

APRENDIZAJE RIZOMÁTICO

Colección Nuevo impulso educativo



Asociación Cultural y Científica
Iberoamericana

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APRENDIZAJE RIZOMÁTICO

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Miguel Grandal Ayala y
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PRESENTACIÓN

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El siguiente volumen se debe a la inquietud por encontrar paradigmas idóneos en su enfoque que atiendan a la nueva situación tecnológica a la que se enfrenta la Enseñanza en estos días y a desarrollar aspectos de los discentes como es la inteligencia social y la cooperación. En este volumen hemos podido contar con el impulso y la simpatía del profesor David Cormier que ha compuesto el prólogo. Entendemos que Cormier ha sido el impulsor de la aplicación educativa del paradigma rizomático desde Cánada y el que ha conseguido que este paradigma de Deleuze y Guattari (1987) sea más comprensible.

El volumen se compone por un prólogo y cinco capítulos y se estructura en dos partes de la siguiente manera. En la primera parte participan los autores en idioma inglés: David Harris, profesor emérito y colaborador de Cormier con un texto introductorio explicando un proyecto con MOOC titulado *The rhizome and the structure of knowledge* y Ana Tomicic con el capítulo titulado *Enfrentando los retos de un mundo donde se incrementa la complejidad* (*Facing the challenges of a world of increasing complexity - A rhizomatic intermezzo in the study of Social Representations; a representational break in approaches to lear-*

ning). En la segunda parte se encuentran los académicos en habla española. Primero John Roberto *nos* introduce de forma innovadora al *Aprendizaje rizomático basado en ontologías computacionales*. Segundo, Felip Vidal participa con el capítulo sobre didáctica *El devenir rizomático como acontecimiento educativo*. Tercero, Carmen María Sánchez Morillas lo aplica al campo Filológico con *Aprendizaje rizomático en la promoción del libro*.

PROLOGUE

David Cormier

It's a funny word, rhizome. It is a stem of a plant that sends out shoots and roots from its nodes. Many of the plants in our gardens that we call weeds actually spread by this method. You end up with a ball of roots, random shoots popping up out of the ground here and there, and a plant that you can't really control. It's this clever quality, one imagines, that led to it being used by two french philosophers, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari in their somewhat peculiar book, *A Thousand Plateaus*¹.

I have developed courses, taught MOOCs and had many, many discussions teasing out the story of the rhizome for learning. I will avoid the temptation, however, to try and dive down the rabbit hole to explain the historical context of D&Gs philosophy, or the nuance of their somewhat curious masterpiece, *A Thousand Plateaus*. I am not the person to make this attempt. I came across the rhizome as its roots were spreading through my network; I came as an educator looking for answers to some of the questions that I had in the classroom. Many of you are likely coming to this book with a deeper understanding of the place of D&G in philosophy, and a more literal, perhaps, interpretation of the work of these too brave philosophers. This prologue may be frustrating for you, as my intention is not (nor has it

¹ *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (French: *Mille plateaux*) is a 1980 philosophy book by the French philosopher Gilles Deleuze and the French psychoanalyst Félix Guattari.

ever been) to be true to the work that has gone before me. I have stolen from D&G, magpie-like, to help me build a story for my own learning.

I have also avoided defining rhizomatic learning. When we define something, particularly in writing, we necessarily exclude some of the nuance of the meaning. We leave out the chance that the definition can get better. We leave out another's perspective. What I want to do is tell the story of rhizomatic learning from my perspective, my personal journey. To talk a little about what the concept has done for my teaching, my learning and my understanding of the world.

So I apologize for leaving you without a definition or a clear theory of rhizomatic learning, however useful these things could be. Theories, like definitions, help create a shared common language. As we reify language into chunks it creates a shorthand that allows us to communicate faster and more effectively. It also means that we are less likely to misunderstand each other as we have a shared 'meaning' for the words that we are using. I am not able to provide this certainty. But with this loss of certainty of meaning there is freedom. Feel free to take this into your own hands and draw the conclusions that work for you.

