some settings, relying exclusively on the Internet, for example, could immediately exclude from participation many prospective learners who already have urgent need for access to alternative means for acquiring educational opportunities. To be seduced by technology that is currently in vogue, or to limit delivery to one medium not necessarily appropriate or available to potential users, is to perpetuate and exacerbate the gap between those with resources for personal growth and professional development and those who continue without. The astute distance education leader may best meet a need with instructional resources that appear less avant-garde, but are better suited to the situation. To eschew so-called hybrid models (i.e., those that combine two or more instructional modes) because these seem less advanced, can lead to media installations that are incompatible with the particular circumstances being addressed.

There has never been a lack of opinion regarding what some see as a noticeable absence of effective leadership in education. The cliché that “Those who cannot do, teach” has been occasionally turned around to “Those who cannot teach become administrators”. Is organizational development and planned change, in fact, any more challenging for those attempting to do so in educational settings than in other corporate environments? And, more to the point of this discussion, is transformation more difficult for distance education leaders to achieve than it is for their counterparts elsewhere in academia? Probably so since, as noted elsewhere, academic administrators generally seem to thrive on maintaining a stable state and preserving organizational equilibrium, while distance educators are exploring viable instructional alternatives to the status quo. To change

attitudes and behaviors in the realm of teaching and learning is far more challenging than to propose structural change in the bureaucracy.

If this is so, what do leaders need to be aware of in order to advance distance teaching and learning in their organizations? Duderstadt et al. suggest that the very first strategy to use for developing greater institutional awareness and action is to simply gain their own leaders' attention, as so many of them seem oblivious to both the threats and opportunities presented by information technology. But, of course, even this elemental step is not so simple. A critical factor in determining whether or not there may be any receptivity to even consider a change in institutional culture is the fluidity of faculty. Duderstadt et al. point out that it can take up to twenty years for a 50% turn-over of faculty to occur, while in some high tech firms this shift can happen in a matter of months! Added to this phenomenon is the change in leadership at senior levels, whereby the interest and momentum in technology applications for distance education can fluctuate wildly from year to year.

The consequence of this inconsistency of leadership can be illustrated through an experience at an institution, with which I am intimately familiar. In 2000, the incumbent academic vice-president commissioned an institution-wide task force charged to examine the future of distance education at that university. A comprehensive document detailing past, present and proposed activities was prepared, presenting a set of realistic new initiatives, seen as desirable and feasible over the next two years. Shortly afterward, the vice-president left the institution, and no further attention was given to the document. In fact, less than two years later, the newly installed provost convened an entirely new committee, charged with essentially the same task, without awareness of, or reference to, the previous endeavor. Thus, despite the apparent interest and attention given to the issue, little actual progress has occurred since the original initiative was launched. And not surprisingly, at this writing, yet a third task force is being convened to address this once again.

Although some academic leaders may possess good instincts regarding how best to take advantage of new technology-driven opportunities for expanding teaching and learning options for their constituents, they remain handicapped by a persistent preoccupation with the elite trappings of academia, and what they perceive to be most important: stressing faculty scholarship, research and grants, prestige, and the preservation of existing infrastructure because so much has already been invested in it. This tendency has been called by some the "Harvardization" of higher education, whereby educational institutions of all types feel the need to emulate elite institutions that cater to a particular segment of society. If this trend is accentuated, wherein more educational resources are dedicated to fewer numbers who can afford them, while the workforce requires greater access to learning opportunities, the distinction between what traditional residency oriented colleges and universities offer, and what more market driven

education and training entities provide in response to market demands for anytime-anyplace learning will become dramatically pronounced.

The institutions that are most susceptible to being left behind in the competition to succeed in the organizational transformation necessary to survive and thrive in the information age are those who adopt a strategy currently in vogue among some oncologists and their patients who are possible candidates for cancer, which is called "watchful waiting". This approach involves waiting a while longer to see if any intervention is necessary, and to see if any new medical developments might offer promise for avoiding having to take any decisive action in the short term. As is the unfortunate case with too many cancer patients, waiting indefinitely without taking any action may prove fatal. This same fate will likely befall those institutions that perceive themselves to be immune to possible threats to their well-being.

Although the allure of distance delivery intrigues many educational providers, most are still determined to focus on teaching students in classrooms using full-time faculty. Faculty constitute a powerful constituency in the academic workplace, and the more students are provided with opportunities, via technology or other avenues, to take responsibility for their learning, the less faculty are confident they are that they can continue to play a central role. Similarly, as market conditions demand a mission change within many educational entities, their culture and infrastructure are often not able to keep up with new needs. Bergquist (1992), writing about traditional campus-oriented institutions, defines four internal cultures – managerial, developmental, negotiating and collegial, and suggests that these are the primary internal forces that interact with one another to preserve the mission, programs and purpose of academic institutions. None of these characteristics promote an entrepreneurial culture that might foster receptivity to an innovation such as distance education; controlled and incremental change is generally far more acceptable.

Schlechty (1997) has identified three levels of organizational change – procedural (how tasks are accomplished); technological (means by which tasks are accomplished); and structural/cultural (changed nature and purpose of work itself). Which level of change is most visible in academia? New demands on educational providers increased just at the point when resources diminished and, as Hanna (2003) astutely observes, this fact, coupled with entrenched models for teaching and learning, have conspired to impede genuine transformational changes and limited these mostly to procedural ones. New roles and new ways of doing things require entrepreneurial endeavors, strategic alliances and other business approaches historically distasteful to colleges and universities. Although the educational environment has become more volatile and unpredictable, change in this milieu is still viewed as risky and unnecessary. And while the wide reach of technology would seem to be a catalytic force to overcome this inherent resistance, Hanna argues that these new technologies have not

fundamentally changed academia's approach. Computers help many do administrative chores more efficiently, but still have not substantially changed the content or format of pedagogy.

Even with the interactive capabilities of the Internet, its tremendous reach and its ability to enrich content, most faculty still think the best way to utilize it is to emulate as much as possible what they do in the classroom. And although the distinction between distance and campus education is gradually blurring, this does not necessarily make the role of faculty any easier. Distance teaching activity, once entirely on the margin, and generally limited to continuing education offerings, may now more often be facilitated by a centralized function that provides some faculty support for course design and delivery, but this does not magically engender faculty receptivity. Undeniably, distance education's future is contingent, at least in part, on how enthusiastically new instructional technologies are embraced by faculty (Willis, 1994). This may indeed be so if we are to reach a critical mass of active users who, even if they do not replace the classroom with technology, at least bring technology into the classroom. However, this modest result will itself not be achieved until and unless faculty in those institutions are encouraged, nurtured and rewarded by leaders who, while if they do not fully embrace the role of technology, at least understand its application and potential to serve their constituents, both teachers and students. There are altogether too many academic officers within too many organizations who give polite but faint praise to distance education (even when there are exemplary distance learning program within their own colleges), while they all too obviously favor 'real' teaching that occurs face-to-face on campus.

Some among those who have studied virtual learning communities have attempted to identify the characteristics that typify the successful virtual organization. The most desirable attributes are likely to more frequently be found within newer online entities able to create their own work culture at start-up; rather than within educational institutions introducing instructional technology into an already well-established milieu. Powell (1990) has stated that a networked organization requires sustained cooperation, incentives leading to quick translation of ideas into action, and means to utilize and enhance intangible assets when resources are variable and environments uncertain.

These characteristics are not generally in great abundance in most academic organizations. And so, managers wishing to convert even a small component of the organization in such a way as to be capable of introducing, sponsoring and delivering e-learning, are likely to encounter extraordinary structural and attitudinal impediments, as the inherent tendency of most organizations is to limit any movement toward change. Power usually is retained with the larger units where the most resources are invested to keep things intact as they are, while smaller, weaker entities vying for a greater stake may be more inclined to implement strategies that advance their position (Burns, 1978). Distance educators

wanting to organize or re-organize self-contained operations into networked communities face formidable barriers, particularly within single-mode institutions with firmly established parameters of structure and practice.

The effective leader in this context must arrive at a balance that is, at times paradoxical in that he/she must establish and maintain viable connections, often despite disparate interests within those relationships, and still move toward the implementation of strategic initiatives that may demand gaining a competitive edge to succeed, all this in the midst of an academic culture that rewards collegiality and predictability, however superficial and fragile these may be, more so than to encourage entrepreneurship and innovation necessary for virtual learning communities. New technologies do have great potential to transform teaching-learning processes throughout much of the educational sector, but thus far, available resources have not yet been optimized to the point of realizing this.

Leaders at whatever level must initiate and facilitate a conversation with key stakeholders on their campuses and, at the very least, identify the right questions to ask regarding how to address the transformative character of education today, what values they possess that are either driving or restraining forces in such a process, and what new roles may be needed to adequately address the tasks before them. All too often, if such discussions do occur, they focus on the need for more and better IT tools, rather than on how to apply these most effectively for educational purposes. If pedagogical issues are addressed, these are usually framed in the context of how to adapt new technologies to traditional ideas and approaches to teaching and learning. Too often, the critical questions are overlooked or avoided. And while these may involve no less than reconsideration of the institution's culture, too often, the prevailing sentiment in academia is that "Nothing should be tried for the first time". Despite widespread applications of instructional technology at many educational organizations in nearly every country worldwide, those responsible for crafting new directions, whether their roles are administrative or instructional, continue, with a few exceptions, to operate on a small-scale, mostly through sporadic rather then systematic efforts.

If today's educational leaders approach these issues and the decisions required to address them more as threats than as opportunities, then it is likely that our educational institutions will steadily become anachronistic in a rapidly changing society. A significant shift of existing teaching-learning modalities embraced by students and faculty, requires infrastructure changes, policy formulation, institutional commitment, strategic planning, resource allocation and leadership focused on such efforts. This is indeed a formidable challenge, but it must be accepted by the very best among those in leadership roles if their learning organizations are to be relevant in this new century.

