

The Desing & Management of Effective Distance Learning Programs

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**Reviewed by Prof. Dr. Ugur DEMIRAY
Editor-in-Chief TOJDE
<http://tojde.anadolu.edu.tr>
Anadolu University/TURKEY**

As computers, telecommunications technology and other electronic media have reduced the constraints imposed by geographic location, increasing numbers of organizations are using information technology to geographically disperse education. And as the number of distance learning programs continues to increase, a variety of challenges and issues must be faced. These issues include: costs incurred for remote space and equipment used, the loss of traditional evaluation methods, and the potential losses of academic integrity.

In general, this book can be considered as a collection of "first-hand accounts" from experienced and accomplished learning technology practitioners highlighting issues in using learning technologies for especially flexible, distance and open learning.

The goal of this book is to increase understanding of the major issues, challenges and solutions related to distance education. With such large numbers of individuals learning at a distance from traditional central locations, it is critical that we understand the impacts of these arrangements, the major issues and challenges, and how to best manage and develop distance education programs. This knowledge will enable organizations to implement and improve programs. It will also further our understanding of the impact of technology, particularly when it is used to replace face-to-face communications among both individuals and groups.

There are 16 chapters which are classified into three sections. The first part identifies the role and evolution of distance education into higher education. This part reports on the development of educational experiences as they have changed in the distance environment. Besides the availability of new technology, much of the motivation for distance programs stems from the perceived need to accommodate nontraditional students when university budgets are squeezed to the point that localized convenient educational experiences are out of the question. There is a clear demand for new course delivery, content, and curriculum. This section shows how organizations have changed, grown, and progressed to meet this demand.

Section II brings a multidimensional discussion of the faculty, student, and program challenges of distance education programs. The evolution of computers and online capacity into the world of higher education has evoked in many a sense of foreboding and fear, while others have welcomed this new approach as a valuable cost-effective tool for delivering educational needs in today's world. Course delivery methods have been modified due to the physical distance between the instructor and the student. The dimensions described in this section point out the significant impact on course delivery, student-to-professor interactions, student-to-student interactions, and assessment vehicles.

Section III gets down to the business of implementing programs and examining the designs and experiences of those who have had their organizations commit resources to distance programs. These are the early adapters or pioneers of this technology who have already made significant progress in the use of computers and the World Wide Web for teaching courses completely online or for adding course sections taught at a main or distant location. Today, these are examples of only a very small portion of the educational work force in the world. Opportunities are awaiting those who are willing to step up and move into the arena of the ever-evolving educational challenges of education at a distance. This part tells the story of experiences and includes technical, pedagogical, and organizational issues. Contents of the book follows:

Section-I THE ROLE AND EVALUATION OF DISTANCE LEARNING INTO HIGHER EDUCATION

- 1. Chapter: Distance Education: What is it? Utilization of Distance Education in Higher Education in the United States-Diane A. Matthews**
- 2. Chapter: Distance Education in the Online World: Implications for Higher Education-Stewart Marshall & Shirley Gregor**
- 3. Chapter: The Potential Attraction of Online Distance Education: Lessons from the Telecommuting Literature-Geofrey N. Dick**
- 4. Chapter: The Future of Distance Learning in the Traditional University-Gary Sanders**

Section-II FACULTY, STUDENT AND PROGRAM CHALLENGES

- 5. Chapter: Faculty Perceptions and Participation in Distance Education: Pick Fruit From the Low-Hanging Branches-Kim E. Doodley & Jane Magill**
- 6. Chapter: The Challenge of Teaching Effectively from a Distance-Valery E. Polichar & Christine Bagwell**
- 7. Chapter: A Preliminary Exploration of Social Needs in Distance Education-William B. Martz Jr & Morgan M. Shepherd**
- 8. Chapter: Online Courses: Strategies for Success-Linda Cooper**
- 9. Chapter: Institutional and Library Services for Distance Education Courses and Programs-Elizabeth Buchanan**
- 10. Chapter: Quality Assurance of Online Courses-Richard Ryan**

