"Creationism, Evolution and Advanced Learning Technologies"
Invited Speech
MSc Technology Education & Digital Systems (e-Learning)
Department of Digital Systems, University of Piraeus

18:00-21:00, Tuesday 27 March 2012
Main Lecture Hall, Central Building, Karaoli & Dimitriou 80, University of Piraeus

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Abstract

There is a still a lingering belief in educational creationism among faculty and administrators in our traditional universities. The belief that the university model was created in a certain form in a limited time period in the Middle Ages and has from then on been immutable is still being propogated. The lecture model in which the professor reads and the students listen (or sleep) is posited as the ideal form as Plato and the other ancient Greek idealists might have posited. In order to learn, students must march (fortunately not 2 by 2) into the "Ark" of the lecture hall and be granted permission to borrow books from the library. On the other hand, there are a growing number of educational Darwinists who recognize that evolutionary change is driven by real world developments. As more and more of the world's knowledge becomes accessible to anyone with an Internet connexion, the need to physically go to a special place, whether it be a classroom or a reading room is no longer a requirement. Is the university as a physical space doomed like the giant dinosaurs? Or is the university capable of evolving into a more flexible and mobile institution? Remember, the dinosaurs that survived evolved into highly mobile species: birds. Those that did not evolve died. The role of advanced technologies and Open Educational Resources will be explained in this context.

Short CV

Professor Rory McGreal is the former Associate Vice President of Athabasca University – Canada's Open University based in Alberta, Canada. He is the UNESCO/COL Chairholder in Open Educational Resources. He was previously the Executive Director of TeleEducation NB TéléÉducation, a bilingual (French/English) province-wide distance learning network. In this capacity, Rory McGreal's team implemented the world's first distance education website, a learning management system and the TeleCampus, a comprehensive learning object metadata database of online courses. For these and other accomplishments, he was given the prestigious Wedemeyer Award for Distance Education practitioner in 2002. Professor McGreal studied for his PhD (Computer Technologies in Education) at a distance over the Internet from Nova Southeastern University's School of Computer and Information Science. His present research interests include the use of Open Educational Resources and standards in technology assisted learning, particularly in the development and application of learning objects. He is also researching how these would be applied and formatted on mobile devices for M-learning.