"Looking at the present by looking back": a review of 25 years of editorials in The American Journal of Distance Education

Michael G. Moore
Distinguished Professor of Education
Pennsylvania State University
United States of America

Abstract

In this presentation, Michael G. Moore editor of The American Journal of Distance Education selects some of the editorials he has written since the founding of the journal in 1987 and identifies some of the topics and themes that have been important during the evolution of the field of information and communications technology in education, -- and raises questions that must challenge today as in the past.

Introduction: AJDE 1987-2014:

Distance education is about the application of Information and Communication Technologies in Education, specifically in those teaching learning environments that are entirely dependent on the use of technology, as contrasted to those environments in which teachers employ technology in a supporting role.

This type of education has been practiced for a very long time, beginning at the end of the 19th century with the use of printed media for linking learners, usually adults, and teachers, followed by use of radio and television, then interactive telecommunications technologies, and today, of course Web-facilitated education online. It was however only in comparatively recent times that distance education has been seen as a focus of research and other scholarly interest. In my own experience, when I succeeded Charles Wedemeyer in teaching America's first academic courses in distance education at the University of Wisconsin in the late 1970's there was no American book about pedagogic issues in distance education, no scholarly journal, no national conference. Indeed it was only in the middle of that decade of the 1970's that a terminology and first theorizing about the concept of distance education had been published. While teaching those courses in the mid 1980's I was part of a conversation that resulted in the decision to hold a conference about distance education in 1987, in Madison, Wisconsin. In speaking at the opening of that conference I said that for the *practice* of distance education to advance it was essential to establish the *academic study* of learning, teaching and its organization, and for that it was in turn, essential to have not only a regular academic conference but also a scholarly journal that would stimulate and report research. Encouraged by the response of attendees at that first conference, The American Journal of Distance Education (AJDE) was launched in early 1987. Since then

AJDE was published three times a year until 2001 and quarterly since 2001. Each issue has included typically four articles reporting the results of empirical research, and in recent years, due to an increase in the number of pages, as many as six articles, as well as a book review and an interview with a person of interest, usually someone involved in policy or administration. Each issue begins with an editorial written by me.

As I look back over nearly 100 such editorials, some patterns emerge, and as we reflect on the state of the field as represented in those editorials, it is clear how much progress has been made, what changes have occurred. What also jumps out from this review are some of the questions that seem to be perennial, questions that are still unresolved and many that are at least as critical in importance now as they were in the past, perhaps more so because of the more central role that distance education now plays in the lives of all of us, and the significance it holds for the health and future of our institutions.

I said above, 'as I look back at nearly 100 editorials", and I thank the organizers of the ICICTE Conference for giving me the stimulus to do this, because in 27 years I have never before looked to see if there are any patterns in what I have written always under pressure of deadlines, every three months during that period, and I have been quite surprised at some of the results of this analysis. I say 'analysis" but I should add right away that this has been a very subjective and from a methodological perspective, a very superficial and intuitive process. Time and circumstances did not allow me, for example, to indulge in counts of key words or other formal content analysis techniques. It would be wonderful if a student or other scholar was one day able to do that.

Before proceeding, I must emphasis that in only a minority of cases was the topic I wanted to classify very clearly and simply classifiable in one of these groups. An example of one such topic would be "Take time to design", (6:2, 1991) which is easily classified as a topic in Design, and another easy to classify would be "Learners come in different types (21:1, 2007). The majority of topics are not so specific however. A discussion of, for example, "Learner support" (17:3, 2003) leads to questions about investment by institutions in their support services, to questions about the proper role of instructors in identifying and perhaps treating student's problems, and thus to questions about the nature and extent of faculty training; these three among other potentially related questions. In very few cases is it possible to cleanly separate a focus on learners from questions about teaching, on design and not interaction, or on any of these without questions arising about institutional organizational structures and their policies and administration. Similarly, at one point I included a group of three editorials that I called "technology focused", but, as, for example, in the case of "Audio-conferencing in distance education (8:1, 1994)" the more important part of the editorial turns out to be the implications for teaching of using that particular technology, and so the article and the other two for the same reason, ended up in the group identified as "Teaching." However, in spite of such overlaps and difficulty in deciding on a focus in many cases, for the purpose of the exercise it was necessary to make a decision about what was the primary focus of each article, and so, with the above caveat in mind, what follows is the result of that procedure.

The broad pattern

The 96 topics, I decided, could be apportioned into 9 groups, one of which I discarded as not relevant for the purpose of this exercise. This is a group of what I describe as "general and guest editorials". General editorials, sometimes called 'editor's notes" are those in which I do not address a particular topic in the field, but merely introduce the contents of that particular issue of the journal and give an overview of the contents. This approach is probably the most common used by journal editors and in fact somebody once complained to me that it is what they expected in an editorial, and that I should subscribe more to that practice, advice I have not taken too seriously, but that I have followed from time to time when there has been no special topic calling for my attention. General editorials also include several in which I have commented on developments at the journal itself, such as when there have been changes in the editorial board or changes in editorial policy. One of these was when we decided to accept occasional international articles after many years of accepting only articles by authors in "the Americas". On two occasions, so far, I have introduced the special issues developed from the ICICTE conferences. In one issue we published a photograph of the editors of all the main distance education journals when they met at a convention, and another was dedicated to celebration of our 25th anniversary.

The other, related, group of editorials that I did not include in the analysis that follows are those that appeared on seven occasions when the journal was edited by a guest editor or editors. In such cases I usually introduce the guest editor(s) who then write the editorial that leads the theme of their particular issue. Such guest editors were Oxford and Florini (1990), Purdy and Wright (1992), Coldeway (1996), Dillon, (1998), Beaudoin, (1998), Kennepohl, (2009) and Clark (2013), and their subjects were, respectively (and here I oversimplify): research foundations, teaching, technology, computer based learning, leadership, teaching science, and K-12 online.

After removing the general and guest editorials, a total of 70 editorials remain for analysis and classification. The groups and frequency of editorials is as follows:

"Building the field"	12 editorials
Theory and history	11 editorials
Teaching	11 editorials
Learning and learners	8 editorials
Management and administration	6 editorials
Course design	4 editorials
Policy	13 editorials
Faculty	5 editorials

I should note that this distribution surprised me as it might you. I did not expect the main focus to be as heavily weighted on policy issues, -- although it should be repeated that the distinction between topics classified as policy issues and others, especially management, is often quite

blurred. Nevertheless what emerged from this exercise as the most interesting and unexpected insight into what is represented by this collection is the extent to which there have been two consistent and closely related themes that have provided the dominant focus over the quarter century of the Journal's existence. The first of these, most notable in the early years I have called "building the field". The second has been especially noticeable in most of the editorials about policy, which has been on explaining the need for a different allocation of resources, in institutions, nationally and globally in the direction of what is usually referred to as a systems approach. Of course improvements in course design and in teaching are advocated and discussed also, but even in these there always appears an urging on readers to understand and accept that improved teaching and learning is dependent on educators and institutions shifting in their practice and in the allocation of their resources from the craft approach of the classroom to what Otto Peters originally and perhaps unfortunately described as an industrial approach, characterized especially by division of labour between designers, technologists, instructors and others within institutions, as well as specialization among institutions within what we might refer to as the markets for education, both domestic and internationally.

