e-Learning Research, Richard Andrews and Caroline Haythornthwaite (Eds.), (Teller Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2007, 539 pp.)

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The book *e-Learning research* by Andrews and Haythornthwaite (2007) provides a systematic examination of e-learning policies, research, theory, language and learning design. As such, it represents an important addition to the e-learning literature in North America and Europe, since it condenses previous work and suggests innovative research possibilities in the future. Although there has been considerable development in the use of educational technologies and some transformation of educational practice due to online and blended learning delivery, there has not yet been a significant analysis of the importance that research plays in this transformation. The authors who have made contributions to this book have advanced this area significantly.

The book starts with a reflection on the concept of e-learning research as an in-depth analysis of the use of electronic technologies for teaching and learning. The novelty in this definition resides in the fact that all the participants in this transformation are included: institutions, programs, formal and informal settings, face-to-face and distance-based contexts. As the use of multimedia increases in the educational arena, the concept of learning also evolves. From the learner's perspective, it requires an open mind and a willingness to access and share knowledge. This idea, together with the experience of e-learning, constitutes the platform from which a new learner emerges, in the framework of the 21st century.

The five sections in the book ('Context for researching e-learning', 'Theory', 'Policy', 'Language and Literacy', and 'Design issues') present the different perspectives that a number of known authors in the field of e-learning from around the world have with regard to framing e-learning as a research tool, as a synchronous and asynchronous activity, and as a departing point around which learning communities gather and share. The entire work organizes and clarifies issues in e-learning so that readers will be able to apply what they read to their educational contexts and realities.

One of the most important aspects of the book resides in the fact that e-learning is pictured as a social practice, not as an isolated experience where only the lecturer (or facilitator) and the student (or learner) interact

to create and discover knowledge. When understood as a social practice, e-learning becomes both a risk and a responsibility. It is from these two axes that the authors in the book built their perspectives on e-learning. Furthermore, it is thanks to this vision that categories such as the "digital divide", race, and gender recover relevance and novelty.

The second part of the book focuses on e-learning theory, and presents the "reshape of rhetorical space", as Locke defines it. In particular, it introduces the distinctions related to distance and online learning, the transformation of the physical into a virtual space, and the cognitive culture of e-learning understood as a system that crosses cultures and physical limits. In Chapter 10, Sharples, Taylor, and Vavoula trace the new world of learning as a mobile reality, where learning becomes conversational, ubiquitous, and networked. Learning is no longer an activity, but a conversation and a relationship.

In the third section of the book, the authors explore the issues of policy development for e-learning: these include international platforms, age and personality, institutions, and governments. Topics such as intellectual property and ownership are discussed by Varvel, Montague and Estabrook, as well as new frameworks for understanding privacy and access. E-learning is situated, in this part of the book, as a futuristic activity that involves transformation of educational concepts and ideas as we currently understand them.

Language and literacy are the concepts discussed in the fourth part of the book. Chapters in this section explore the relevance that concepts such as bilingualism and computer literacy have acquired in our contemporary times as well as their significance in the new construction of curricula. According to Brutt-Griffler, Chapelle, and Snyder, e-learning has emerged as the protagonist of radical construction of knowledge, both in one's native and second language as appropriate.

The final part of the book offers a logical conclusion with which to close and encourages further research in e-learning. The authors in this section analyse the new conceptions of design, community, and globalization, and suggest that e-learning represents the link between community participants and the development of new skills. The teacher is no longer the knowledge holder but the facilitator of knowledge while divisions between knowledge access and territories dissipate.

The book, in addition to its various analyses, includes very useful references for further reading and exploration. These materials make the book an important teaching tool for students and others working in education, learning design, educational technologies, and technology policies. Given the reviewer's background in e-learning policies for higher education institutions, the investment that Andrews and Haythornthwaite have made to establish the theoretical stage of e-

learning is appreciated. Their work promises to guide both experts and researchers in the exploration and analysis of e-learning.

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