

Why did I begin this class titled "Applications of Distance Education" with a 50 year old motion picture?

This class began with a 50 year old motion picture to demonstrate how the foundation of distance education is still applicable today. The medium through which it is delivered has evolved from “teaching machines” to computers and will continue to evolve as technology continues to advance. The videos demonstrate the basic learning principles and how it is used with “teaching machines” to help learners gain information quickly and how they can learn at their own pace. This is similar to today’s learning principles and technologies used in distance education. Another similarity are the implications of implementing the use of new technologies for learning.

Who is BF Skinner and why is he important to the ITDE field?

BF Skinner was a psychologist who made an important contribution to the ITDE field with the concept and creation of the teaching machine. He is also important to the ITDE field for his rich study of operant behavior which educates us all on the importance feedback and reinforcement both positive and negative. Skinner, through his research and the teaching machine show instructional designers and educators the value and impact effective instruction and feedback on quizzes have on learners’ performance. His research and methods of the teaching machine are seen today in educational training created with modern technologies and programs such as Adobe Captivate and Adobe Presenter.

Why did the teaching machines movement fail? Or did it? Is this movement relevant to ITDE today?

Even though the field of ITDE uses some of the teaching methods created for the teaching machine, the actual teaching machine movement failed due to lack of support from publishers due to cost and lack of material becoming obsolete too quickly. The teaching machine addressed the need for instruction, it provided learners with small successes, built confidence, and helped learners by allowing them to work at their level and pace. The teaching machine is relevant to ITDE today because its teaching methods are seen today in educational training and lessons created with modern technologies and programs such as Adobe Captivate and Adobe Presenter that allow learner to go at their own pace, provide hints, and immediate feedback after each response in order to ensure mastery of the lesson.

Review Everett Rogers' chapter on Diffusion of Innovations and the plans for distance education in Iowa, Kentucky and Mississippi (3 Statewide Approaches) and the South Dakota approach (Governor Janklow's Capital City Conclave). Which of the four states, if any, seem to be using Rogers' theory to guide the diffusion of distance education in their state? Do you think Rogers' work has relevance to the growth of distance education generally, why or why not?

In some ways I think all four states seem to be using some aspects of Roger's theory to guide the diffusion of distance education. Innovation, communication channels, time, and social systems are apparent in all plans. Each state has a different approach to how they will expand their networks and infrastructure, but each have a communication channel to implement the innovation of distance education to their social systems. Roger's diffusion plan has relevance to distance education as technology continues to grow, evolve, and expand while more cities and states find a need to be connected and supported. Based on each state's needs and current infrastructure the diffusion process is seen in the choice of communication channel selected. The star school project allows each state to evaluate their needs and strategize a way to bring innovation and education together for their people. Through time and awareness this project will be fully adopted with the help of the infrastructure the government has helped them place in each state.

You have two (three) artifacts of the effort to diffuse distance education in South Dakota -- a video of the Governor's Conclave on Distance Education and an evaluation report that discusses the consequences of a federally funded star schools program grant to South Dakota that was to assist in the spread of distance education in South Dakota. Based on your review of these two artifacts, was the governor's vision for distance education accomplished? Why or why not, do you surmise?

I think the governor's vision for distance education is being accomplished due to the efforts and actions taken to achieve his vision. Having the vision of the Digital Dakota Network and finding the most efficient way to implement it was critical. With the implementation of networks to support distance education in every area of the state, supports the governor's vision for the people. Giving the people of South Dakota access to the distance education and planning the future of learning, lays the foundation for success and enhanced learning. Understanding this is a long term process and the need for a plan to permanently raise the level of education the governor breaks his initiative into three areas: starting with the children, empowering the workforce, and promoting economic development. Learning is the center of this initiative that reaches all areas of South Dakota. With the education level rising and the accessibility becoming easier, the people and the economy of South Dakota can only go up.

Module 3 Question 1 - Increasingly, it is being claimed that distance delivered courses are becoming mainstream in education - that distance education is not a fringe activity, but a regularly practiced way of offering education to learners. Assume this is true, and respond to this -- Are students and teachers adequately prepared to learn and teach outside the traditional face to face classroom? Why or why not?

Based on my experience as a student in a distance education course and working in higher education, I think there are very few teachers and students that are currently adequately prepared to learn and teach outside the traditional face to face classroom. As distance education grows and becomes a part of everyday education, teachers and students will eventually become prepared through experience. Even though there are currently several resources, they are not being fully used by most educators or learners. A great example is how extensive Blackboard is and even in this current program (ITDE), most teachers do not use it to its capability. Some teachers try and use every feature, which can be overwhelming, and others barely use any features. Blackboard has several resources to educate both students and staff on how to best use it and there are best practices readily available on the web, but unfortunately they are not utilized as much as they should be. Based on how implementation and how long it took for distance education to be accepted in my current organization, I think it will take about five to ten years before most educators and learners are adequately prepared.