PART A: Building the field

Here is a list of editorials that in retrospect appear to have been especially motivated by the goal of asserting that distance education can, and ought to be, a distinct field of research and study, and in more recent years of guiding the maturing of this field. This list is followed by brief comments and excerpts from each editorial.

Words of welcome and intent. (1:1, 1987)
Homogenization of instruction and the need for research. (1:2, 1987)
Telecommunications, internationalism, and distance education. (2:1, 1988)
The American Symposium on Research in Distance Education (2:3, 1988)
Report from the International Council (3:1, 1989)
Conferences and changes (3:3, 1989)
Towards an American Council (5:1, 1991)
An international issue (5:2, 1992)
The 1995 Research Distance Education Research Agenda (9.2, 1995)
The global distance education network (12:3, 1998)
The Handbook of Distance Education (17:2, 2003)
A Welcome Cross-Cultural Initiative (24:1, 2010)

1. Words of welcome and intent. (1:1, 1987)

The very first issue of the Journal contained, perhaps not unsurprisingly, a statement about the character of distance education, as well as a response to a jaundiced view about the subject of the new journal in an established journal of adult education (Adult and Continuing Education Today, XVII, No. 4.) The author of that article said there was a view that "old-fashioned face-to-face learning was passe, and the wave of the future was the airwave, which would deliver distance education on the TV screen," and added that "the TV screen has delivered very little education". In reply I argued that the future potential of distance education should not be judged by the standards of poor television broadcasting, and asserted also that our interest was not in any particular technology but was in "all communications media" that met: "the following criteria"

> "1. Programs are designed with the primary purpose of being educational; i.e., they set out to help people learn new knowledge, skills, and feelings;
>
> 2. This learning is with the full consent and active participation of the learners; and
>
> 3. The communication consists not only of information and ideas, but also guidance, advice, and assistance with the process of learning.
>
> Included within our universe of distance education, therefore, are programs on radio, audio and video tapes, computers, telephone and videoconferencing systems, and such new media-integrations as interactive videodisks, videotext systems, and shared screen telecommunications. Even more important than education through any of these single media is education through systems that employ a variety of the media mentioned here. There is no single super medium. Each communications medium has characteristics that make it especially suited for learners of particular learning styles, for particular fields of knowledge, and for each of the instructor's main activities. Staying with television, for example, it is the preferred medium for transmitting impressions of activities that are too expensive or otherwise unavailable to the learner's own direct experience, such as overseas field visits, microscopic observations, industrial processes, archive film, and interviews with politicians and researchers. Broadcasting is often the most desirable form of television, but sometimes different educational needs require the use of cassettes or disks instead. For distance education, the learners' needs determine the use of media, and the media must be suited to the educational message. Obviously, television is not the appropriate medium for, say, the educational process of learner self-evaluation. For this process, the distance educator is likely to call on print, perhaps placing a self-testing exercise within a printed study guide. While it is essential that adult and college educators become users, not opposers, of modern communications media, it is also highly desirable that they avoid single medium fixations." (Editorial 1:1 1987)

Thus even at this earliest stage, when the technology of interest was television, we began to argue for a pedagogical concept about communications technology, and also a systems approach to the use of the media, as well as to argue the merits of an integrated multi-media approach to teaching.

2. Homogenization of instruction and the need for research. (1:2, 1987)

Attacks on the new journal and the field it represented continued, especially during the first year, one at the conference on distance education at the University of Wisconsin being especially vitriolic. These were answered in a deliberately restrained editorial in the second issue that appealed to critics to join in putting their assertions about the dangers of distance education to the test of research, and continued:

> "It is incumbent on both those who design distance learning materials and those who use them in interface with learners to ensure that the criteria of good instruction are met. For academic courses, (and usually but not necessarily for courses in professional, vocational education) an important objective will be the development of the learners' abilities to criticize, question, and analyze the ideas of others, and to synthesize and create ideas of their own.
>
> If this does not occur, the solution is not a retreat to institutional parochialism. Few institutions will spend the million dollars that are required for distance education course of high quality, unless of course they can be assured of a market large enough to justify such expenditures; i.e., a national market. There is a place for cheaper, locally produced courses, but there is also a vitally important place for high-quality, expensively produced, nationally distributed courses. These excellently produced courses can only be successful, however, if there is equally excellent local instruction, and student support services. It is up to the local institution to help central organizations to design programs in ways that enhance learning and then to teach them excellently, according to the highest standards of instruction. There is also a critical, urgent need for research, developmental testing, and reporting of experiences that will contribute to the design and use of materials in ways that achieve the highest of academic standards." (editorial 1:2, 1987)

3 Telecommunications, internationalism, and distance education. (2:1, 1988)

This editorial described the many projects that used dedicated satellite video networks to deliver educational programs in the USA and some that were using such technology for training internationally, and advocated further attention to international programming in higher education.

4 The American Symposium on Research in Distance Education. (2:3, 1988)

The Journal's second year was marked by a breakthrough event that quite probably secured both the journal's future and perhaps the future of distance education itself and that was the first of what became a series of meetings of researchers and other academics at what was billed as a research symposium, organized by The American Center for Study of Distance Education at

Penn State University, (of which I was the founder and director). Several guest edited issues of the Journal subsequently were initiated at these research symposia as well as a series of monographs, and the first book on distance education to be published in the United States. In retrospect we can see what was an invaluable symbiosis between the Center's provision of a venue for providing encouragement to otherwise isolated individuals interested in the field, and stimulating exploratory face to face dialogue among these emerging scholars, and the Journal as an outlet for the more carefully crafted output resulting from those discussions, as individuals coalesced into an awareness of common ground, an emerging field of academic study and research.

In the editorial 2:3, 1099, three reasons for the meeting were described, of which the following was the first:

"Why should we be so concerned about research in distance education?

Our first concern springs from the almost unbelievable rate of expansion of distance education in North and South America, as throughout the world. Of course, expansion is very welcome. Distance education methods have been neglected for too many years for us to be other than excited about the current enthusiasm with which they are now being widely adopted. However the enthusiasm we are seeing is sometimes excessive. It is excessive when administrators and educators in corporations, colleges and universities, public school systems, health care institutions and the military, make decisions in favor of distance education, or what is usually a limited view of distance education, that are hurried and based on lack of information about our methods. Enthusiasm is misplaced when it reflects the view that distance education is easier or more simple than face-to-face teaching, while in fact it is pedagogically more complicated. The expectation that it can be introduced without long and sophisticated needs assessment, course design and instructional procedures, demonstrates ignorance about the time and money, the procedures and human skills that are required, and that must be organized, to achieve well designed learning programs and also good instruction of distant learners.

