

# Distance learning: the new frontier in education assignment



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Distance learning has started to become more visible in today's society. It has been recognized as an integral part of the education system. While still not being utilized in all places, it's spreading and gaining ground as one of the more popular ways to deliver information. As a means of educating students, distant learning helps plug holes that have been created by a lack of a certified teacher being available. Through distance learning, technology has become an intricate part of how students are educated. Early Beginnings Distance Learning has been considered somewhat of a new idea.

However, some of the key concepts that shape distance learning have been around for quite some time. Distance learning has a large portion of its roots in what's known as correspondence study. According to Webster's' Dictionary, correspondence is defined as, " a course offered by a correspondence school. " Correspondence is defined as, " 1 a: the agreement of things with one another b: a particular similarity c: a relation between sets in which each member of one set is associated with one or more members of the other — compare FUNCTION 5a. This information explains to us that two different parties are engaging in a form of communication with one another. " The roots of distance learning are at least 160 years old. An advertisement in a Swedish newspaper in 1833 touted, the opportunity to study ' Composition through the medium of the Post. ' In 1840, England's newly established penny post allowed Isaac Pitman to offer shorthand instruction via correspondence. " This information is very important because it helps in shaping some of the reasons and purpose of why correspondence was necessary.

The power of correspondence began to develop even further. Because its advantage was in its ability to send information via the postal service, correspondence created opportunities for people to gain knowledge without physically being present. Not all scholars believe that form information transference marked the beginning of distance learning. " The history of distance education could be tracked back to the early 1700s in the form of correspondence education, but technology-based distance education might be best linked to the introduction of audiovisual devices into the schools in the early 1900s. This is an interesting point because it shows that different reference points are used according to a different set of criteria. As correspondence study continued to evolve, the implementation of correspondence schools began to expand. Several different correspondence schools were opened inside and outside of the United States: In 1891, Thomas J. Foster, editor of the Mining Herald, a daily newspaper in eastern Pennsylvania, began offering a correspondence course in mining and the prevention of mine accidents.

His business developed into the International Correspondence Schools, a commercial school whose enrollment exploded in the first two decades of the 20th Century, from 225, 000 in 1900 to more than 2 million in 1920. In Britain, we are informed that correspondence began to progress, " with the founding of a number of correspondence institutions, such as Skerry's College in Edinburgh in 1878 and University Correspondence College in London in 1887. " As time progressed, distance learning received more support with the development of different communication mediums. Radio began to find its way into the mix of distance education. In the 1920's, at

least 176 radio stations were constructed at educational institutions, although most were gone by the end of the decade. " The development of televised courses began to receive a major push as well: In the early 1930's experimental television teaching programs were produced at the University of Iowa, Purdue University and Kansas State College. However, it was not until the 1950's that college credit courses were offered via broadcast television: Western Reserve University was the first to offer a continuous series of such courses, beginning in 1951.

The development of fiber optics paved the way for distance learning to make greater strides. It allowed for fast expansion of live, two-way, high-quality audio and video systems in distance education. With the introduction of the computer, teaching at a distance was able to really take off by leaps and bounds. Online courses found its way onto a number of colleges and universities. This was a great stepping stone for the development of such institutions as the British Open University, the American Open University, Nova Southeastern University and the University of Phoenix.

These schools offer an enormous amount of courses online. According to Teaching and learning at a Distance; it is vital to the study of distance learning to combine theory because " it directly impacts the practice of the field. " There are many theorists whom express their ideologies that pertain to the historical background of distance learning. There are several scholars that note how important the role of theory and distance education intertwine, including; Borje Holmberg, Michael Moore, Otto Peters and many others.

Theorists' Desmond Keegan exemplifies the significance of theory and distance education when he expressed in 1988... Lack of accepted theory has weakened distance education: there has been a lack of identity, a sense of belonging to the periphery and the lack of a touchstone against which decisions on methods, on media, on financing, on student support, when they have to be made, can be made with confidence. Keegan in his theories, implements how distance learning is vital in not only the classroom, but also how it encompasses the areas of politics, finance, and socialism.

According to this theorist this type of education not only affects the classroom, it covers several properties of the world. Bjore Holmberg's ideas promote that like any type of education. This type is no different in that it is according to him, trial-and-error with mere attentiveness to the theoretical stand point in making decisions. The ideas between Holmberg and Keegan contrast in that, Holmberg views distance learning as a representation of a deviation from conventional learning, while Keegan's theories deduce that this type of instruction is a discrete type of education is symmetrical to the conventional methods.

Contemporary Issues Distance Learning has created a wealth of opportunities for education to reach people in a variety of formats. With progress come concerns and issues that must also be addressed. There are several areas that have become red flags in the process of delivering education through the non-traditional classroom setting. Several policy issues have come about that are being examined. These areas of development deal with academic, fiscal and geographic: Institutions will

need to develop policies that clarify everything from academic calendar to transferability.

