

The Train has Left the Building

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This documentary explores current themes in online education, and fits the Carnegie Academy for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning “what is” question classification.

- Carnegie Academy for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning information program booklet, 1999

Interviews and Topics

Interviews include educators, administrators, online students, business leaders, experts, and innovators in distance learning education. Discussing -

- Accessibility
- Best teaching practices
- Demographics
- Engagement
- Instructional technology
- accountability
- Student connection, networks, and nodes
- Tips for online learning success
- Trends
- Criticism
- Fear
- Future predictions
- Student

“I think the growth is going to be in the virtual space. That’s pretty straightforward at this point and there are a lot of good reasons for that. First of all I think the effectiveness of the online learning environment has surprised a lot of people. There is certainly more that we need to learn about...people who have done their primary degrees...or high school program... through online learning. There’s much more to learn about how successful they are, but at this point there don’t seem to be a lot of red flags about the effectiveness...Developing learning in cyber space is a lot more cost effective than building bricks and mortar...It’s also a lot more versatile and scalable. You can do more with it. You can build it up more quickly, and you can reach more people where they are. So those are all good reasons that the growth is going to be in the virtual area.”
Peter Nordgren, Professor Emeritus
UW-Superior former Associate Dean for Distance Learning



“I think its beneficial for students that can’t do traditional face to face classes like parents that are working fulltime and then have their kiddos at night. They literally can’t fit a time in their schedule to have a dedicated class time for three hours a week. So I think that’s really valuable and I think it is more valuable too for...adult learners that really would benefit more from being able to self-pace it because there are some things they might know more about and need to spend less time on but in a traditional face to face classroom they don’t have a choice but to sit through all the lectures even though they might not necessarily need it. So I think it allows a little bit more personalization by the students to be able to say this is what I really want to focus on.”
Eleni Pinnow, Associate Professor of Psychology
UW-Superior Human Behavior, Justice and Diversity



“I am not convinced that mediated education in and of itself engages students. I believe that there is great opportunity to engage students through mediated education, but it takes the mediator. For me if you try to take the human element out of education I am not sure what you have left - not the kind of education I really want to be involved with. So the mediation, the midpoint between instructor and student or institution and student or what ever we might be talking about along those lines, the mediation is a tool that allows the connection to happen between the different parties. But, it is the people on either end of the connection that I would be most interested in.”
Barry Dahl, Senior Community Manager
Brightspace (formerly Desire2Learn)

“Most of the connectivist MOOC’s... really rely on network connections...You can’t particularly succeed in these courses unless you are willing to network with others. And that’s the reality of learning in the future - is that it’s not going to be a relationship always singly with the teacher. I think the teacher plays an important role but teachers should also now not only facilitate the content, but help to facilitate connections for others.”
Dr. Alec Couros, professor of educational technology and media and the Coordinator of Information and Communications Technology at the Faculty of Education, University of Regina



Synopsis

It is no longer a question of will the internet and mobile technology change education, but rather what does the future hold?

The mediated education landscape is evolving rapidly, and so is the teacher’s role online and on the ground.

MOOCS, flipped classrooms, YouTube videos, wiki’s, social networking, and course management systems are a few of the tools that are rapidly pushing boundaries, affecting student-teacher interaction, teaching, and learning.

Funding

2013 UW-Superior Jumpstart Grant
Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning

2014 UW-Superior
Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Program



“I found it was difficult to know exactly what students were struggling with...I was always worried about knowing if they were doing their own work, and trying to determine the best way I could explain myself in text because at that time I didn’t use video...It was a hybrid meeting so we made sure that we met with them in person as well, but it was a while back and I would definitely do it different now. I would do a lot more video and Pencasts so that I could explain better on my end. I would use and take advantage of chat services so that I could get the feedback I need.”
Heather Kahler, Senior Lecturer
UW-Superior Math and Computer Science

Full Disclosure

John Grierson, considered the father of British and Canadian documentary filmmaking, defined documentary as “the creative treatment of actuality.”

With that definition in mind it is important to recognize that all those interviewed and the director/producer for this documentary, are passionate about distance learning, and as such are also biased.

As online educators, students, business people, and administrators we all have ‘skin in the game’ and benefit from online education availability and success.