In their design and their instruction, there are already too many poor programs around. We should be concerned about ill-informed actions that might result in any more, since as a result of too many failures, our methods could get a bad name and we will then lose the opportunities of creating more good, effective, programs.

So the first reason for wanting to organize more research about distance education -- and the equally important task of disseminating what we already know --- is to enable more of the people who are involved in starting new systems to know what they need to do to develop good programs and better teaching for distant learners." (editorial 2:3, 1988)

5. Report from the International Council (3:1, 1989)

The aim of this editorial was to encourage participation in the exchange of research and knowledge internationally and also promote the International Council for Distance Education (ICDE), of which I was a vice-president. Since the founding of ICDE as the International Council for Correspondence Education in 1938 there had been a network of leaders in many countries, but the flow of information was limited by its dependence on international postal services as well as the high cost of attendance at the four-yearly conferences. The editorial introduced the prospect of widening international participation, mainly through the introduction of the latest technology. The editorial said:

> 'With the growth in membership and the widening of the range of interests in ICDE in recent years it has proven difficult for the leadership of ICDE, voluntary in nature and geographically dispersed, to keep in touch with and to consult sufficiently with the membership.
>
> …. I think this is a problem that emerging technology can help us solve, if we can organize ourselves to use it. The technology I refer to is computer conferencing and the organizational concept is that of regional associations. For some years there has been an Australian and South Pacific External Studies Association that is recognized as a regional association of ICDE, and Canada has its Canadian Association for Distance Education. There are plans for a Latin American association and similar regional associations are emerging in Asia and Africa. A meeting has been proposed later this year of leaders of distance education organizations in the U.S. to examine the possibilities for an American Council for Distance Education. I have undertaken two activities on behalf of the ICDE Executive that I think will contribute to the evolution of regional and national associations, and thereby make the ICDE more effective and more democratic. The first of these is to examine the possibility of setting up a computer network between the various regional associations, or, until they exist, between members of the Executive as representatives of those regions."

6 Conferences and changes. (3:3, 1989)

In the final editorial in 1989 I used the opportunity provided by my attendance at several conferences during the year to underscore the idea that distance education was already well established in some parts of the world, and was well on the way to becoming part of the American academic landscape also. Most important of these conferences for this purpose was that held in Cambridge, England, of which I was able to write:

> In Cambridge more than a hundred distance educators attended an international conference convened by the International Council for Distance Education and the British Open University, the third such conference organized by this partnership.

> Like the others it was well focused, and it was this clarity of objectives that in my view lead to the success of the program. The subject of this and previous Cambridge conferences was the important, but not too fashionable, topic of Student Support, and this year the program was constructed to provide a range of views and experiences on the theme of "Interaction and Independence". The names of the countries represented bear witness that the importance of Student Support is well understood universally. They were: Zambia, Britain, Canada, Sweden, Israel, West Germany, Turkey, Spain, Australia, Sierra Leone, Netherlands, Finland, Norway, Hong Kong, India, Eire, Colombia, Japan, Oman, and the United States"

As a founder of the conference that became an annual event at my alma mater, the University of Wisconsin, I was glad to promote that conference in this editorial, as well as use it to further bolster the message that academic and scholarly interest in distance education was on the rise in the USA as already suggested in the rest of the world. In this editorial I also took the opportunity of telling readers about the establishment of the Wedemeyer Award. It was a source of satisfaction and happiness for me that University of Wisconsin professor Charles Wedemeyer, the father of distance education and my own mentor, had lived to see several of his dreams about distance education come true, dreams that he had not been able to bring to reality in his own working life, but that I had been able to accomplish by building on his foundation work. The national conference was one of these, and a national scholarly journal was another. The award established in his name was to be presented at the annual conference to an outstanding author in the American Journal of Distance Education, and this has been done every two years until now, with the first award in 1989 going, very appropriately to one of America's founding theorists, Farhad Saba. This is what I wrote:

> "The Annual Conference on Teaching at a Distance has become the primary meeting of educators in the United States interested in and concerned about distance education. I say "educators concerned with distance education" rather than distance educators, because one of the intriguing features in the Wisconsin conference that I have observed over its life of five years is its attraction to educators from the mainstream of educational practice and thought. People who have not developed their careers primarily in distance education but who are open-minded about the phenomenon, seem to regard the Wisconsin conference as an opportunity to find out what is developing in distance education and also to contribute. Perhaps it is the organizers' consistent policy of offering conference themes that give Teaching priority over communications technology that makes this such a comfortable place of meeting between distance educators and educators with more traditional teaching backgrounds. A special pleasure for me at the Annual Conference on Teaching at a Distance is the opportunity to say a few words about Charles Wedemeyer, the father of the study of distance education, and to introduce the winner of the Wedemeyer Award for a notable article in The American Journal of Distance Education. This year's award was presented by Professor Wedemeyer

> to Dr. Fred Saba, whose acceptance speech is published in this issue of The Journal." (editorial 3:3, 1989)

7. Towards an American Council (5:1, 1991)

At the first, 1987, Wisconsin conference in my keynote speech I had said that a field of study and research, as distance education aspired to be, necessitated not only a national journal and a national conference but also a national organization. In an editorial in 1991, I reported on the founding of such a national organization:

> A decision, in principle, to form The American Council was taken by approximately 40 representatives of the universities, corporations, armed forces, schools and other government agencies at a meeting in Phoenix Arizona convened by the Los Alamos National Laboratory in June 1989. In conformity with its policy to encourage the establishment and development of regional councils having linkages to the International Council, ICDE has given a small grant to help in setting up the American Council. ACDET will have both individual members, and a Congress of organizations. It aims to provide a meeting ground for the many disparate elements that make up the fragmented field described above, and to influence the development of policy as well as practice and research in American distance education. It will also facilitate communication not only within the United States, but between the U.S. and overseas, and especially with ICDE members around the world and the Secretariat. "

Ultimately the American Council did not survive. It is mentioned here for its relevance to the theme of building the field. Eventually links between distance educators in the USA and overseas did develop, mainly as a result of the spread of social networking technologies, and not resulting from a regional organization. Several organizations have emerged to carry out some of the roles that had been envisaged for an American Council, but the field in USA is still one of "many disparate elements", and perhaps even more "fragmented" than ever.