References

Bennis, W., & Nanus, B. (1985). *Leaders: The strategies for taking charge.* New York: Harper and Row.

Bergquist, W. (1992). *The four cultures of the academy: Insights and strategies for improving leadership in collegiate organizations.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Burns, J. M. (1978). *Leadership*. New York: Harper and Row.

Duderstadt, J., Atkins, D., & van Houweling, D. (2002). *Higher education in the digital age.* Westport, CT: Praeger.

Hanna, D. (2003). Organizational models in higher education, past and future. In M. Moore & W. Anderson (Eds.), *Handbook of distance education.* New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Irlbeck, S. (2002, October). Leadership and distance education in higher education: A US perspective. *International Review of Research in Open and Distance Education, 3*(2).

Powell, C. (1990). Neither market nor hierarchy: Network forms of organizations. In B.M. Shaw & L.L. Cummings (Eds.), *Research in organizational behaviour* (pp. 295-336). Greenwich, CT: JAI press.

Schlechty, P. (1997). *Inventing better schools: An action plan for educational reform.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Williams, P. (2003). Roles and competencies for distance education programs in higher education institutions. *American Journal of Distance Education 17*(1), 45-57.

Willis, B. (Ed). (1994). *Distance education: Strategies and tools.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Education Technology Publications.

6.1. A New Professoriate for the New Millennium[8]

Introduction

As we rapidly approach the next millennium, the role of the professoriate within the context of an evolving teaching/learning environment is undergoing profound changes. While much attention is given to instructional technology, we have not yet fully discerned the impact of technology on learning, and thus how it affects teaching. Since teaching is how many within the academy earn their living, how they gain a certain measure of personal satisfaction and professional recognition, it would seem prudent to examine how and why this phenomenon is occurring and what teachers might do to acclimate themselves to this new academic milieu. The students themselves contribute to no small extent to this transformation. They are products of a digital age, being exposed in their early years to the interactive format of digital media at the expense of a more passive relationship with television. Thus, they are more active participants in the shift from broadcast to interactive learning than are their faculty. They prefer to discover than to be taught, to construct a customized curriculum rather than absorb one than is prescriptive.

Not all wish to embrace these trends that are inexorably affecting the teaching profession, but we must not, indeed can not, avoid them. The changes described herein are not necessarily endorsed, nor are they promoted as more desirable than the more conventional roles with which many are most familiar. But faculty will need to be constantly adapting to new ways of interacting in new roles, with new students, and at new institutions – increasingly peripatetic and required to evolve their practice during their careers. Curriculum vitae more frequently reflect greater diversity in what, where, and how teachers have practiced their trade using diverse teaching methods. We are witnessing a trend from teaching primarily in a lecture mode, classroom-based, homogeneous students in a fixed location, to working with larger numbers spread over a wide geographic area, and utilizing varied instructional methods. A gradual progression from rather traditional to increasingly non-traditional means and venues is a career migration pattern that likely will become more common.

The Changing Face of the Workplace

Imagine, for a moment, what the typical mid-sized private or public institution might look like just ten years from now, and the impact of this change on instructional personnel. Even though enrollments would be higher, physical facilities would not increase proportionately. Many matriculants would be taking selected courses from one institution, but receiving their degree from

[8] This article was first published in DEOSNEWS 8(5), 1998.

another. Some students will complete their degree studies with campus residency requirements of only a few weeks, with all other studies completed off campus. Students enrolled full time would spend less time on campus than they do now; most would be in residence for no more than two years, with initial exposure to the fundamentals of a profession or discipline, but acquiring the skills needed more independently in field, clinical, or work settings.

Full-time faculty numbers will have increased only slightly, but most institutions will employ many more adjuncts faculty, including some outside the area who will teach via electronic media delivery. As many as 50% of the courses might be delivered online from other sources. Rather than more lecture halls, there will be additional communal computer labs equipped with a wide array of multi-media instructional devices. Many institutions will be affiliated formally with several other institutions in consortia that share students. Students can pick from the curriculum menu at each member institution to fashion their own program of study.

Many institutions will enter into new contractual arrangements with for-profit corporations which service the education sector as it becomes increasingly industrialized. For example, institutions will contract with outside parties to market some of their programs, and to warehouse and mail texts and materials to students studying primarily off campus. Much of the instructional content will be designed and pre-packaged in a multi-media format by specialists and vendors. These packages will be augmented and presented by resident faculty or guest faculty engaged to teach online. Continuing education activities will be more closely tied to professional degree programs, as continuous education lasting several years beyond graduation will be offered.

There are many in the academy who dismiss most of these future scenarios. The skeptics question why there is so much attention given to recent developments when, in fact, significant historical changes have been occurring all along with relatively little real impact on how the academy functions. They note that, if anything, these innovations have contributed to the expansion of the academic enterprise.

What exactly is different about what we are witnessing today that could so fundamentally change the profession? Will the Internet, interactive video, multi media, desktop software, and wireless communication really transform the content and delivery of higher education as quickly and as broadly as many futurists claim? They tell us that this technology is driving the restructuring of academe and will force educators to realign and redesign the teaching/learning environment dramatically. Those who do not address these critical issues now, they say, will likely be among the 500 or so colleges that are predicted to go out of business in the next two decades. The ones that survive are those that will incorporate technology to broaden their course delivery base, and thus attract

more students, be able to retain faculty, and be in a better position to compete with for-profit companies and institutions. For example, the University of Phoenix is not only attracting students no competitors had previously but is also aggressively seeking students from other institutions which can't or won't modify the way they do business. Those institutions may not even be asking themselves the right questions regarding their future.

The questions to be addressed are not simple. It is not merely a matter of inquiring about what brand of software to purchase and how many classrooms should be wired next year. Instead, more provocative questions must be asked that encompass fundamental issues such as:

- how many faculty will be needed?
- will the notion of classrooms survive?
- is the present structure of the institution viable?
- what is the role of the institution in view of new providers?
- will students and teachers need to meet anymore?
- will campuses even be necessary?

The changing context of higher education makes it impossible to ignore these questions. First, there are workplace trends that require retraining of the present workforce, since the shelf life of many technical degrees is now less than five years. Second, demographics are changing: five million working adults are currently enrolled part time in higher education courses and probably another five million would like to enroll but can't. These lifelong learners, plus the projected growth of traditional age college students will add 20 million FTEs (full time equivalents) in the next few years (Dolence & Norris, 1995). Today, students want convenience, credits, and credentials. What is important to these busy and ambitious adult learners is career enhancement, not the college experience. They want information delivered to them.

These factors are making new demands on the academy and specifically on its teaching personnel. There is an expectation that teachers demonstrate measurable improvement in students' knowledge and skill development; and there is a more competitive environment, not only among educational institutions themselves, but also with business entities both locally and globally. It is this confluence of competition, cost, technology, and need that is driving change in the professoriate's historically placid environment.

Just a few selected statistics should dramatize the transformation occurring in academe. Forty percent of post secondary students today are working adults over 30 years of age studying part time; the projection is 60% by the year 2000. The percentage of courses being taught with electronic media doubled from 1994 to 1995, and it is now commonly used in one of five classrooms. Today

over half of students and faculty make continuing use of information technology including the Internet and the WWW. E-mail is now used in approximately one third of all college courses. In 1990, about 100 institutions had academic offerings incorporating some form of distance education delivery with classroom instruction; by 1995, 75 more institutions were offering degrees entirely on line. In that year, approximately 60% of public institutions responding offered distance education courses, as well as 12% of the private institutions. Of a total population of 750,000 students enrolled in distance education courses in 1994-95, approximately 5,500 students received degrees or completed certificate programs by enrolling exclusively in distance education courses. By fall 1998, at least 85% of all institutions with enrollments of 3,000 or more will be offering distance education courses (National Center for Educational Statistics, 1997).

These activities are not limited to fringe institutions with reputations for engaging in avant-garde educational practices. The initial resistance to distance education has dissipated even among some of the elite halls of academe such as Yale, Duke, Stanford, Harvard, Cornell, and Chicago which are all getting very serious about distance education. And, of course, we are now seeing the emergence of new and entirely online regional entities such as the Western Governors' University and the Southern Regional Electronic Campus.

The attention and activity taking place in the arena of instructional technology and distance education at this time is remarkable. It seems that practically every professional conference today manages to include technology as one of its themes; indeed, many meetings are devoted exclusively to distance education issues. Ten years ago, *The Chronicle of Higher Education* occasionally ran an article related to distance education. Now it has a section on "Instructional Technology" with several articles every week.

In fact, the October 3, 1997 issue featured a piece entitled *Rethinking the Role of the Professor in an Age of High Tech Tools* (Young, 1997). It began by stating "New technologies could take over many of the instructional duties that now define professors' jobs . . ." (p. A26). Here are a few paraphrased excerpts which are especially germane: . . . some expect that teaching will become more efficient and that students will benefit as parts of the professor's job are taken over . . . Others worry that professors will be left on the sidelines . . . would students and institutions be better off with a new arrangement that allows the professor's tasks to be divided up? . . . courses could be designed by distant teams . . . individual professor's lectures could be replaced by multi media Web sites . . . With many of their responsibilities removed, professors could spend more time leading discussions that take place in classrooms or on line. . . . and technology can be used for basic teaching . . . Doing away with human contact would be disastrous . . . The faculty need to wake up and realize . . . jobs could be radically changed for the worst over the next ten years . . . . some who have taught with technology say that computers can help foster a more interactive

and lively learning environment appropriate for today's information rich world . . . some say such technological tools are fine as supplements, but should not replace traditional lectures . . . And so the debate goes.

A companion piece immediately following this one in the same issue of *The Chronicle* reports a fifty-five day faculty strike at York University in Canada resulting in an agreement with administration that faculty would not be forced to use technology in their classrooms. But a week earlier in the *Chronicle* it was reported that UCLA (University of California, Los Angeles) now requires all of its faculty to put all of their courses on the WWW. These two extremes demonstrate what happens if both administration and faculty overreact and don't thoughtfully consider ways to reconcile different perceptions about the use of technology.