Hi Adam,

I agree with you in that teachers are more likely to be prepared for distance education compared to the past, but to what is currently available and the need that is out there, I think most teachers have a long way to go. With technology being so robust and there being so many different tools available, I don't think most educators have thought about the difference in teaching and/or learning at a distance. Most try to use the same face to face approach and as you said, that is difficult to recreate and at times not even appropriate depending on the course. As a learner myself, I grew up with traditional face to face education and now doing my masters mostly at a distance, I can say most educators are not adequately prepared. In my experience, I've had teachers who fully embraced the distance education experience and consistently contact students, provide feedback in a timely manner, create an interesting online experience; while others just gave a list of items to complete without any contact or feedback until the end of the course. Keep in mind this was for a distance education program. Imagine other educators who are just starting to utilize distance education? In the end I think educating our learners and educators along with experience will make them adequately prepared.

-Sheila

Module 3 Question 2 - Many think that the curriculum for distance delivered courses needs to be organized differently than that of traditional courses. Equivalency theory implies that different students should have different learning experiences to reach the same instructional outcomes. Based on your knowledge as an ITDE student, how do you feel distance delivered courses should be organized, and should they be organized differently than traditional courses?

As an ITDE student, I agree with the equivalency theory in that students should have different learning experiences to reach the same instructional outcome. In my experience, how a distance delivered course should be organized versus how a traditional course should be organized, should be very different in order to reach the same outcomes. With the traditional course, you have immediate feedback and support from your teacher along with the ability to create or make last minute modifications to the course based on your audience's mood, engagement and understanding of the materials. In a distance course, the learning experience needs to be more organized, especially those catering to audiences who are working professionals and/or live in other countries. Most people take distance courses due to distance or work. For me it was work and the flexibility to be able to do extracurricular activities. The classes that were organized and stuck to a schedule allowed me to plan properly and allowed me to study and complete assignments at my convenience. Other classes, made me think if the professor remembered that many people were working professionals that wouldn't be able to make personal calls during the work day or post every day. I think some flexibility should be allowed, but overall distance and traditional courses need to be designed differently in order to be successful. Distance courses cater to a different audience and to different needs, so the materials need to be able to engage the students in a different way along with provide students a way to learn with some flexibility.

1. The Florida Virtual High School began as a relatively small example of distance education being applied to meet the needs of a state's high school students. This application could be called a "grass roots" approach to distance education, since even though it is supported by the state government, it was not originally pushed. First, what is your reaction to the approach taken and explained in the Virtual High School video? Second, does the Florida Virtual High School seem to be applying effective principles for distance education? Why?

I think the approach for distance education at the time this video was made was appropriate due to it targeting a specific audience type. Even though technology, demands, and accessibility has improved and grown, I think the Florida Virtual High School is able to apply effective principles for distance education by offering clear instructions, assessments, and online course offerings through the web. At the same time, the increased knowledge on distance education, proven successful completion of previous and current students enables Florida Virtual High School to develop and increase its enrollment based on student's goals and needs rather than this opportunity be limited to a specific group of people.

2. In South Dakota, the concept of distance education was being promoted, even pushed, by the state's chief executive -- at least it was a few years ago.

This "top down" approach to educational innovation seems to be the fad right now. What do you think about this approach to the diffusion of a new innovation, in this case distance education? Should an organization's chief executive, in this case the state governor, be responsible or expected to promote innovation and change? Why?

Even though leadership should support educational innovation, I do not think it is the only way to diffuse innovation. As a result of town halls at my current organization the importance of including employees in the decision making process is a key component in making them feel strong connection and support the organization. Being a part of the innovation process can alleviate stress caused by change and create a stronger support and collaboration when implementing innovation. It is important for leadership to promote the innovation and show support when leading these changes to show its importance and value to the employees. Through open forums, leadership can work with teams in leading educational innovation while promoting inclusion and teamwork.

3. Telemedicine is an area of intense growth--as a matter of fact; this area of distance education may be most dynamic right now. Why? What research should be completed in the broad category of telemedicine?

Telemedicine and distance education has grown exponentially and is most dynamic now due to its increase in value due to life expectancy being longer and shortage of physicians. The ability to conduct remote monitoring of patients and being able to consult at a distance is key in helping clinics, hospitals, and patients save money. Telemedicine is prevalent and used for many things like ultrasound, neurology, stroke and heart attack, emergency and trauma care and much more.

The patient demand for improved access to medical care allows telemedicine to be dynamic and creates a greater reach not only in the community, but globally. Telemedicine allows hospitals to discharge quicker and earlier, patients can be monitored at home, patients can connect to specialists no matter their location, and doctors also have access to these specialists when needing to assist their patients or refer them to a second opinion.

Research on other tools and resources is vital for the growth, strength and ability of telemedicine success. A prime example of telemedicine research and exploration is the robot used to help in surgeries. Other and newly developed technologies will help doctors and patients reach and manage the increase in demand and costs associated with healthcare.