8 An international issue 5:2

> The aim in this issue was to continue to refer to international examples as a means of boosting the concept of distance education in America and in this issue a departure was made from the policy that articles should be from "the Americas", although the opportunity was taken to restate the primary mission, to build and develop the field in "the Americas" (and given the relatively advanced condition of the field in Canada, that really meant the main focus was on the United States. Unfortunately the challenge of writing in English has continued to disenfranchise researchers and other potential authors in Central and South

America, although very occasionally articles of publishable quality have been received from Brazil. Here is an excerpt from this editorial:

> As part of our goal of achieving this recognition for American distance education we have, over the past five years, only very occasionally sacrificed space for an article about foreign distance education, and only then if it had close links with, or implications for distance education in North America. ….. this special issue is a departure from our established policy, and contains reports of developments and research OUTSIDE North America. …. I hope this special issue might encourage some readers to investigate foreign experience as they seek solutions to their own research and development questions. Perhaps other readers will, as they plan research, get in touch with authors who we publish here, as well as those whose work in other countries they reference. (Some of these authors can be contacted personally through DEOS, the Distance Education Online Symposium). With articles from, and about, distance education in Great Britain, Finland, China, Spain, Hong Kong, Germany, it is hoped this special issue will provide a good introduction to the universal experience of the distance education movement of which American distance education is an increasingly important part.

The reference here to DEOS, the Distance Education Online Symposium is a reminder that one of the significant contribution of The American Center for Study of Distance Education was the establishment of what was probably the world's first online network of scholars in this, or perhaps any, field, with computer based networks delivering short articles in a list serve and chat by e-mail among participants in as many as 70 countries, ---this before the invention of the first browsers and the World Wide Web.

9. The 1995 Research Distance Education Research Agenda (9.2, 1995)

In June 1995, The American Center for Study of Distance Education (ACSDE) hosted the Third National Symposium on Research in Distance Education. About a hundred participants were organized in a program aimed at setting an agenda for research, to identify priorities in each of four areas, namely course design, instruction, policy and administration, and learners and learning. The results of these discussions were summarized and reported in four small books published by the ACSDE. Looking back, perhaps the most interesting of these is the agenda proposed by the group that discussed policy and administration as listed in the editorial:

> "The following are the main areas that the group identified as having high priority for immediate research:
>
> 1. The legitimacy of distance education in the professional lives of faculty and administrators, and the attendant change processes necessary to provide distance education with "value added" for these professionals.

2. Finance and financial models. Illustrative questions include: "What is the efficiency of investment in distance education programs and how is it measured?"

3. Changing the faculty culture. What policies and organizational structures are best for encouraging faculty participation in distance education?

4. Access, equity and social impact of programs; especially as the "information highway" encourages a more market driven concept of distance education, what is the socio-economic impact of such programs, and what consumer protection policies may be called for?

5. Applying the results of research. What change models help determine how to successfully apply the information being revealed by research. What are the benefits, and what are the penalties, of applying this information?

6. Work-styles and lifestyles; how do these change with distance education and how do faculty and administrators respond to these changes?

7. Evaluation of administrative practices. In light of recent activity by politicians and questions raised by the public regarding the mission of higher education, research is needed on such questions as the relevance of current residency requirements and their impact on success of distance education programs."

10. The global distance education network (12:3, 1998)

12:3 was written during the time I was employed at the World Bank, where I made every effort to advance the cause of distance education, and among other projects initiated and led the development of an online data base of training and educational materials called the Global Distance Education Network.

"The Global Distance Education Network (GDENet) is a Web-accessible collection of documents about distance education, particularly distance education related to human development in economically underdeveloped societies. …. In Phase One of what is conceived as a three-year, three-phase development, the Global Distance Education Net team has conducted a year-long, global literature search. A set of approximately 300 key knowledge sources has been selected. These knowledge sources consist of articles and chapters by leading authorities on distance education, as well as examples of good practice, case studies documents, and knowledge tools gathered from the world's premier distance teaching organizations. These items have been organized in a knowledge taxonomy developed by myself, consisting of four domains: teaching-learning, management, technology, and policy. Each domain consists of twenty eight subsets, each a different area of knowledge. A particularly demanding activity has been obtaining permission from copyright owners for these intellectual goods to be placed on the Web.

> The World Bank team was assisted by the International Centre for Distance Learning at the British Open University in carrying out this task."

11. The Handbook of Distance Education (17:2 2003)

In my introduction to this paper (above), I mentioned that in the early 1980's there was no journal reporting American research in distance education, nor were there any books; in my own teaching the only books I could use were copies of books by European authors, Desmond Keegan, Greville Rumble, Borje Holmberg. The first American book was published in 1990, consisting of 32 chapters by contributors at the 1988 First Symposium on Research, (published incidentally by Pergamon Press based in Oxford, England). That book was of great value in establishing the field, and especially as a text that could be used in university courses like those I had started to teach. It was followed in the late 1990's by our first introductory textbook, designed for use in graduate level courses, written by myself with the collaboration of Greg Kearsley, (who dreamed up the idea of that introductory text-book in a conversation at one of the early Wisconsin national conferences.) During the first decade of the new century, a growing number of books appearing on the market as the popularity of the idea of distance education spread and as more institutions followed the example of the University of Wisconsin and Pennsylvania State University in setting up courses in their colleges and faculties of education. The 2003 Handbook of Distance Education consisted of more than 50 chapters, each focused on the task of reporting a specific area of research, organized into sections dealing with Theory and history, learning and learners, design, instruction, administration, policy, and internationalism. The editorial referred to here was intended to publicize the Handbook as a tool for college teachers in constructing a curriculum for teaching research and as a reference tool for students and others in identifying researchable questions and beginning the literature search during the research process itself. In the editorial I mentioned the Pergamon book, and said the following about the new Handbook:

> The Handbook was conceived as a follow-up to the first ever compendium of scholarly articles which is a book I edited that appeared in 1990. That book was called "Contemporary Issues in American Distance Education" published by Pergamon Press. It is now out of print, but I think it was a really important book since it presented, for the first time, in 32 chapters, ideas of all the people who were involved in scholarship and research in distance education. In fact I think that book was a significant contributor to establishment of the field of study as we now know it, because until then many of the people making up the field of scholarship did not themselves recognize what they had in common. The new Handbook is intended to meet several purposes, but one reason for producing it is to record the state-of-the-art, a decade or so on from that first collection of scholarly work.

10. A Welcome Cross-Cultural Initiative (24-1 2010)

This is the last of the set of editorials I have grouped as being consciously promoting the establishment of distance education as a field of study and its character. Here I extended my advocacy of internationalism to tackle the problem of linguistic divisions and it was the result of friendship and conversations with Martine Vidal, editor of the French journal Distances et Savoirs. Together we arranged for a special issue of the French journal that contained articles written by six authors of the Handbook of Distance Education, second edition, 2007, each of which was a summary of the American research in one of the Handbook's six sections, and each of which was the subject of a commentary by a leading French distance education scholar.