Challenges and Opportunities in the Academy

While we have tinkered around the edges of the academic enterprise dealing with such issues, for examples, as core curriculum and the integration of liberal and professional studies, which are certainly important matters, we have tended to largely ignore what has been going on in business and industry, but we can't do so any longer. Several technology-based industries, collectively known as digital commerce, with enormous wealth and influence, notably computers, communications, media and entertainment, and electronic publishing are now aggressively challenging the academy's previous monopoly as the purveyor of information and knowledge. This is going to force institutions to more boldly rethink their place and purpose, not just in philosophical terms, but in very pragmatic ways as well.

We will see a major shift occurring in the next 10 to 15 years in the composition and structure of our educational institutions. There will be fewer residential colleges, although many will remain to provide younger students with the traditional trappings of a campus experience. There will be an expanding continuing education and training sector, delivered primarily by employers and companies such as Sylvan Learning Systems. In fact, these outfits are already working under contract with many colleges to provide remedial instruction to degree candidates who are not adequately prepared for postsecondary-level work. Another major component is the expanding global electronic campus whereby students can access learning opportunities via computer from home, work, dorm, community, or other location, whenever it is most convenient.

This notion of education on demand, rather than when the registrar schedules classes, has contributed a new buzz word to our educational lexicon: asynchronous learning, meaning that learning activities can occur without having to be synchronized with a scheduled instructional event. We can now categorize students as those who go to school when we open the doors for them, and those who go to school online without having to go through the doors at all.

Many among the professoriate are unaware of how many elements of this new teaching/learning model are actually already in place in their own institutions, which now constitute the newest and fastest growing programs within the academy. Several such enterprises are already serving as prototypes of new offerings, from low-tech to higher-tech academic programs. Students who are enrolled in degree programs may spend little or no time on campus, satisfy course requirements through self-directed study supported by campus based faculty (mostly adjuncts) via correspondence, e-mail, fax, telephone, or other media. Instructional materials are frequently developed primarily under contract with an outside for-profit company, as is the recruitment of students and the distribution of study materials. Some of these arrangements no doubt strike campus-based faculty as a bit unorthodox; they are skeptical that such programs compare favorably with conventional programs in terms of academic integrity, learning outcomes, and student satisfaction.

This approach, and variants of it at hundreds of institutions around the world, is being referred to as the Virtual University (it also gets labeled as distance ed, distal ed, distributive ed, etc.). Whatever it is called, it is going to look, feel and be quite different from what faculty have been accustomed to. It will be characterized by a move away from a campus-centric model of higher education to a consumer-centric model. This is leading to disintermediation, meaning that students seeking service and information can get it increasingly through automated systems not necessarily requiring human mediation. University infrastructures won't necessarily disappear, but they'll be utilized in different ways. The implication of this for faculty should be quite obvious since they also function, in effect, as intermediaries between students and knowledge. If some new, more cost effective medium is available, it will likely be introduced into the workplace. This will inevitably lead to restructuring and reassignments for many employees, including faculty.

The Changing Role of the Professoriate

We now can envision a not too distant future where the geographic hegemony of higher education will be eliminated because students simply won't need to come to a campus to learn, and where the teaching function will be less critical to the very raison d’être of higher learning. For centuries, faculty have controlled the place, the time, the content, the delivery, and the quality of education. Indeed, this is what has defined the professoriate and given it whatever authority it has exercised within the academy. As universities move into the digital age, will this unique role in knowledge delivery be demeaned? Rather than enjoying the most prestigious title within the academic workplace, will faculty roles be viewed as utilitarian?

Make no mistake; academia as we know it is vulnerable to culture shock and what has been observed or experienced thus far is only the beginning. The

biggest mistake would be to dismiss all of this as a passing phase, not recognizing that it has already insinuated itself into the academic mainstream. In fact, the boundaries and distinctions between traditional and so-called non-traditional education can no longer be clearly demarcated, and faculty will be expected to act out their roles comfortably and effectively in both milieu.

Faculty should recognize a subtle but not small point; their core competency should not be seen as simply transferring knowledge, but rather orchestrating knowledge that leads to understanding. True, faculty no longer hold the monopoly on information and ideas; they are but one of numerous resources now available by which students can learn. Faculty must accept the fact that students can have many useful learning interactions without necessarily involving a teacher in a classroom. Students interact with each other, with their medium of choice, and with their practice environment. In short, much valid learning already takes place among self-directed students with little, if any, dependence on faculty. So the teaching profession might as well get used to it.

It is ultimately the role of mentor, facilitator, and guide through the transformative process of learning that should give meaning to what teachers do. This role is not that easily replaced or replicated, no matter how sophisticated the technology may be. It is not what happens between students and a teacher in a classroom which defines the quality of education. The true challenge for those who serve as the brokers in the knowledge axis is to create the conditions for continuous conversation, or what Dewey called "productive inquiry." This inquiry does not require our personal intervention or further involvement in the student's successful and continuous growth once skills for true lifelong learning have been imparted.

If the academy is destined to change in order to better respond to new circumstances, can we be assured that there is a pivotal role for faculty to continue to play? What new constructs could be in place within a very few years? To reconstruct higher education, we need to be clear about what learners really need and what nonessentials can be jettisoned. These issues were recently examined by EDUCOM, a consortium of businesses and universities which convened in 1996 and produced an important white paper. It stated that students today need access to authentic communities of learning, they need resources to help them learn, and they need accepted credentialing as verification of their learning (Twigg & Oblinger, 1996). This, in its essence, means they need faculty, facilities, and an institutional affiliation. Currently, all these components are typically aggregated and self contained on a campus.

Distance education has made it possible, however, for students to be separated from the campus, yet still get what they need. And because working adult students tend to have little allegiance to a particular institution and are more interested in the credential, smaller certifying bodies might replace larger

permanent institutions. These entities could set their own standards, evolve to meet particular student needs, add or subtract faculty as needed. Faculty could be widely dispersed along with their students rather than location bound at a costly physical plant. A student's academic career would no longer be linked to a particular place, time, or pre-established infrastructure, but based on a network of flexible arrangements shaped largely by the student in consultation with a credentialing body and its faculty. Few faculty would come to a single campus-based office on a regular schedule. Instead, they might hold faculty appointments with several credentialing bodies in widely dispersed locations around the globe and conduct more individualized mentoring sessions live or on line rather than teach in pre-determined congregate settings (Brown & Duguid, 1996).

What else would faculty do in this new era of digital education? Many of the very same things they do now. They will have to adjust from transmitting information in person to students sitting dutifully in classrooms, to monitoring and evaluating the work of distant learners they may never personally meet. Faculty will have to pay more attention to process and less to the content that has distinguished them as resident experts in some rather esoteric subject areas. They will also have to plan how to share the teaching load with technology, and become familiar with new regulations governing intellectual property and fair usage.

One of the most important things faculty must do to find a comfortable division of labor between themselves and the new bells and whistles of the 21st century is to disabuse themselves of some of the prevalent myths regarding out-of-classroom learning. The growing body of research informs us that effective teaching and learning at a distance has been demonstrated in almost every subject area. The literature tells us that distance education students who evaluate their courses almost always express strong satisfaction for the personal attention and assistance they received from their faculty mentors. Concern is expressed that pre-packaged instructional materials being used independently will result in students becoming overly reliant on stock answers, and discourage critical thinking and self-directed learning; but in fact, these students generally spend more time researching additional sources than do their classroom based counterparts.

There is another myth that faculty should get beyond if they wish to effectively incorporate technology as a medium of instruction. For a generation, distance educators felt that, to prove the efficacy of out-of-classroom teaching, they had to emulate what typically goes on in a classroom. We are finally recognizing that the task is not to replicate what occurs in the classroom, but rather to create the conditions and dynamics that will optimize the teaching/learning process most appropriate to that particular situation. What you do with students 500 miles away, and how you do it, should not necessarily be the same as what would take place inside a classroom which, after all, is just a venue and not an essential ingredient for effective interaction.

As faculty acquire more experience with technology, they tend to be less skeptical about its uses and more creative with its possible applications. As this occurs, they must insinuate themselves into the planning taking place at their institution so that they can influence the discussion and the decisions. Too often, those organizing such efforts invite the technocrats, but seldom include faculty. As a consequence, pedagogical issues are frequently and ironically left out of conversations about melding technology and teaching. Ultimately, it is the opportunity for meaningful involvement, professional rewards, and institutional support that are key factors in promoting faculty receptivity and contributions to new technology-based initiatives. The notion that there is minimal need for strong faculty in such efforts must be dispelled, for it is precisely in the design and delivery of these new learning activities where participation of competent and committed faculty is most critical to preserve those educational principles we believe in and aspire to continue promulgating.

Conclusion

Technology is just a medium; it is the professoriate who must define its application for the purpose of achieving worthwhile educational ends. Many institutions are now at a critical juncture. Considerable resources are being invested in enhancing and expanding technology infrastructure, academic programs are being designed to accommodate new interests, and new markets are being identified. At the same time, meetings are being convened and committees formed to engage in strategic academic planning, or at least to talk about it whether or not it is actually done. It appears to be an exciting enterprise, but are we, in fact, asking the right questions about our future? Is the faculty playing a meaningful role in the discussions and decisions? In view of institutional directions being set now, will faculty be doing the same things ten years from now? Will they want to be where they presently are ten years from now? In short, does the professoriate want to wait for the future or does it want to make its future? The changing environment in which the professoriate exists should make the answer to such questions quite obvious. If not, then the profession will likely undergo even more profound changes, becoming as vestigial as the lectern is likely to be as we enter the next millennium.

Reference:

Brown, J. S., & Duguid P. (1996). Universities in the digital age. *Change, 28*(4), 11-19.

Dolence, M., & Norris, D. (1995). *Transforming higher education: A vision for learning in the 21st Century.* Ann Arbor, MI: Society for College and University Planning.