I was first introduced to the word 'rhizome' in 2004. I was approaching that 4-5 year mark as an educator and had been trying to understand why we shape the learning experience the way that we do. I was starting to accumulate a set of approaches that seemed to match my style. I had a reasonable expectation, walking into a class, that it probably wasn't going to be a disaster. And I was reading. And that reading was starting to bother me. There was a discrepancy between some (many) of the things that I was reading and what seemed to be

working in my class. I was clearly not doing what other people thought I was supposed to be doing.

Teaching in a graded environment is a true position of power. You get to decide, as a teacher, what someone needs to know and whether or not that person knows it. You get to set the measures of success. I had the same sense of imposter syndrome that many of us do in that situation. Who am I to be in a position to decide what someone else should know? What gave me the right to exercise the power that I had over my students? Sure, my grading matched my rubric, but I had just made up the rubric, how was that fair? Was I ready to accept the implications of failing a student?

All the questions I had, though, fell under the category of THE question of education. What does it mean to learn? I could see it in students in my classes, and had experienced it myself, but I was looking for a way to understand it... a definition of it that I could use. I was looking for a touchstone that I could use to justify the work I was doing.

I had just started experimenting with different technology supported learning methods at the same time. The use of those technologies seemed to have a fairly significant impact on what it was possible to do in my classrooms. The work that my students were doing suddenly became more diverse and more individualized, and, at the same time, I had lost some control over the teaching process. Had the learning changed? What impact does the technology that we use (think of technology broadly here, to include things like pens and books) have on what it means to learn? Was it better or worse that my students were handing me assignments that didn't match what I had assigned? How could I assess them fairly?

The research I was reading indicated that students were ‘most successful’ when they had a clear expectation of what success could look like. Clear goals for each learning event combined with a perfectly structured class was a clear indication of someone who took the profession of education seriously. This is what it meant to be expert teacher. I struggled to match this perspective on expertise to the new experiences that were happening in my classroom. Telling someone what success looks like seemed like a poor way of empowering students to take control of their learning.

The textbooks that were a part of the day to day of my classroom supported this very structured, linear approach to what learning should be. It set out assignments that were connected to the content. There were answers to those assignments. Clear answers. Some of those answers were hidden in the back of the book and some were hidden in the magic book that was at my desk - The Teacher’s Copy. My job seemed to be to hide the answers to questions from my students and then work with students until they could guess them. The Internet was starting to make that a difficult game to win.

But all the time I was writing lesson plans (or feeling bad because I wasn’t writing them) I was thinking about the future students I would encounter. My own academic path and that of my peers had already shown me that learners are not an homogenous group. Did the literature really expect me to accept that a one size fits all approach would be successful? How could I know what a student needed to know before I met them? Was there some canon of knowledge that I could simply go to and pick the right topics off a shelf that would be applicable to everyone? How could I decide, ahead of time, what success was going to look like for a student?

I was becoming more suspicious of that textbook. How much had the technology of print (that is, the ability to use a press to rapidly add words to a page) impacted what we thought learning could be? How much and how many of our practices were shaped because of the practical realities required for the writing, editing, printing, binding and shipping of books from one place to another? How many practices, by extension, were impacted by the process of knowledge access that happens in a typical school? In a print world, a classroom is limited by what I have in my head as a teacher, what are in the books I thought to order ahead of time, the books in my school and, if I'm teaching well, in the heads of my students.

This leaves you with little choice other than to plan ahead of time. If I need a book to be in my classroom on day 1, someone needs to chop down a tree, mash it into paper, throw a pile of ink on it and send it to me in a truck. All these things take time. I need to be completely prepared with 'content' before the classroom starts. I have to create the uncertainty in the classroom. I, as a teacher, control the uncertainty.

The Internet has changed that. Right here and now, with the ability to search I have access to an almost limitless amount of information. It may not be the best information, it may be controlled in ways that I don't understand, but I can access it. And, furthermore, if the information is available everywhere, what does that mean to the content I use in my class?

This is when I came across the concept of the rhizome. It moved differently than the static models that I had been working with. It felt like a radical step away from the kinds of conversations I was having. It refused to be defined in any way that made sense to me. The thought suddenly occurred to me that the reason