When a course is offered at one institution through a traditional classroom model, the academic calendar, for example, is the purview of that college or university. In certain cases, state regulations influence the calendar. But when a college enters into a consortia arrangement with other institutions on different academic calendars, it can become very confusing for the learners. In fact, some semesters or quarters end too late for courses to transfer to another college. Since distance learning models can complicate this process, flexibility is required.

This is an issue that I personally encountered while taking an online Spanish course at Pulaski Technical College in the summer of 2007. In order to enroll for Spanish 2 I had to show that I had passed Spanish 1. The deadline was 2 days before grades were to be posted. I was fortunate enough to receive help from the administration but it was an intervention that would be constant on the part of the university. There's also the question of integrity on the part of the students. While the use of CIV technology can alleviate some of this, other forms of distance learning continue to deal with this problem.

The issue of students allowing others to complete their assignments has been around for quite some time. With distance learning, it looks to be just as prevalent. Fiscal concerns are consistent for a number of reasons. In most cases, distant education comes with a higher price tag than the conventional classroom setting: One certain way to guarantee problems in a distance

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learning program is to overlook the role of receiving institutions - those who do not offer the courses but provide the resources for learners to participate.

This includes "receive" sites for interactive television courses and colleges that provide their computer laboratories to learners not enrolled at that institution. Contractual arrangements often provide a source of revenue to these receive sites, but in some cases policies do not provide, or prohibit, revenue sharing. Eventually, these receive sites become a source of frustration and potential revenue loss, which can diminish an otherwise well-run program.

Distance learning policies must address the issue of equitable fiscal arrangements with receive sites and all other partners. These issues must be clarified in advance of program offerings, for without them, sound fiscal planning is impossible. Students are experiencing, what is called, geographic "out-of-state" fees for distance classes. This is a major concern because the internet is a boundless instrument that does not limit the learners' ability to acquire knowledge on the basis of physical location.

Asking students to pay extra fees for such this reason is of major concern: Setting tuition clearly is a fiscal issue; however, it also is a key aspect of the geographic service issue. Is "out-of-state" currently a relevant categorization for learners? Will "out of country" rates still apply? If we are to recognize the overarching reach of today's distance learning, existing policies need close examination and new policies may be needed to redefine tuition rates and service area restrictions.

Another issue deals with the availability of instructors. While most of the curriculum is uploaded to the site in online courses, students may have questions that aren't explained in the information. The difficulty comes in trying to contact the teacher through email or via telephone. The instructor may not respond in a timely manner, which puts the student at a disadvantage if the assignment is due before the question gets answered: Respondents were asked to rank the differences between traditional course delivery and distance delivery.

The scale was according to importance, one having the most importance and six the least importance. The order in which possible choices were ranked was not of importance in this question. The rankings provided by each respondent for each difference was what was being examined. Results can be seen in Table 4. The primary choice for most important was "interaction with instructor" with 40 out of 107 (37.4 percent) responses. Ronn Atkinson, social studies teacher at the Distant Learning Center in Maumelle, suggests that, "not all kids in Arkansas have access to the internet.

It's either a question of accessibility or affordability. CIV is very expensive. Buying the system and paying the line charges, etc. Some districts can't afford it on their own without help. "Futuristic Implications Distance learning has made some very interesting strides and looks to be a mainstay in the future. This alternate form of education looks to be the growing as it takes on different shapes. Distance learning will take the place of traditional classrooms because of the accessibility that students have to computers.



The overhead cost of running and operating an educational institution from a building will be a big determining factor in the success of distance learning: Despite the challenges distance education presents to our traditional conceptions of education and instructional delivery, distance education enrollment at community colleges has increased greatly over the last decade, suggesting that distance education offers an alternative to the traditional classroom experience that accommodates many students' individual circumstances and educational needs.

Although the goals and outcomes of distance education are still somewhat unclear, it is generally agreed upon, however, that the marriage of technology and higher education will be a lasting one, and by the year 2000 more students will be instructed via more media than was ever thought possible. Though distance learning has become a very viable asset to education, a very key component to learning may be lost in the shuffle.

The instructor's ability to inspire the students through classroom lectures and instruction would most definitely not have the same effect on a student via online learning: How can we substitute for the inspiration of personal interaction with faculty members? In all of my years at Miami-Dade Community College, I never received a letter complementing a college program without reference to a faculty member or other staff member who had inspired or contributed to the development of the writer. Almost all of us can point to an individual, very often a faculty member, who had major impact on our lives.

Is there a way to keep that inspiration in a distance learning situation? Is there something to be substituted? Compressed Interactive Video (CIV) has become a very interesting form of technology. This medium allows students to be taught a subject by a teacher in another location outside of the school building. So if a student is interested in taking a sociology course and their school does not offer it, he/she can utilize this system. More students are taking advantage of this technology each year. While CIV is still pretty expensive, over time it will become more affordable.

Once that happens, it will help in the progression of home schooled students.

Conclusion The power of learning at a distance has reached unparalleled heights in its ability to educate students. While there are some concerns as to whether or not it's the "cure all," there doesn't seem to be much concern whether or not it is the medium of the future. It is cost efficient and looks to be the ultimate replacement of school building instruction. Distance learning is the truly the way of the new frontier. Bibliography

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