National Center for Educational Statistics (1997). *U.S. Department of Education. Distance education courses offered by higher education institutions.* Washington, DC: Government Printing Office. Retrieved August 5, 2002 from http:/nces.ed.gov/

Twigg, C., & Oblinger, D. (1996). *The virtual university. A report from a joint Educom/ IBM roundtable.* Washington, DC: Educom.

Young, J. (1997, October 3). Rethinking the role of the professor in an age of high tech tools. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, A26-A28.

6.2. Epilogue – Perspectives on Education in the New Century

In the late 1990s, as the new millennium rapidly approached, there was considerable attention being given to what changes would likely occur in the educational sector in view of an increasingly information-driven economy. Writings during this period ranged from op-ed pieces speculating on what universities might look like, to studies based on comprehensive analyses of recent trends in education that might suggest future directions. Topics included commentary on what institutions would have to do to respond to new competitors in the knowledge industry, and how faculty might adapt to the seemingly relentless encroachment of virtual learning modes in the midst of face-to-face instruction at fixed times and places.

Various models were proposed as being most suitable for success and survival in this new era. Many observed and analyzed the convergence of distinct administrative constructs, as both campus and distance organizations increasingly relied on the Internet and other interactive network-based technologies. James Hall (1998), for example, saw a ”networked” educational delivery system wherein the distinctions would be blurred between traditional campus/ classroom-centric institutions and those engaged in anytime-anyplace learning. Woudstra and Adria (2003) pointed out that distance education organizations have been developing the networked model for some time, through consortia and a more highly differentiated division of labor. As these organizational arrangements have evolved, new models for learning communities have become more viable alternatives. Kurzweil (1999) speculates that within a couple decades, learning will be accomplished exclusively via virtual teachers. Twigg and Oblinger authored a widely circulated white paper (Twigg & Oblinger, 1996) that envisioned a post-secondary environment that would provide verification of learning rather than serve simply as a locus of study.

In an earlier era, when the technology did not yet offer interactive possibilities, and the notion of proximity in the context of distance education was still perceived in geographic and social terms, the center-periphery model of course delivery and student support was the dominant configuration used by distance education planners and administrators. The headquarters, usually a campus, was the epicenter for preparation of instructional materials and administrative operations, while student support was typically proffered at regional sites where learners met with faculty or counselors to augment independent study. This arrangement has now generally been superceded by the networked model, whereby provider functions and user activities are more widely dispersed, and require little, if any, face-to-face interaction, either on a one-to-one basis or in congregate settings. Some notable success has been achieved by consortia organized as regional

virtual networks designed to serve relatively large regions and multiple countries. Universitas 21, with 17 members from 10 countries, is an example of a broad-based partnership that also utilizes a private corporation to provide the technical platform. Other educational providers are allying with book publishers that are themselves evolving from the book production business to the organization and dissemination of electronic-based information and knowledge.

The growing allure of, and increased demand for, distance learning options reveals a somewhat curious and contradictory phenomenon: at the same time that lifelong learning has been encouraged as a critical means for economic success and occupational mobility, workplace pressures and busy lifestyles has actually made it more difficult to arrange for participation in these opportunities. As Alan Tait (2003) observes, a credential-oriented society makes continuous learning almost compulsory for much of the population, yet many institutions are unwilling to re-arrange their structures to facilitate access. This circumstance has fueled the movement toward increased online course enrollments, and has created new opportunities for more providers, though it is not necessarily the well established educational purveyors who respond most readily. In my 1998 essay, I described a new pedagogy characterized by a shift from accessing content for knowledge to collaborative learning to create knowledge; an expanded distance education community moving from peripheral activity to a more ubiquitous role; a shifting allegiance of both teachers and learners from one institution to several; and the likelihood that a significant number of institutions resistant to these changes would become vestigial and eventually extinct. Now, less than five years later, it would appear that predictions regarding the proliferation of online courses at more and many institutions have been confirmed, yet enrollments at those institutions that eschew online studies have tended to remain comparatively flat.

Consider just a few selected statistics. By 2001, approximately half of the 3,000 or so US institutions reported they were offering online courses, and a third of these were already offering or soon planned to offer one or more degree or certificate programs available entirely online (Phipps & Merisotis, 1999). The University of Phoenix (UP) has aggressively increased its percentage of online offerings. From 1997 to 2002, UP's online enrollments increased by an astounding tenfold, from 5,000 to 50,000, and can now claim a 70% per year growth rate, with annual revenues topping $1 billion.

Even many traditional institutions, such as the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), have aggressively entered the distance education arena with online courses. Indeed, MIT recently took the bold and unprecedented step, through its OpenCourseWare initiative, of making 500 of its online courses available to the world for free downloading, in hopes of fundamentally changing how universities share information. Many of these ventures often utilize partners that have developed instructional platforms, and which offer

course design and technical support (e.g., BlackBoard, WebCT, eCollege). The global market for e-learning in 2003 is estimated to be $365 billion, up from $300 billion in 2000 (Moe & Blodgett, 1999). The proliferation of instructional computers and Internet access in public schools typifies this growth. The ratio of students to Internet-connected computers in US classrooms improved from 20 students in 1998 to 5.6 students per computer in 2002. The ratio of students to instructional computers in 2002 increased from 4.2 to 3.8 in just one year. (Education Week, 2003).

One measure of the advance of instructional technology in academe and its use for revenue generation is the movement toward exclusively online learning ventures. Despite some reports that a few of these initiatives have failed, there is, in fact, evidence that some institutions have achieved considerable success and continue to thrive. It is true that many such activities began as ambitious for-profit subsidiaries and did not make sound business decisions regarding enrollment projections, or how best to bring their product to market, and instead relied on their institution's reputation rather than acquiring necessary expertise to succeed in a complex enterprise merging business with academics. But others (e.g., UmassOnline, University of Maryland University College) have succeeded, though they have retained their online offerings as part of their nonprofit units, rather than spin these off. So, it would seem that, despite some notable examples of uneven performance, e-learning continues to evolve, even if earlier claims of this phenomenon leading to a revolution now seem somewhat exaggerated.

Yet, during this period, relatively few new individual stand-alone institutions have been established to provide instruction exclusively online. One in this category, Jones International University, gained attention as the first virtual university to obtain accreditation (in 1999), and immediately projected enrollments of 6,000 by 2001. But the growth of new distance education entities has not been especially prolific. Some efforts at consortia have been in evidence in recent years, but neither the frequency nor the success of these collaborative endeavors have been overly impressive. Western Governors' University, National Technological University, and Southeastern Regional Electronic University have all experienced relatively modest growth since their inception. The U.S. branch of the British Open University has not fared well, and recently ceased its ambitious initiative to export its successful model beyond the U.K.

Looking briefly at the European experience, the results in that arena to date have also not been particularly noteworthy. Indeed, some observers have asked if European educational institutions have either the will or the capacity to advance online products and services. It does not appear, despite the emergence of the European Union and some attention, in 1999, to a trans-national educational delivery system among ministers of the 29 member countries, that there is much demonstrable interest in a virtual university for the European community. However, there are some promising signs that this condition may

be changing; Dumort (2002) does note that the European Commission has launched an initiative called "eEurope", designed to encourage more interactivity via the Internet and Web among universities, distance education entities and training facilities.

Higher education now finds itself in a more aggressive environment, where its brand name, intellectual capital and credentialing role is being challenged by all sorts of new competitors, and where its products and services are being scrutinized by more diverse and discriminating consumers. Try as they might, educators can no longer claim hegemony in a domain once exclusively theirs, and certainly not in the field of distance education where they are still relative newcomers themselves. Here, for-profit organizations can rival them by creating their own brand name, produce high quality digital learning materials, and ferret out new learner markets or capture a large share of existing ones.

The reality is that those colleges and universities that begin acting more like for-profit institutions are the ones that will likely thrive in an increasingly competitive marketplace. Small, private institutions with liberal arts cores abound in every locale, and despite their proud traditions, most are generally indistinguishable from one another. But sooner rather than later, what will most surely distinguish them are those that decline and those that grow. Those that are among the first to aggressively market new offerings to new consumers, to focus more on working adult learners and corporate clients, expand online offerings, increase the proportion of part-time faculty, arrange flexible and accelerated courses and programs and enter into partnerships with local companies – some combination of these initiatives will enhance their chances for success, and this will be determined in the short term, which is when such entrepreneurial initiatives must be taken.

So, as we witness these varying levels of activity and mixed success with outcomes, what can now be said regarding the state of higher education institutions and their faculties vis-a-vis the digital resources available to augment conventional pedagogical practices and organizational structures? Will, in fact, Internet-based distance education really put competitive pressure on traditional higher education, even to the point where the latter will have to strategically alter its way of doing business? To be sure, digital communication is less foreign to much of the professoriate today, but has it fundamentally transformed the way they relate to their students and to their institution? Computer-mediated pedagogy has, without a doubt, spread across the educational spectrum, but despite the promising appearance of so-called hybrid courses, its widespread integration into the conventional classroom milieu remains elusive.

Although distance education offerings have become widespread in many academic venues, there are still many professions in which this format for delivering instruction is resisted. This is perhaps best revealed by the fact that

only a modest number of programs reviewed by specialized accreditors are engaged in distance education. Of the nearly 13,000 education programs accredited by professional organizations, only 17.7% offer some instruction using distance learning, and it is not the primary mode of instruction for any of these programs (*Assuring Quality in Distance Learning*, Council for Higher Education Accreditation, 2002). That fewer than 20% of all professional education programs in the US have incorporated any form of distance education as a means of facilitating access to their curricula to benefit their constituencies is truly astounding. This is especially so considering that the vast majority of these are graduate level programs of study largely subscribed to by working adults seeking continuing professional education for whom convenience and flexibility are surely important criteria.