The rationale for the initiative, from the American perspective, was summed up as follows:

> "Working with Martine Vidal on this project has had the effect of underscoring the uncomfortable fact that we in the United States know almost nothing about the practice or research going on in France, or indeed in other countries, that use languages other than English. How ironic it is that, living in a time when there is so much talk about globalization and even working in a field that depends on communication technologies, we are able to get away with investing so little effort in developing knowledge across linguistic boundaries (and probably the same is true of other areas of education also). There are scholarly journals of distance education in Spanish, Portuguese,
>
> Chinese, Russian, French, and German, among others, and yet only one in a thousand American researchers has any idea of what is published in those journals. A similar situation exists with regard to reading books. To take an example close at hand, the textbook that I wrote with my colleague Dr. Kearsley has been translated into Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Portuguese, so clearly students who use those languages are learning about American distance education.
>
> By contrast, to the best of my knowledge, not one book about distance education published in any of those languages has ever been translated into English. What a shame it is that we fail to achieve the leverage of effort that could come from working more closely together, and from enjoying the different worldviews that such collaboration would give us, if this is simply due to language differences."

Closing that editorial I made a comment that is worth reproducing here as a conclusion to this section of my paper, since it refers to the evolution of the field of study:

> "As evidenced by the body of research being reported by the American authors, scholarship in the United States has grown from a minimal condition to become a robust, though still growing, field within the span of only a quarter century. We began that journey in the 1980s with some exploratory steps (one of which was, let it be noted, a symposium held near Caracas, Venezuela, to formulate an agenda for international research). In retrospect some of those first steps were remarkably bold ones, and some were historically premature perhaps. However, now, in the same way, in the special issue

> of Distances et Savoirs, we will make a new attempt at cross-cultural and cross-language collaboration."

So far, it must be admitted, there has been no noticeable improvement in this situation. As a practical step to open such dialogue, the American Journal has changed editorial policy so that articles originating outside "the Americas" may now be published, but very few that originate in a language other than English have been submitted so far.

PART B: A selection from themes

Since space in the Proceedings and available time at the conference do not allow for even a superficial introduction of every editorial in the remaining 7 groups, what I propose to do is to try to identify at least one from each group that will be representative of the topics and issues in that group. After summarizing that one item I will pick out what I think is a core question in that topic for you to consider and, if the opportunity arises, for discussion among participants. I will begin with the group that includes both Theory and History because the topics here flow most naturally from the "Building the field" items that have been introduced so far.

Theory and history

Editorials in this group

Distance education theory (5:3, 1991)
Lessons from history: (11:1, 1997)
Charles Wedemeyer. In memoriam (13:3 1999)
The Benton Harbour Plan (16:4, 2002)
Research worth publishing (18.3, 2004)
Innovation and change (18.4, 2004)
Meeting the theorists in Europe: (21:2, 2007)
Historical research. (22:2 2008)
Making History; Then and Now 23-1 (2009)
Heritage and Transformation (26-1, 2012)
Independent Learning, MOOCS and badges (27-2, 2013)

The articles in this group that focus on history are of two types, one that reports on one or more historical events such as the early K-12 distance education in The Benton Harbour Plan, and the other that expresses my concern about the neglect of historical research, and invites and encourages more interest in that methodology. The theory articles begin with one that summarizes the theory of transactional distance (5:3) an article that has historical significance, being a response in the early days of "building the field" to those who tried to dismiss distance education as a pedagogy. For my choice from this group, I will move forward two decades, to:

Meeting the theorists in Europe: (21:2, 2007)

In this editorial I reported a unique event that occurred in Barcelona at the 2006 EDEN research workshop:

> "This special session featured Otto Peters and Börje Holmberg as well as me. I will assume that *AJDE* readers do not need an introduction to these particular scholars—but if there are students or other newcomers who need it, I refer them to Keegan (1993), or chapter 9 in Moore and Kearsley (2005), or Black (2004). I should point out that this was the first time that Holmberg, Peters, and I have shared the same platform—and almost certainly it will not happen again, and so this meeting felt like a very special occasion, as indeed it was….
>
> In making my presentation of the theory of transactional distance I drew on the chapter prepared for the second edition of the *Handbook of Distance Education* (Moore 2007). ..
>
> As I explained in answer to a questioner—she in fact put it as a proposition with which I concurred—because the theory of transactional distance is such a broad pedagogical theory, its value now is in generating hypotheses testing some of the many variables that constitute course structures, dialogue between teachers and learners, and the student's propensity to exercise control of the learning process. Fortunately, some of these variables have been investigated in doctoral and other studies, so the model becomes increasingly robust and trustworthy, and it is these studies as well as the underlying theory that potential researchers must review as part of the most creative research act—which is the determination of the new researchable question. It is long past the time educational research should have adopted this scientific approach of building on what has gone before, as contrasted to the haphazard "wouldn't it be nice to know …" approach that is still far too prevalent in all educational research, including distance education. …..
>
> As editor of this journal, I have to return many manuscripts because their authors have not been able to connect their data and ideas to previous research. Usually I can see that they have based their literature review on online searches in which they have entrusted themselves to the use of key words like "e-learning". This leaves the researcher with no understanding of how (if at all) their data fits into the wider and deeper frameworks of knowledge about distance education that exist beyond the simplistic conceptualizations derived from (if "e-learning" is the keyword) current applications of Internet communications technology. Over and over again, I see new terminology dressing up old questions that should not have taken the researcher's time and energy if the researcher had not been blinkered by the terminology, and known more of what was already known in the broader literature—that is, the theory."

For discussion: Can there be research without theory? What theory do you find helpful in guiding your research? What are its limitations?

Teaching

Editorials in this group:

Presentation and participation. (2:2, 1987)
Three types of interaction. (3:2, 1988)
Audio-conferencing in distance education. (8:1, 1994)
The three C's of site coordination (9:1, 1995)
Monitoring and evaluation (13:2, 1999)
Constructivists: don't blame the tools: (18:2, 2004)
Dialog. (20:3, 2006)
Teamwork. (21:3, 2007)
Web 2.0: does it really matter? (21:4, 2007)
Continuing thoughts on social networking (22:3, 2008)
Musing on tweets (24:4, 2010)

An impression of the evolution of technology in distance education is hinted at in a glance at the titles in this group, with the shift from audio-conferencing in 1994 to Web 2.0 in 2007 and after. Regardless of technology however, several themes about teaching are consistent. One is an emphasis on the importance of students' participating in the learning process – of course, something that has been much easier to organize since the invention of the Web. Getting the balance right between content presentation (i.e. structure) and student participation and interaction (dialogue) remains a core challenge, regardless of technology. At times in the past it has been necessary to advocate more attention to dialogue and participation. Today the balance sometimes swings in the other direction. Editorials in this group consistently maintain the emphasis on student participation, interaction and dialogue between students and with their instructor. However today, when I visit institutions to review their programs, I am impressed by the big steps made in this direction and what stands out as more seriously lagging in development and therefore is the area selected for discussion in this group is:

