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Chapter 3- Imagining Multi-Roles in Web 2.0 Distance Education

Part 1:

In the past, when we needed information, we went to experts. The information that we received was from a reliable, credible source. The person had credentials or the book had been edited and the facts checked. Today, the information we receive can be from anyone, anywhere. We now have to have enough knowledge to filter the information ourselves and determine what is reliable and credible. With Web 2.0 blogs, wikis, and so on, anyone can contribute to just about any source. How do we know what is credible. Is this a problem in education?

In the past, most people became experts in one, more focused field. It was difficult for people to gain information on other fields. Most peoples' educations were limited by location, resource availability, and socio-economic status. Today, information is readily available to anyone who wishes to seek it. Information is cheaper and easily accessible. With Web2.0, people can use the internet to communicate with experts or other interested in topics to gain knowledge, information, and contacts.

In the past, it was easy to tell who the students and experts were. Experts were few, students many. The cost was high to get published materials by the experts. Now with Web2.0, information is cheap and readily available. Experts are easily accessible. Now, everyone contributes their knowledge to form large networks of information. If information is not available, it can be requested directly.

A major change has occurred that both teachers and students have access to the same information. Teachers use to have the information, students learned primarily from them. Now students can use the internet to find the same information presented in class. Now, students may have the advantage of being more able to access information due to being skilled in using the internet. Do we need to adjust or teaching to accommodate student interest in the internet and turn to a less formal approach?

There a contradicting views about the type of teaching we should be doing now that technology has changed and impacted our learners. If the way or students are receiving information then we must change the way in which we present it to them. We must teach them to understand, analyze, and validate information they get from the internet. It is recommended that we encourage our students to work collaboratively, use media in projects to make personal connections. Students should be assessed on how students make personal connections rather than reciting facts. It is important to conduct "class" as a discussion and challenge students by asking questions that make them analyze their assumptions and biases. There are many ways to use technology to assess students' growth.

Although students are able to take responsibility for their learning because of the abundance of information available, we still need to be worried about the amount of information that is inaccurate. Is student freedom worth the risk of them obtaining information that is false? In the works are website reliability ratings so users can see if the information on that site is reliable for them to use. Although this is being worked on, there is also the point that with the internet being so interactive, false information is usually corrected by other users or participants. We need to educate students on website reliability and

how to look for credible sources or how to find how often a website is updated or edited. The more edits, the higher the chances that it is reliable and errors were found and fixed.

Veletsianos, George. *Emerging Technologies in Distance Education*. Edmonton, AB: AU Press, Athabasca University, 2010. 231-247. eBook.