Curiously, though colleges and universities have employed technology for research activities and administrative applications, its use for instructional purposes generally lags far behind. Many institutions insist it is too costly and, of course, it is as long as all existing forms of teaching are preserved. Duderstadt, Atkins & van Houweling (2002) contend that use of technology has remained on the margins, mainly to provide modest augmentations to classroom pedagogy, such as listing a few websites for students to check out after they leave the classroom. IT is usually seen as an added cost, rather than as a value-added benefit. Frankly, few academic entities have leaders with any expertise in strategic planning and organizational development that encompasses the transformational processes involved in integrating information technology in a pervasive manner. Those who do recognize the need to move forward with broad initiatives, often rely on outsourcing. For some, this is the only viable option, but it can be costly, and ultimately still leaves the institution dependent and never able to acquire its own in-house expertise to move on to the next stage of development.

It would seem that the movement to "clicks and bricks" has not been as relentless as some, including myself, had predicted. Perhaps the end of the university as we know it, like the oft reported death of Mark Twain during his lifetime, has been greatly exaggerated. Even the notion of campuses being gradually supplanted by virtual spaces and digital libraries warrants re-examination at this point. Yet, while its demise is probably not eminent or even likely, the traditional university's vitality and competitive position cannot be assured indefinitely. Its transformation to accommodate the digital era will continue to be evolutionary rather than revolutionary, with a mix of in-class and online products, and its acceptance of partnership arrangements with for-profit organizations will increase as the academy recognizes that a larger share of its business ought to be digital delivery to better accommodate more diverse learners who are often more demanding consumers as well.

So, is there, at this stage of the digital "tsunami", any segment of the higher education industry that is truly vulnerable to extinction, or at least tenuous

survival? Though the developments we have chronicled have occurred at many institutions in many locales, the impact has not been uniformly felt. It would still seem that low profile, place-bound institutions with modest enrollments, unwilling to consider alternative delivery systems or new markets, will eventually face some rather serious challenges. While more prestigious institutions might appear most immune, less certain is the ultimate fate of those in-between, such as community colleges that depend on relatively large numbers of commuting, part-time adult students, and research institutions with costly physical plants and infrastructures that are not easily adaptable or expandable to meet new market conditions. One aspect of this potentially disruptive change in the higher education equation where Lloyd Armstrong (2002) offers an astute prediction is in the area of continuing education. He argues that for-profit entities are already securing a significant share of this market from traditional institutions because of their capacity to attract busy working adults seeking courses and credentials in content areas typically offered by continuing education (CE) units. This is forcing some CE departments to now give more serious attention to expanding their online offerings; however, despite strong marketing instincts, the typical CE unit has yet to acquire much in-house expertise in the design and delivery of online programs.

In describing the threats and opportunities presented to higher education by digital technology, Duderstadt et al. reference a scenario scripted by Frank Desanto in which for-profit competitors offering online medical education programs and exams are labeled "barbarians." Probably most traditional educational providers do indeed view these interlopers as barbarians, yet relatively few of them seem to be effectively countering this challenge, and even fewer are allying with their competition. Duderstadt et al. maintain that contemporary colleges' modus operandi are determined more by history and happenstance than by strategic planning and rational decision making. If we accept the authors' argument that nearly every function in modern life is being fundamentally affected and maybe even displaced by digital applications, academic institutions will certainly not be immune to these disruptions and, in fact, may be far more vulnerable than others if their response is untimely and inept.

The modern university's Achilles heel, according to Duderstadt et al., is overextension, in its attempt to engage in and control all aspects of learning as vertically integrated, full-service organizations that operate diverse functions, and go well beyond the business of instruction itself. Meanwhile, differentiated competitors are siphoning off many of these activities in more cost-effective ways. The authors go on to state that higher education must, like other organizations, identify its real strengths, and "unbundle" those activities in which it does not have a unique advantage or ability. Successful organizations are able to capitalize on sustaining technologies and avoid disruptive ones, but colleges and universities typically react more slowly, and so remain more

vulnerable. Reorganization to function competitively in the so-called e-business environment is occurring everywhere, it seems, except in higher education, where the classroom remains the epicenter of activity, despite huge resources having been committed over the past decade to "wire" campuses,

It is tempting to argue that educational institutions are resilient enough to weather the challenges and changes brought about by new technologies and different demands from education consumers. In this regard, it is worthwhile to examine Armstrong's thesis regarding the adverse impact likely to occur in these venues by what Christensen (1997) has labeled "disruptive technology," which he defines as one which introduces a new element into the environment that is perceived by some as an alternative to the mainstream product or service and so generates a new value or demand, which can cause tension and disruption. Armstrong (2002) gives, as an example, the aggressive and successful movement, into the staid academic milieu, of for-profit enterprises, such as University of Phoenix, introducing streamlined structures and accessible avenues for achieving educational and career goals, and doing so in new areas to reach multiple markets quickly and with a favorable cost-benefit ratio. He points out that research institutions, in particular, with their cumbersome social and physical infrastructure, are not especially nimble in responding or adjusting to this form of competition. Indeed, it may be that most do not even feel the need to do so because they do not perceive this trend to be disruptive or threatening, at least not at the moment.

It is quite possible that most traditional institutions will compete more with one another by each tinkering with some distance education activity, rather than attempting to convert themselves into new structural arrangements to directly challenge the for-profit sector. This is so because these institutions cannot see themselves taking optimum advantage of the scalability of distance education, as this would require accommodating larger numbers of new students while still trying to preserve their conventional approach to serving their established student clientele. Meanwhile, Armstrong (2002) contends, the alternative providers of distance education will increasingly penetrate the traditional providers' marketplace, and this disruptive technology will, even in the short term, create instability, most notably among research institutions. Although many are still reluctant to do so, more institutions are being forced to partner with for-profit providers, which have venture capital and expertise in such area as marketing, start-up strategies, product development, most of which are usually in short supply in the typical college or university.

But for-profit providers are not necessarily waiting for educational institutions to make overtures to them. Instead, recognizing the prospects for investment opportunities in post-secondary education, outfits such as Sylvan are aggressively pursuing new and emerging markets, both domestically and overseas, by purchasing or acquiring controlling interest in existing entities. Sylvan's CEO

indicated in early 2003 that his company anticipated a 40% growth rate in its post-secondary operations that would serve 200,000 students and generate revenues of more than $1 billion over the next four years (Blumenstyk, 2003). Such initiatives pose a distinct threat to the higher education establishment, and it is quite remarkable that a sector of society that has long enjoyed a monopoly on the organization and dissemination of information, is now required to share the marketplace, not only for its traditional consumers, but also for new markets that it is less familiar with and less well equipped to capture.

My 1998 article speculated that a major variant on present arrangements between institutions would be more flexible policies regarding transfer of credits, as well as the brokering function that facilitates co-mingling of courses from multiple providers to enable consumers to acquire a credential given by one of them. Although cooperative transfer agreements among traditional institutions (even within the same system) are still resisted, more lenient policies are slowly being adopted. But still relatively uncommon is an open attitude on the part of traditional institutions to accept transfer credits earned via distance education, particularly from institutions that are not regionally accredited, even if they are nationally recognized by the Distance Education and Training Council, or other bodies that accredit distance education offerings. Indeed, there is even reluctance on the part of some institutions heavily engaged in distance education to accept credits from similar providers (Carnevale, 2002). But, as the percentage of courses offered at a distance increases; are delivered by increasingly diverse providers; are regionally accredited; and a new generation of distance students demands the service and will enroll where it is offered, then transfer restrictions will be eased and more programs of study will consist of courses taken from multiple institutions and delivered via varied formats.

But despite new arrangements and new activity among institutions and faculty, the question still persists: will the pervasiveness of digital resources for teaching and learning fundamentally alter the shape of higher education as we presently know it? At the end of the last century, Moe and Blodgett (1999) reported that higher education worldwide was a 400 billion dollar industry. Will this sector, as Bollag (2000) suggests, consolidate into a much smaller number of major providers, delivering courses in English to education consumers worldwide? If this phenomenon does occur, campus-centric institutions less able to compete in this emerging arena, will be pressured, along with their faculties, to modify their on-campus pedagogy, incorporating distance teaching modalities into classroom-based courses. This is already occurring, as evidenced by the increase in so-called hybrid courses (Young, 2002). Further, faculty utilizing this approach will have less face-to-face contact time with students, but they will spend more time facilitating learning processes rather than disseminating content (cf. chapter 4).

In view of the significant enhancements made just within the past decade with interactive computer technologies and their enormous potential for even more

extensive applications for teaching and learning at a distance, it might be assumed that academe would play a leading role in further innovation within this area. As the locus for the exchange of ideas, research, reflection, discourse and the dissemination of knowledge, universities ought to be at the forefront of advancing the "next generation" of distance education. Yet, on closer examination, we should recognize that the academy, though a place for conceptual discoveries, is really not very comfortable with innovation and change. Its members seek to understand ideas and events, and to establish order and standardization. But technology is constantly changing, and so continuously demands decisions regarding its use and purpose. With its conventional approaches to research, its arcane models for governance and policy making, and its Byzantine ideologies, the university is not, in fact, an especially effective epicenter for fostering technology-enhanced pedagogy. Indeed, even in those institutions where distance education endeavors have been quite successful, they are often relegated to the periphery so as not to interfere with the main purpose of the academy and the primary means by which it conducts its business. A conversation not too long ago with a university president illustrates this point. This leader expressed strong skepticism that the institution was capable of launching a doctoral level program of study offered completely online. This leader remarked that the only places with such offerings were those primarily in business for delivering alternative programs. The unmistakable implication here was that any self-respecting institution concerned about image and quality would likely not engage in such non-traditional methods, and that research and classroom teaching remain the attributes that distinguish the true university.