Monitoring and evaluation (13:2, 1999)

Here is what I wrote in 1999:

> Effective monitoring requires a network of indicators that pick up data about learner performance and instructor performance; this must be done frequently and routinely, and the data has to be relayed with similar routine to a control center where it can be evaluated.
>
> Evaluation in this context is the process of analyzing the feedback data gathered by the monitoring system, reviewing it and making decisions about how well the distance education system and its various parts are operating, as learners,

> instructors, designers, administrators and communication resources work together to accomplish short term and long term goals. Being an educational system, the most important of these goals are learning outcomes, -- though other goals are legitimate and may be monitored and evaluated, for example maintaining cost-effectiveness or rectifying demographic imbalances in the student population.
>
> …… More specifically, if a student fails to complete an assignment while other students evaluated by the same instructor do so, the instructor is alerted to identify and rectify the problem experienced by the particular student. However, if all or many students of the same instructor have difficulty with an assignment, and students of other instructors do not, evaluators must ascertain what circumstances cause difficulty for that particular group of students. (Perhaps the instructor is mis-interpreting evaluation criteria; perhaps the group of students did not receive a package of learning materials; perhaps an incorrect interpretation was given at a study site tutorial meeting.) At a more general level still, if all the students in a region fail to complete the assignment and those in others do it successfully, there is a suggestion of a regional breakdown; (perhaps internet connections failed, or a television broadcast that reached other regions was not received in the region in question; perhaps assignment packages arrived late and assignments were rushed, etc. or perhaps a briefing and training session was missed in that particular region.) Finally evaluators have to deal with the situation in which large numbers of students across the whole system perform badly on an assignment; among possible causes the administration then has to investigate is whether the teaching material was inappropriate, or if the objective was unattainable, or if the assignment itself was an ineffective measure of the objective.

Discussion: Is the teaching in your institution evaluated by student performance or only opinion? Is data on performance gathered systematically or randomly? Is learning evaluated by measurable and observable performance? Are instructors held accountable for successful performance and if so how?

Course design

Editorials in this group

Take time to design (6:2, 1992)
Study guide: foundation of the course. (11:2, 1997)
Standards and learning objects (15:3, 2001)
What students really want: (22-1, 2008)

In this group, the topic of Study Guide is the most important and I considered it for selection as my choice for focus in the group; my reason for not doing so was the recognition that

most of the practices recommended in the editorial in 1997 now seem commonplace, and have even been commercialized in systems like Blackboard. Most newcomers to teaching online have these expectations of good practiced delivered in an online menu, and for most teachers now they are no longer exceptional. In "what students really want" I pointed out to readers the danger of over-emphasising the use of social networks to facilitate interaction at the expense of providing adequate structure of content and guidance, and in "standards and learning objects" I advocate the economies and improved quality that should accompany greater standardization.

Of this group of editorials, my selection for more discussion is the first, written in 1992:

'Take time to design". 6:2 (1992)

Here is an excerpt from that editorial:

> In some of my recent consulting work, I have found almost without exception that decision makers and advisers are making an almost catastrophic error in underestimating how much time and money are required to ensure the benefits of good distance education programs. ….
>
> McDonnell Douglas Astronautics Company estimates that one hour of student "contact time" using printed materials requires, for the best quality, some 274 hours of design. Among the conditions leading to this substantial time investment, McDonnell Douglas includes the need for numerous revisions when working with "state of the art" content, substantial research in the subject to be delivered, high quality graphic design, and substantial validation of content. A second significant source is the United States Office of Personnel Management. Its estimate of the production time needed for each hour of presentation of materials designed as "Self-contained for hand off to other instructors" is between fifty hours and 100 hours. This can be compared with the estimates of Charles Jackson of the U.S. Army, who estimates 100 hours of design for each hour of instruction by print, 200 for video tape, and 300 for computer-based training. In major distance teaching institutions, i.e., those that produce programs of good quality, I estimate that courses that are based on print and recorded audio and video take between fifty and 100 hours of design per hour of instruction.
>
> .. these estimates are extremely imprecise, and the variability is explained in part by the question of the final quality of the product. I believe they are worth quoting, however, because I meet many decision makers in educational and other institutions who are contemplating a distance education strategy with absolutely no recognition of the fact that it can take a team of five to ten people a full year to design the equivalent of a one semester three hour course. … the consequence is that an under-resourced design team is desperately overworked; materials are produced that are good under the circumstances, but much below what is possible; and the market is flooded with mediocre materials that threaten to undermine confidence in the distance education approach. It is true that, given enough resources, distance education can provide better quality education at lower average cost to

more students than is possible in conventional education. The big condition, however, is that persons with expertise in design and delivery must be found, and the time must be given them to perform their functions to the full.

Discussion:

"You can have it good, cheap or quick but only two of these". Do you agree". Has the world changed so much since 1992 that we can now design an hour of quality instruction with an hour of design as in many institutions? What is your experience?

Learning and learners

Editorials in this group

Autonomy and interdependence. (8:2, 1994)
First thoughts on meta-skills (16:1, 2002)
What does research say about using computer mediated communication? (16:2, 2002)
Learner support. (17:3, 2003)
Disabilities and other Learner Characteristics (18:1, 2004)
Cheating (19.1, 2005)
Questions of culture (20.1, 2006)
Learners come in different types (21:1, 2007)

This group of editorials focused in on learner characteristics, most obviously personality characteristics, cognitive skills, cultural differences and disabilities. It also includes the following statement about the importance of student support services:

Learner support (17:3, 2003)

"I suggest that the learner support problems that are presented are of three types. First are what I might call the student generated problems - usually arising from the adult life style - that prevent the student behaving according to the expectations or requirements of the course as it was designed. The most common case is inability to produce an assignment by the due date as a result of illness or employment duties or family crisis, but also of this type of problem I would include difficulty in meeting financial obligations and academic difficulty arising from mal-placement in a course. Second are problems arising from malfunctions in the administrative system, such as the computer generated letter that demands tuition that has already been paid, or failure of the materials distribution system to deliver a book on time. Third are problems that I will

define as emotional, that are difficult to recognize because the student invariably presents the problem as an instrumental one, i.e. as one of the two types defined above. The student is not likely to explain, or perhaps even to recognize, that insecurity in the student role, defensiveness against the kinds of personal change that usually accompanies the learning, a need for reassurance, a need for dependence on authority…..