It would seem that the advances in information resources and asynchronous communication should place universities at an ideal advantage to capitalize on the capacity of technology to advance their agenda. Yet, paradoxically, many within and outside the academy agree that universities are not the best environments to promote innovation in technology, certainly not for instructional purposes. It is an expensive process, and requires a comprehensive approach and, in an era of shrinking resources, higher education is unlikely to allocate adequate support for such endeavors, nor is it in any era, noted for its ability to formulate systematic approaches to new initiatives. One argument currently in vogue is that as technology gradually insinuated itself into the instructional process over the past 100 years, innovation and flexibility has actually been constrained. To illustrate this point, some observers note that institutionally mandated electronic platforms currently being adopted on many campuses tend to reduce flexibility for faculty and, in many cases, actually dissuades them from trying to incorporate any instructional technology into their courses, as they feel this is an intrusion into their pedagogical domain.

Many observers of the educational scene in the 1960s and 70s, an era of energy and excitement when a significant cadre of enthusiastic educational reformists

whose mantra was "Let a thousand flowers bloom," eventually asked themselves if, despite the profusion of well intended reforms, well entrenched educational values and practices ultimately had prevailed. As one whose efforts encompassed both of these periods, I now find myself posing essentially this same question with respect to the impact of the digital age on academe: despite a remarkable infusion of new materials and methods that has made educational opportunities and experiences accessible to new learners across time and space, has this phenomenon fundamentally transformed the education enterprise, and if not, is it likely to do so at any point in the near future?

Some recent distance education literature makes a useful contribution in addressing this question. Of particular notice is *Digital Academe - The New Media and Institutions of Higher Education and Learning*. This collection of essays, edited by Dutton and Loader (2002), attempts to respond to this debate, and seems to conclude that, although interactive computer technologies have certainly become more central to the infrastructure of all types of educational entities, new media have not transformed the processes and practices of higher education. Even within institutions where effective distance education programs have prevailed and where impressive numbers can be touted, such successes are often self-contained, and so have not resulted in a ripple effect, whereby other sectors of the organization have adopted distance education resources or practices. My own institution typifies this scenario: despite being the largest academic program within the university, the distance education masters program has not generated much interest, even from departments with low enrollments which could benefit from an infusion of new students attracted by alternative and flexible delivery systems.

This digital divide is manifested at many levels, compounded by structural, financial and, of course, philosophical divisions and differences. Faculty reinforce their institutions' inherent resistance to change. Duderstadt et al. refer to various "silos of activity" that are near impossible to coordinate, to re-configure, or to eliminate. They argue that an effective technology strategy must be systemic, drawing together many disparate interests and complex activities, not always responsive and adaptive to changing conditions in the environment, and usually more inclined to preserve things as they are. Systemic change can be best executed when there is experience, at least among some stakeholders, with the industrial model. But faculty are typically more comfortable with the craft approach; even those who do make some use of IT in their courses are averse to allowing instructional designers or other tech support staff to assist them. It is not at all surprising then that they would not understand the imperative need for technology to be a part of their enterprise, despite the expectations of today's students who are accustomed to electronic conveniences in every facet of life, and who are not too tolerant of place-bound and paper-dependent organizations.

In many cases, the greatest impediment to any genuine progress at the organizational level in the area of distance education is not the lack of interest or enthusiasm on the part of individual faculty, but simply the absence of any viable mechanism in place to facilitate activity that could contribute to systemic change. Institutions occasionally engage in assessments of their activities in the distance education arena, conduct an inventory of their resources, and arrive at some quite thoughtful plans for proceeding to the next stage of engagement. But too often, and perhaps more importantly, these well intentioned goals languish for want of leadership capable of operationalizing new ideas. In the absence of infrastructure and/or leadership to develop it, many institutions squander the opportunity to nurture those few intrepid instructors tinkering with instructional technology, often doing so without any training or support. Not only can this result in a lack of momentum, but it may also be that those who initiate entirely new online courses without adequate resources and expertise available to them become disenchanted with both the product and the process, and this reaction can even extend to their students. This outcome only reinforces the innate skepticism regarding distance education that abounds in the academy.

Does this suggest that, despite much documented distance education activity within the last two decades of the previous century, much of what currently characterizes the structure and function, policies and practices, and attitudes and behaviors of academe will likely persist into the first two decades or so of this new century? My conjecture is that although we will certainly witness still more impressive gains in terms of technological advances and applications, these activities and efforts will have little fundamental impact on our educational organizations. Despite external forces that will challenge the educational sector, as well as present it with new opportunities, internal resistance will stubbornly preserve much of the dominant culture that now prevails.

References

Armstrong, L. (2002). A new game in town: Competitive higher education in American research universities. In W. Dutton & B. Loader (Eds.), *Digital academe: The new media and institutions of higher education and learning.* London: Routledge.

Blumenstyk, G. (2003, March 21). Sylvan will shed its tutoring business to focus on higher education. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, A29.

Bollag, B. (2000, September 8) The new Latin: English dominates in academe. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, A73.

Carnevale, D. (2002, October 18). Missed connections. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, A35.

Christensen, C. M. (1997) *The innovator's dilemma*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press.

Council for Higher Education Accreditation (2002). *Assuring Quality in Distance Learning*. Monograph Series 2002, Number 1. Washington, D.C.: Council for Higher Education Accreditation.

Duderstadt, J., Atkins, D., & van Houweling, D. (2002*). Higher education in the digital ag*e. Wesport, CT: Praeger.

Dumort, A. (2002). New media and distance education: EU and US perspectives. In W. Dutton, & B. Loader (Eds.), *Digital academe: The new media and institutions of higher education and learning* (pp. 290-300). London: Routledge.

Dutton, W., & Loader, B. (Eds.) (2002). *Digital academe: The new media and institutions of higher education and learning.* London: Routledge.

Education Week (2003, April 8). *Technology Counts*, *22*(35).

Hall, J. (1998). Leadership in accreditation and networked learning. *The American Journal of Distance Education 12*(2), 5-15.

Kurzweil, R. (1999*). The age of spiritual machines: When computers exceed human intelligence.* New York: Viking.

Moe, M., & Blodgett, H. (1999). *The knowledge web.* San Francisco: Merrill Lynch & Co.

Phipps, R., & Merisotis, J. (1999). *What's the difference? A review of contemporary research on the effectiveness of distance learning in higher education*. Washington, DC.: Institute for Higher Education Policy.

Tait, A. (2003). Rethinking learners support in the Open University UK: A case study. In A. Tait & R. Mills (Eds.), *Rethinking learner support in distance education*. London: RoutledgeFalmer.

Twigg, C., & Oblinger, D. (1996). *The virtual university. A report from a joint Educom/ IBM roundtable*. Washington, DC: Educom.

Woudstra, A., & Adria, M. (2003). Issues in organizing for the new network and virtual forms of distance education. In M. Moore & W. Anderson (Eds.), *Handbook of distance education.* New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Young, J. (2002, March 22). 'Hybrid' teaching seeks to end the divide between traditional and online instruction. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, A33.

7. Reflections on the Future of Distance Education

The Chronicle of Higher Education conducted a survey of public opinion on higher education in 2003. A key finding was that 59% of the 1,000 respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that "Some time in the next ten years, students who want a college education will take most of their courses over the Internet." (Selingo, 2003, p. A11). What is remarkable is that this question was not specifically asked of educators, nor was it referring to taking courses online, but actually obtaining a degree via the Internet. As recently as perhaps five years ago, it would have been highly improbable that three-fifths of the general population would see the Internet as a viable and legitimate means by which to obtain a college degree. Equally astonishing is a key finding of a study conducted by Babson College and the Sloan Consortium of senior administrative officers from nearly 1,000 private and public institutions. Fifty-seven percent said Internet-based courses at their colleges were already at least equivalent to lecture hall counterparts in educational quality, and one third responded that online education would be superior to in-class instruction at their institutions within three years! (Sloan Consortium, 2003). And consider the implications for distance education of this most amazing statistic: a U.N. sponsored study revealed that there will be more people to educate in the next thirty years than have been educated in all of history (Pelton, 1996).

The growth of distance education, most dramatically manifested in the exponential increase of online courser enrollments, is chronicled and touted in many venues. And while there may be some dispute as to the accuracy of some statistics regarding the phenomenon, few could argue persuasively that it is an insignificant development. The chair of the Distance Education and Training Council (2003), recently stated, in that organization's annual conference report, that in 1997, fewer than 500 institutions offered courses online; he went on to report that, in 2001, there were more than 4,000 institutions worldwide offering distance learning opportunities at the post-secondary level, ranging from a course to entire degree programs. And as the global pipeline of prospective students creates even greater demands for education, more providers currently limited to regional hegemony will establish niches in these dispersed marketplaces. The University of South Africa (UNISA) serves as a model for this likely development; it currently provides education at a distance to 140,000 students, of which 10 percent live out of the country. And now new providers have moved into the distance education marketplace relatively recently; for example, community colleges now comprise nearly 50% of all post secondary institutions in the U.S., and workforce needs will create a huge demand for more learning opportunities at a distance for their clientele.

As the digital era of distance education further evolves, and greater numbers of users accumulate experience and insight into teaching, learning and interacting

electronically, there is both a promising trend and another that gives some cause for concern. What is encouraging is that we now witness an entire new generation of emerging practitioners enthusiastically engaged in online discourse. Their interest and involvement is readily apparent when one attends conferences dedicated to distance education and instructional technology, where there are literally dozens of sessions in which one or more of these new practitioners is eager to share their online adventures, offering advice on “How to teach online” and, in many instances, demonstrating their course’s interactive features. Further evidence of the widespread adoption of instructional technology is the proliferation of texts and manuals on "How to design online courses". It seems as if there is at least one new title released per month promising the most effective new strategies for asynchronous instruction.

So, one might ask: “What is the problem with this? Isn’t it encouraging that more folks are recognizing the opportunities presented by online education?” But there is indeed a problem: far too many of these offerings are anecdotal “show and tell” talks and writings, prepared and presented by individuals who, although perhaps quite engaged in their new roles, do not really have much awareness of distance education practice, and certainly little or no understanding of distance education theory. What the evidence described above suggests is that, while technology is indeed changing the larger society, through electronic connectivity that is portable and therefore constant, it is not really changing the academic culture in the fundamental ways I might have predicted earlier. Why? Because although technology is now ubiquitous and has moved into the mainstream, distance education, nevertheless, still remains peripheral to the academic enterprise. Certainly, the futurists can rightly claim that the World Wide Web has pervaded our social relations to the degree that human beings interact differently, functioning as virtual agents representing our real selves. But have those who utilize this transformative technology, with its remarkable interactive capability to accomplish pedagogical goals, gained much useful insight into how these resources can be applied to achieve optimum results? Have we, through new technology-enhanced means of communication, now truly transformed educational practice, or have well-entrenched beliefs and behaviors remained, with only the trappings of innovation?

Seymour Sarason (1971) has written convincingly for three decades on the culture of schools and the prevailing climate that pervades most academic settings, and which so often compromises change efforts. He states: "The school person is in a role that is characterized by duties and defined by a complicated set of personal and professional relationships with many others in that setting. The capacity to evaluate alternatives dispassionately is near impossible for most people because it confronts them with the necessity of changing their thinking, then change their actions, and finally, changing the overall structure of the setting.” (p.13). Given the impediments to innovation that typically lurk in most

educational entities, it is no small accomplishment when individual faculty members or those that lead their institutions are able to implement even modest changes. And while these may generally not represent truly transformative changes, the cumulative impact of a series of alternative pedagogical approaches or new organizational arrangements can gradually lead to noticeable and viable new ways of practice.

Donald Schön (1971), in his seminal work over several decades on reflective practice, reminds us that ways of knowing are inherently conservative and resistant to change, and thus we perpetuate old assumptions even when faced with new problems. It may be that much of the activity we witness among some faculty who initiate promising new instructional approaches with technology demonstrates little more than a false sense of forward motion, an empty exercise fostered by restlessness, an appetite for change, a vague malaise about their teaching, an urgent need for career fulfillment not yet realized, perhaps even an abandonment of other tasks not yet finished. If these behaviors are characteristic of academic innovators attempting to be responsive to new demands and expectations by new consumers for alternative ways to provide instruction, will the cumulative effect of their efforts ultimately influence fundamental changes in the way learning organizations plan and deliver instruction?

More than one generation of distance educators has expended considerable effort fending off critics who reveled in extolling the virtues of face-to-face instruction and offering invidious comparisons at the expense of distance teaching. The usual tactic employed to counter skeptics has been to demonstrate how teaching at a distance could, in many respects, effectively emulate the classroom environment. This response has always been easier to rely upon, rather than articulate and practice pedagogical approaches uniquely appropriate to teaching across time and space. This debate has proven to be a difficult one for distance education advocates to address until the relatively recent introduction of digital communication dramatically enhanced their ability to not only replicate what transpires in classroom venues, but to also augment those dynamics with additional teaching and learning resources, including some not even possible in live, face-to-face encounters. This development has now resulted in an inclination on the part of many classroom-based faculty to adopt and incorporate selected distance education modalities into their “live” courses.

This enrichment of face-to-face pedagogy derived from innovative instructional practices in distance teaching settings, coupled with the dramatic increase of so-called “hybrid” courses (combining live and distance modalities) might well be characterized as marking a new “third generation” of distance education, wherein the era of networked learning has quite suddenly arrived. Nipper (1989) distinguishes between “first and second generation systems” in distance education, the first being print materials, and the second print combined with some means of broadcast media. He points out that during both the first and

second generations, communication with learners was marginal, and among learners was practically non-existent. Peters (2003), in discussing his insights as a long-time distance educator more recently using new media, alludes to the "third generation" characterized by the interlinking of several media. This has since superceded the "second generation" from about 1970 onward when distance education first featured multiple media, though these were used as distinct elements but not yet interlinked.

We should pause here to ask about this casual use of the term "generation" as applied to the evolution of distance education? Despite its rather frequent usage, is it, in fact, appropriate to employ terminology that implies twenty-year increments to a phenomenon that has progressed at such a rapid pace, especially since the advent of digital imaging and interacting? There are those who argue that this terminology is entirely inadequate to convey the speed of distance education's development. So what might be more suitable and effective nomenclature in this regard? To refer to different "eras" of distance education does not connote any better the rapidity with which new technological resources have proliferated. And employing terminology like "phases" of distance education conveys an almost too transitory sense of what has and is occurring in this domain. One could also speak of "stages" of distance education, in hopes that this terminology might better reflect what we are attempting to articulate. But perhaps a more useful image is to conjure up "waves" of distance education. Does this image not effectively suggest a constant and relentless surge of energy within which one wave has barely ebbed when another, without pause, takes its place? Successive waves of distance educations seems to aptly describe, more than does most other nomenclature, what we have witnessed in the domain of computer-mediated pedagogy in recent years.

Whatever we call it and however we describe this phenomenon, it now seems as if certain aspects, at least, of distance education have finally gained some acceptance and maybe even respect among many traditional educators. This development might suggest a promising rapprochement is imminent between two previously divided pedagogical camps. But what can now be seen emerging from the ascendancy of distance education, primarily driven by the appeal of online features and some amalgamation of previously separate and distinct instructional strategies, is a sudden reversal of attitudes. Whereas in the not too distant past, those teaching via out-of-class arrangements were often defending their work as just as good as that of their colleagues inside classrooms, many of these same educators are now touting online teaching and learning as better than their classroom counterparts. Notice how many conferences focusing on instructional technology now feature sessions that declare how much more effective online activity is in comparison to what occurs in the classroom. From faculty training and support, curriculum design and delivery, student-directed learning, learning outcomes assessment, cost-effectiveness, and other criteria,

distance education is now characterized by its recent converts as the exemplar of how faculty should teach and how students should learn.

The *Chronicle of Higher Education* (Arone, 2002) quoted a spokesperson from the Sloan Foundation (a prominent supporter of online course development): "To stay competitive, institutions that offer online education will have to replicate the quality of teaching that traditional courses have." Such observations, though presumably well intended, imply that quality is best defined by similarity to classroom pedagogy. There is something quite disheartening in the persistent notion that, to remain competitive, institutions that offer online education must replicate the quality of teaching in traditional courses. This apparently assumes that the typical face-to-face course is to be emulated for its inherent quality. This assumption is probably more harmful to the cause of advancing distance education as a legitimate alternative in its own right than those who espouse outright opposition to it.

The professional associations continue to ponder the question of "what to do" about distance education: condemn it, give faint praise, offer a cautious endorsement, or simply suggest that it is still too early to render a verdict? The American Association of University Professors (AAUP), in 1998, somewhat reluctantly acknowledged the 'potential' benefits of online education, but also put forth plenty of cautions. The National Education Association (NEA) released its latest survey results on distance education (2000), reporting that 72% of faculty polled responded positively to the 'new' medium, with those having some experience with it expressing the most favorable responses. But just one month later, the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) passed a resolution opposing exclusive use of distance education media to deliver undergraduate courses (Carneval, 2001). These faculty unions, as well as other professional groups, persist with their fears that growing use of online teaching modes, with an assembly-line approach to course development and delivery, could ultimately transform higher education, compromise workplace standards, and even threaten jobs of full-time faculty. These concerns are exacerbated by increasing numbers of joint partnerships among institutions and, even worse, with for-profit enterprises. Such arrangements, it is presumed, will entice unsuspecting faculty to contribute further to the industrialization of higher education.

What is the distance education leader to do to counter, or at least neutralize such hostility, whether it reflects worthwhile criticism or just plain anger toward anything that differs from traditional pedagogy? It is not enough to simply ignore or discount all opposition as uninformed or biased. In fact, any opinion, whether credible or questionable, should be seen as another opportunity to engage in on-going discussion of an important topic. Indeed, one can parlay the debate into another sign that distance education is a vital and lively aspect of education in our times, as evidenced by the interest and attention it elicits from all quarters. Further, respondents prepared to document their own successful

experiences in the field, or to cite their own research and writing on the topic, are in a position to offer alternative perspectives, not necessarily to dissuade, those convinced that the advance of distance education is a great scourge, but rather to attempt to persuade doubters that it is an approach worth considering within their own setting. Most often than not, converts are won over one by one in this fashion

Rather than acknowledge that greater numbers of educational constituents can benefit from useful, appropriate and effective applications of both modalities, as well as from a blending of the two, it may be that we shall continue to experience a less hostile yet still uneasy tension between two models of pedagogical practice that, in most respects, are fundamentally the same, but persist in accentuating their differences, even if these are more imagined than real. There are those who decry what they perceive to be distance learning's dominant characteristic – that it deviates sharply from the idealized Mark Hopkins notion of what education should be (i.e., a teacher on one end of a log and a student at the other end) and substitutes this intimate relationship with mass learning, possibly involving a thousand students in a single course. Yet, in fact, a teacher and student connected by interactive computers (sitting, in effect, at opposite ends of an electronic log) can achieve the same level of meaningful discourse as Hopkins might have had with his mythical student. But, if perceived differences, of what constitutes distance education and what a traditional collegiate setting is, are perpetuated and accentuated, then it remains difficult for the rank and file of the academy to accept or even accommodate teaching and learning at a distance.

There continues to be a good deal of speculation regarding whether the advent of the Internet and the burgeoning phenomenon of worldwide asynchronous study will vanquish the so-called Digital Divide, or if yet to be imagined advances and applications of technology will exacerbate the cognitive gap between those with information and those without. When one contemplates the exponential growth of online courses now offered by thousands of educational entities in just the immediate past decade, in all but the most impoverished regions of the planet, it is difficult not to assume that humans and technology will become inexorably more intertwined in every facet of existence. The cyborg concept – the notion that people and their technology are converging and merging, gains increasing prominence in research and literature. Indeed, for some 250 years, theorists and thinkers have ruminated over the relationship between man and machine, and even man as machine. And certainly no educator today who practices in even a resource-challenged setting can avoid the almost ubiquitous presence of technology in every facet of personal and professional life. There are some predictions that as early as the end of the current decade, 95 % of all communication will be between machines without people.