It is to treat these problems, problems that will not affect everyone -- but may strike anyone -- that is the mission of a learner support system. The highest priority should be given to informing every student that an easily contactable learner support specialist is available. …. Usually this first-contact person will be able to refer with a note to an administrative department, or perhaps to an instructor, or to a specialist counselor who can make a return call and take over the case. … In a good learner support system there should also be provision, -- perhaps in the person of contracted specialists -- even if only on a part-time, on-call basis for support for certain "at-risk" groups. These are groups for whom identifiable conditions can be expected to cause stress beyond that experienced by the general population. Examples include students with visual or auditory or other disabilities, inmates of correctional institutions, persons with diagnosed learning disabilities or inadequate study skills, members of armed forces. Other specialists might also provide advice regarding career development, particularly as it is related to the selection of courses within the educational program.

I should add that there is a place for support services that are somewhat more pro-active rather than reactive, which is how I have portrayed them above. Such services as pre-admission advising, advising on financial aid and registration, providing library services, helping with credit transfer and giving technical support.

I realize there will be readers who might argue that these and other learner support functions should be provided by the instructor, but that is not my view. I maintain that the instructor has more than enough to do in attending to the academic progress of each student and the dynamics of the virtual learning community and that the provision of learner support with high quality is a specialty that requires the attention of individuals special personal characteristics as well as special training. Of course the learner support specialist will work in close cooperation with instructors as well as other members of the teaching team."

Discussion: How good are your learner support services? Can you share examples of learner support success, and failure?

Management and administration

Editorials in this group:

Administrative barriers to adoption of distance education. (8:3, 1994)
Tips for the manager setting up a distance education program. (10:1, 1996)
Media options (10:3, 1996)
Learning the necessary principles. (16:3, 2002)
Blended Learning (19.3, 2005)
Stages of Organizational Capability (20:4, 2006)

My choice to represent this group is:

Tips for the manager setting up a distance education program (10:1, 1996)

In this I wrote:

> "In a recent meeting I was asked, 'to give some tips and tricks, and point out some traps' for managers thinking about setting up a distance education program ….
>
> Tip One: Ensure support of top management. … The support of top management does not guarantee a successful distance education program, but NOT having the full, on-going and open support of management is a guarantee you will NOT be completely successful. Before proceeding you will have to assess how much support you have, and then plan the type and extent of your distance education program accordingly.
>
> … Tip Two: Be conservative. Identify one content or subject area, one where you can expect support from the trainers involved, and concentrate on developing a distance education approach in that one area. Success there will demonstrate the effectiveness of the distance education method. It will demonstrate the non-threatening nature of the changes involved. The best advocates of the new approach will be the trainers and trainees involved in it. They will speak from experience. If it is done well, other trainers will begin to ask to be involved.
>
> Tip Three: Take time to design. … Probably the most common cause of failure is impatience on the part of management as well as instructors to get into the implementation phase of the program, anxious to see the students and trainees at work before a proper foundation of course materials and strategies has been laid. … time spent in designing and producing good quality materials, planning teaching strategies, and training trainers, will increase the chances of success.
>
> Tip Four: Chose communications media carefully. …. Since learning depends on both receiving new information and processing it, there has to be both presentation of information and interaction with it. Some media are better suited for the presentation role, others for interaction. Therefore media must be "mixed and matched" to meet the needs for communicating particular content, to particular learners, in particular locations, and using different teaching processes.

Tip Five: Learner support is as important as good design …. One purpose of the media selection process is to identify those educational functions that can be delivered better by technology than by people, and thus release people to do those things that people do better than technology. This usually means providing support to individual learners, and groups of learners, as they interact with subject matter delivered by technology. This role of learning facilitator is vitally important, and the organization should be very systematic in setting up its learner support network, training personnel for this function, monitoring them, and rewarding them.

In summary, here are my five tips for managers who are thinking about distance education:

1. Do all you can to obtain support from your top managment.
2. Focus on specific projects and do them superbly.
3. Take time and resources to plan thoroughly and design well.
4. Select media tools according to the needs of the program
5. Select, train, monitor and reward learner support personnel.

Discussion. Have you been involved in setting up a new distance education program? Are these 'tips' still relevant today? Can you add any others?

Policy

Editorials in this group

A market-driven distance education system. (4:2, 1990)
Is teaching like flying? A total systems view of distance education (7:1, 1993)
Regulators, providers, and vendors: the fingers in the dyke. (7:2, 1993)
Free trade in higher education. (7:3, 1993)
The death of distance (9:3, 1995)
Quality in distance education; four cases (11:3, 1997)
Is teaching like retailing? (13:1, 1999)
Welcome to the for-profit providers - with some concerns (14:2, 2000)
Network Systems: the emerging organizational paradigm (17:1, 2003)
Emerging models of collaboration for national and international distance education (17:4, 2003)
Globalization (19.4, 2005)
Diploma mills (23:4, 2009)
Corporate and Professional Continuing Education (25-3, 2011)

After I organized the 70 editorials into topic groups, I was quite surprised to discover that the single largest group was this one, on Policy. Perhaps I should not be so surprised at this because it is a reflection of an opinion I have expressed very frequently, -- that the major problems in

distance education are not any that can be posed in terms of improving technologies, or even pedagogy because we know a lot already about how to teach better using technology. The big problems arise from the difficulties in changing our educational institutions so that resources can be more effectively allocated to the different pedagogy, and changing resource allocation nationally as well as, eventually internationally. Such changes require changes in educational policies and my awareness of this is reflected in this result, showing 13 editorials that address policy questions. Of course it would be quite valid to list all these policy editorials as relevant to "building the field" because everyone is an advocacy statement, perhaps the privilege of editorializing, --and the advocacy is in each case on behalf of further development in the field. This takes several directions, but after setting aside some that address specific topics such as issues about for-profit providers, regulators and standards, diploma mills and corporate and professional continuing education, globalization and international collaboration – two threads seem to link most discussions about policy.

One of these is my consistent attempt to differentiate the application of technology in classroom from its use in distance education, both in the form practiced by dual mode institutions on the one hand and single mode institutions especially open universities on the other and then to press the advantages to be accrued by the former in adopting more of the systems methods of the latter. A systems approach is a core concept in my view of distance education, the result of many influences, not the least of which was the influence of Charles Wedemeyer. The editorial that most clearly presented this case for the systems approach, and the one most widely cited in the literature was: "Is teaching like flying? A total systems view of distance education" (7:1, 1993). This argument for a systems approach also features largely in "Quality in distance education; four cases (11:3, 1997) and also in "Is teaching like retailing? (13:1, 1999)

The second pervasive theme, emerging in the second half of our history, is advocacy for a new, kind of delivery system, building on the history of dual and single mode institution, that I sometimes called a Virtual System, sometimes a network. In retrospect this can be spotted in some of the very early editorials, when it was presented as a student centered as contrasted to institution-centered system. The use of network terminology was reinforced by my experience in setting up such a system in Brazil, the two terms not being mutually exclusive.