In her 1985 landmark essay in *Socialist Review*, Donna Haraway wrote of the illusion that exists between science fiction and social reality, suggesting that the boundaries between these two domains is more imagined than real. Lest we dismiss this idea as an exaggerated view of a post-human world, we might realize that computerized gadgetry imbedded in humans is now a routine surgical procedure for a variety of physical maladies. Or perhaps an even more immediate example for the distance educator is to think for just a moment about the fact that one can simply execute a couple of clicks on a computer and thus be able to exchange information and ideas within seconds with colleagues or students 7,000 miles apart! We have become so inured to the wonderment of this almost daily activity that we easily forget what an astonishing phenomenon it truly is to so easily achieve such instant and intimate discourse across time and space.

This human-machine synthesis is no longer simply an intellectual consideration; we are immersed in technology nearly every day and in practically every activity. Technology permeates communication, the economy, transportation, home and workplace, warfare, medicine, etc. And while many may be quite ambivalent about this relationship, all are a party to it, usually more directly than indirectly. There has been a long tradition whereby we view man as the maker and user of tools, but always keeping the two as separate and distinct. Now, it seems to many that biological and technological elements are rapidly becoming a unified whole. Is there perhaps a feeling of helplessness as we move relentlessly in the direction of yet greater reliance on technology? Is the reason why so many academics continue to resist the application of computers for teaching and learning because they see it as the dawn of the post-human period? It is more likely that they are taking a micro-view of the situation, and cannot imagine that the academy could function effectively in a largely post-faculty environment. Such a shortsighted perspective will perpetuate a division between users and providers.

The potential of information technology to meet the vast educational needs of a global society does have a dark side. Although there is a democratizing dimension to information technology, in that it can provide universal access to education, there is also an equal threat that its proliferation can just as easily contribute to a further widening of the digital divide. Duderstadt, Atkins & van Houweling (2002) depict a time in the not too distant future when the residential college could very likely become the gated community of higher education, well beyond the economic reach of much of the population which will have to satisfy its learning needs via computer mediated distance learning and/or off-campus learning centers. And the choice of the latter mode and venue to access instruction and credentialing will be increasingly selected, not only by the less affluent, but also by enterprising consumers of all means who recognize the value represented by these alternative arrangements. This trend is being accelerated by the explosive growth of employee education. As Botkin and Davis (1994) note,

we have seen the prevalence of student education in the data era now superceded by a demand for knowledge in the information age. This phenomenon is especially compatible with instructional systems that can design and deliver information rapidly across time and space.

Ultimately, as distance education continues its advance from the margins to the epicenter of the knowledge and information age, its transformational role in providing new learning opportunities to a worldwide citizenry will force the inevitable convergence of two previously disparate modes of education. Many stakeholders will be challenged in this ongoing tension between tradition and innovation. With all the prospective risks and potential returns implicit in this exciting enterprise, it is uncertain if the process will result in a seamless integration of traditional and distance education. Indeed, we may find that sooner than we wish to consider, distance education as we now know it may itself be viewed as an example of traditional teaching and learning, overtaken by something new far beyond our ken. In the interim, however brief it may be, there can be few areas of engagement where leaders can make a more significant contribution to the future well being of the world community than in the expanding distance education arena.

References

American Association of University Professors (1998). *Statement on distance education.* Washington, D.C.: American Association of University Professors.

Arone, M. (2002, May 10). Many students' favorite professors shun distance education. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, A39-40.

Botkin, J., & Davis, S. (1994). *The monster under the bed.* New York: Touchstone.

Carneval, D. (2001, July 21). Faculty union opposes undergraduate degrees earned entirely through distance education. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, A32.

Distance Education and Training Council (2003). *Report on the DETC 77th Annual Conference.* Washington, D.C.: Distance Education and Training Council.

Duderstadt, J., Atkins, D., & van Houweling, D. (2002). *Higher education in the digital age*. Westport, CT: Praeger.

Haraway, D. (1985). A manifesto for cyborgs. *Socialist Review 80*, 65-107.

National Education Association (June, 2000). *A survey of traditional and distance learning higher education members.* Washington, D.C.: National Education Association.

Nipper, S. (1989). Third generation distance learning and computer conferencing. In R. Mason & A. Kaye (Eds.), *Mindweave: Communication, Computers and Distance Education* (pp. 63-73). Oxford: Pergamon Press. Retrieved November 10, 2003 from: http://www.icdl.open.ac.uk/literaturestore/ mindweave/ chap5.html

Pelton, J. (1996). Cyberlearning vs. the university: An irresistible force meets an immovable object. *The Futurist, 30*(6), 17-20.

Peters, O. (2003). Learning with new media in distance education. In W. Anderson & M. Moore (Eds.), *Handbook of distance education.* New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Sarason, S. (1971). *The culture of the school and the problem of change.* Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Schön, D. (1971). *Beyond the stable state.* New York: Random House.

Selingo, J. (2003, May 2). The Chronicle survey of public opinion on higher education. *The Chronicle of Higher Education,* A11.

Sloan Consortium (2003). *Sizing the opportunity: The quality and extent of online education in the United States, 2002 and 2003.* Retrieved October 20, 2003 from http://sloan-c.org/resources/survey.asp

Name Index

Index of Journals and Institutions:

Subject Index:

ASF Series

Studien und Berichte der Arbeitsstelle Fernstudienforschung (ASF) der Carl von Ossietzky Universität Oldenburg
The Series of the Center for Research in Distance Education (ASF) at the Carl von Ossietzky University of Oldenburg

The Series' Editors: U. Bernath, F. W. Busch, D. Garz, A. Hanft, W.-D. Scholz

---

Volume 1 **Bernath, U., Fichten, W., Klaus, J., & Rieforth, J. (Eds.).** Psychologische Gesundheitsförderung für Pflegekräfte in der Dialyse - Dokumentation einer betriebsinternen Fortbildung. – 2000 – 112 pp. – ISBN 3-8142-0668-1 / € 9,30
Available as an electronic data file at: http://docserver.bis.uni-oldenburg.de/publikationen/bisverlag/2000/berpsy00/berpsy00.html

Volume 2 **Hülsmann, T.** The costs of open learning: a handbook. – 2000 – 165 pp. – ISBN 3-8142-0724-6 / € 14,40 / $ 16.50

Volume 3 **Friesen, H., Berr, K., Gerdes, K., Lenk, A., & Sanders, G.** Philosophische Dimensionen des Problems der Virtualität in einer globalen Mediengesellschaft - Beschreibung eines Forschungsprojektes. – 2001 – 60 pp. – ISBN 3-8142-0763-7 / € 11,30

Volume 4 **Holmberg, B.** Distance Education in Essence. An Overview of Theory and Practice in the Early Twenty-first Century. (2nd ed.) – 2003 – 124 pp. – ISBN 3-8142-0875-7 / € 16,00 / $ 19.00

Volume 5 **Peters, O.** Distance Education in Transition. New Trends and Challenges. (4. ed.) – 2003 – 250 pp. – ISBN- 978-3-8142-0931-9 / € 26,00 / $ 30.00

Volume 6 **Bernath, U., & Rubin, E. (Eds.).** Reflections on Teaching and Learning in an Online Master Program. A Case Study. – 2003 – 295 pp. – ISBN-3-8142-0848-X / € 24,00 / $ 28.00

Volume 7 **Rumble, G.** Papers and Debates on the Economics and Costs of Distance and Online Learning. – 2004 – 192 pp. – ISBN 3-8142-0886-2 / € 20,00 / $ 23.00

Volume 8 **Beaudoin, M.** Reflections on Research, Faculty and Leadership in Distance Education. – 2004 – 144 pp. – ISBN 978-3-8142-0905-0 / € 18,00 / $ 21.00

Volume 9 **Brindley, J., Walti, C., & Zawacki-Richter, O. (Eds.).** Learner Support in Open, Distance and Online Learning Environments. – 2004 – 330 pp. + DVD-Video – ISBN 3-8142-0923-0 / € 38,00 / $ 45.00

Volume 10 **Hülsmann. T., & Perraton, H. (Eds.).** Educational Technology for Distance Education in Developing Countries. (forthcoming 2008)

Volume 11 **Holmberg, B.** The Evolution, Principles and Practices of Distance Education. – 2005 – 174 pp. – ISBN 3-8142-0933-8 / € 20,00 / $ 23.00

Volume 12 **Perraton, H., Robinson, B., & Creed, C.** (Eds.), International Case Studies of Teacher Education at a Distance – 2007 – 314 pp. – ISBN 978-3-8142-2037-6 / € 28,00 / $ 39.00

Volume 13 **Bernath, U. & Sangrà, A.** (Eds.). Research on Competence Developments in Online Distance Education and E-Learning - Selected Papers from the 4th EDEN Research Workshop in Castelldefels/Spain, October 25 - 28, 2006. – 2007 – 263 pp. –ISBN 978-3-8142-2077-2 / € 24,00 / $ 32.00

Related publications:

Bernath, U., & Szücs, A. (Eds.). Supporting the Learner in Distance Education and E-Learning. Proceedings of the Third EDEN Research Workshop, Carl von Ossietzky University of Oldenburg, Germany, March 4 - 6, 2004. – 2004 – 556 pp. – ISBN 3-8142-0902-8 / € 50,00 / $ 57.50

Bernath, U. (Ed.). Online Tutorien - Beiträge zum Spezialkongress "Distance Learning" der AG-F im Rahmen der LEARNTEC 2002. – 2002 – 201 pp. – ISBN 3-8142-0806-4 / € 12,00

Bernath, U., & Rubin, E. (Eds.). Final Report and Documentation of the Virtual Seminar for Professional Development in Distance Education. – 1999 – 433 pp. – ISBN 3-8142-0657-6 / € 20,50 / $ 23.50

For more information please see: http://www.mde.uni-oldenburg.de/40574.html