> The editorials that carry this view were:
>
> A market-driven distance education system. (4:2, 1990)
> Is teaching like flying? A total systems view of distance education (7:1, 1993)
> Free trade in higher education. (7:3, 1993)
> The death of distance (9:3, 1995)
> Network Systems: the emerging organizational paradigm (17:1, 2003)

In the earliest of these openly policy-oriented editorials, in 1990 (4:2), I reported on a think-tank meeting I had attended at the Los Alamos National Laboratory where I said there was:

> " consensus that fresh thinking is required about the basic infrastructure of education and training as well as the technologies used"

and one idea was for “a market driven distance education system”. What was meant by market driven here was not that education should become commercialized but that programs should be developed in response to consumer (i.e. learner) needs and demand. In those pre-Web days our imagination as to how learner demand might be identified was limited. We speculated that

> “The interface of such a system is located in such public places as libraries and community centers, as well as being accessible from home computers by modem. Some of the resources currently spent on content expertise (teachers of history, mathematics, professors of economics, human resource trainers etc.) are diverted to provide a cadre of readily available expert helpers in accessing and interpreting the data base. In response to any learner's inquiry the system provides information in pyramidal fashion, starting with details of courses that can be accessed locally, perhaps in a distance or face-to-face mode, then if the user desires, information about state and nationally or internationally produced courses. The content of courses offered locally is likely to be more specific to the particular locality, while courses offered nationally are likely to be more generic. It is likely that local and national providers would team up to give the benefits of both large scale production and local learner support. The system gives feedback to course producers to report unmet demand, which in turn brings new courses into the market.”

This theme, advocating a new, institution-less but collaborative kind of program development and delivery was developed further in 1993, in:

Free trade in higher education (7:3, 1993).

This editorial was written after my attendance at a meeting of university and governmental officials from Mexico, Canada and the United States, held in Vancouver at the time of the establishment of a North American Free Trade Area (NAFTA). The purpose was to discuss the future of higher education in a North American community and among the outcomes was:

> “ the development of an implementation plan for a North American University (NAU) to operate as a consortium to broker access to recognized graduate distance education courses offered by different institutions, and develop a mechanism for awarding graduate degrees for such composite programs."

This idea never came to fruition, but I mention this editorial here because in it I took the opportunity of further advocating an approach to higher education that had programs no longer anchored exclusively in a specific institution, and the idea of students being able to shop around to compile portfolios of learning through their own choice of provider. The idea which seemed far-fetched at the time seems to come closer to reality with the passing of years, and most recently with the emergence of such opportunities through Massive Open Online Courses.

Here is what I wrote:

> "The idea of university as network is the emerging concept of higher education. It is the next generation of higher education, and the next generation, the third generation, of distance education."

After describing first generation, dual-mode universities and second generation, open universities, I continued:

> "With the communications technologies of the 1990's, the development of the electronic highways to our homes and workplaces … a third type of distance education organization, the Virtual University is now technically viable. Such an organization COULD make instructors from ANYWHERE available to students anywhere, and make courses prepared by ANY INSTITUTION available to students anywhere. A student's faculty need no longer be limited to those who assemble in any place any more than a teacher's students have to assemble in a place. Students can learn where-ever they are located, from instructional resources where-ever they are located. No student need take instruction from exactly the same teacher as any other; teachers can be accessed from any state, any country at any time, in any combination of teachers; information resources can be accessed from any state, country and at any time and in any combination. Advice and guidance can be accessed universally."

The editorial continued to describe what might at that time have been the first international virtual class in which I taught a total of 85 people in eleven cities in six countries and I then continued:

> …. "So here is one example of an international virtual classroom, and it must be fully recognized, it is a very crude and primitive international classroom. What is needed to improve on this, and what is needed to move from the simple virtual classroom to the virtual university? Obviously more than can be discussed here, but in general what is needed is an organizational structure that reaches across international boundaries and links resources and institutions and individuals within participating countries. There is need for inventing a structure that informs students of the learning resources that are available; that recruits and supports instructors in their designing of courses, and organizes, controls, and monitors instruction.
>
> There is no organization that links the efforts of one virtual classroom with others to provide a full curriculum. Working in the context of a bricks and mortar university, the resources available to one professor are severely limited; there is no organization that provides the resources needed to design and deliver such instruction with better quality on a much larger scale in a Total Systems approach.

Discussion: What progress do you think has been made in developing policies in institutions and in countries you know, that support radical improvements in the cost-effectiveness and quality of distance education?

Faculty issues

Editorials in this group

A letter from Crystalline Lake (6:1, 1992)
Technology-driven change: where does it leave the faculty? (14:1, 2000)
Is distance teaching more work or less? (14:3, 2000)
Surviving as a distance teacher (15:2, 2001)
Faculty professional development: (20:2, 2006)

In this small group of editorials I focused primarily on the teacher as compared to the teaching process, dealt with earlier. In the research as reported in the Journal there have been several studies about faculty concerns regarding their status in new technology based systems, especially their workload, but most importantly their changing roles. This is represented in the following:

Technology-driven change: where does it leave the faculty? 14:1(2000)

" … I received a paper from Prof. Jack Simmons of Savannah State University that gave an insightful analysis of the changes and challenges facing the role of faculty. This was exactly when at my own university we were preparing to launch our online program, with my own courses among the first, in our World Campus, and so I asked:

… what will be the impact of teaching these online courses on our other responsibilities, particularly on what we can offer in our residential program, and on our research and service, when all the faculty are teaching online? Will the university hire a considerable number of new professors to undertake the residential teaching, or will this be done by adjunct professors? Will the distance learning courses replace the residential? What will be the effect on staffing if the online courses are modestly successful, or if they are very successful? Will we appoint seven assistant instructors in the first case, or multiples of seven in the second? Where will we find these instructors in a small college town? Will we hire people "at a distance" with whom we do not interact face-to-face? What will be their terms of service? How will they participate in faculty governance?

…. To describe what he sees as the "real danger" posed by distance learning, Prof. Simmons cites faculty roles at the British Open University (BOU), the University of Phoenix, the University of North Florida, Florida Gulf Coast University and the University System of Georgia. He refers to speeches by the BOU's Sir John Daniel to show that distance education, in Simmons's words, "is not merely a tool to reach non-traditional students. Distance learning is fundamentally a financial tool: a means by which universities may reduce their costs while increasing their enrollments." Costs are reduced because "having developed the course, the faculty developer need no longer be present" and income is increased because "online courses are not physically limited to the size of a lecture hall. Hence, thousands of students may simultaneously enroll in a single course." It is the "high tech approaches to education [that]

improve efficiency in the simplest manner. By replacing labor with technology, they reduce the labor force."

This group of editorials was placed after the Policy group because the faculty issue is one part, and a very significant part, of the policy problem that faces institutions as they try to develop new systems.

Discussion: Were these worries about changes in faculty roles justified? Do you see other changes occurring? Have students and taxpayers benefited from changes past, or potential in the future?