Section-III IMPLEMENTING DISTANCE EDUCATION: PROGRAMS DESIGNS AND EXPERIENCES

- 11. Chapter: Distance Education Quality: Success Factors for Resources, Practices and Results-Caty Cavanaugh**
- 12. Chapter: Establishing Successful Online Distance Learning Environments: Distinguishing Factors that Contribute to Online Courses and Programs-Lynne Schrum & Angela Benson**

13. Chapter: Case Study in Managing a Distance Education Consortium-Vicky A. Seehusen

14. Chapter: Using Tutored Video Instruction Methodology to Deliver Management Education at a Distance in ChinaL. William Murray & Alev M. Efendioglu

15. Chapter: Leveraging Distance Education Through the Internet: A Paradigm Shift in Higher Education-Zeynep Onay

16. Chapter: Teaching Enterprise Systems in a Distance Education Mode-Michael Rosemann

A brief description of each chapter follows:

Chapter 1 describes and identifies distance education as a serious alternative to the standard classroom environment, presenting enormous opportunities for both the organizations and players involved with this version of education. Matthews examines the technology and the types of students involved. She comments also on the advantages and disadvantages for instructors, virtual universities, state governing bodies, and consortia members.

Chapter 2 begins by identifying forces leading to change in organizations involved in the online world. These include rising global competitors, powerful consumers of education, and rapid changes in technology. Also included are the formation of alliances, outsourcing, and the re-engineering of systems and work practices of distance education providers. A model is presented that outlines "glocal", a networked education paradigm that separates out global and local resource development. The result is that university academics are finding themselves responsible for the learning of hundreds of students with whom they may never find themselves face-to-face.

Chapter 3 reviews the telecommuting literature and proposes a model that provides a basis for consideration of the appropriateness of the attributes associated with various distance education tasks and the suitability of those tasks. This model could be useful for managing issues presently encountered in distance education programs.

Chapter 4 presents the impact that Internet courses have on the traditional university and also examines whether these courses represent a new and significant improvement over traditional pedagogy for educating students or just a lessening of the rigor in academic programs. The chapter shows the results of a departmental survey on the reactions to distance programs by accounting chairpersons and college of business deans.

Chapter 5 addresses the motivation of faculty members to teach at a distance. The concepts and challenges of distance programs involve adapting traditional classroom approaches, attitudes and barriers to the technologies associated with distance education methods. Dooley and Magill present an extensive survey of faculty opinions about teaching at a distance, as well as several case studies describing incentives and training made available for distance education.

Chapter 6 describes the potential of distance learning to be as successful in instruction as conventional classroom learning. The approach is to take advantage of the known principles of perception and learning gleaned from cognitive behavioral, educational and perceptual psychological research. The principles are presented and applied in conventional learning packages that include web page development, course-in-a-box software, chat rooms, MUD/MOO environments, bulletin boards, and real-time online

lectures.

Chapter 7 explores the concern for social needs in distance education. Several themes that integrate learning and technology are identified and analyzed. In addition, the results of an exploratory study are presented on the "need for affiliation" among students who work in groups in distance courses versus those who work in groups for campus classes.

Chapter 8 reviews the experiences of offering an online Business Computer Applications course that provides instruction in basic computer concepts and terminology as well as instruction in using software programs. Various strategies that were successful in the course are reported for those who are interested in offering online courses. Topics of importance include the initial class meeting, providing diverse instructional material, the value of student evaluations, and the determination of student assessment procedures.

Chapter 9 examines the use of institutional resources and structures for embracing distance education. The areas scrutinized include registration, advising, library, and technical support. Institutions must have clear, well-planned strategies in place in order to maximize a student's experience and overall satisfaction. These strategies prevent attrition and maximize retention for institutions considering distance education.

Chapter 10 explores the issues surrounding quality assurance with online courses. As demand for distance education grows, the Internet delivery method raises questions about the quality assurance of these offerings. Ryan addresses the question that administrators and participants must ask themselves: "Should there be a trade-off of class quality with the convenience of the delivery method?" If not, then how do we keep course quality from being compromised using this new medium?

Chapter 11 describes success factors used by institutions, course developers, professors and students that lead to high-quality educational experiences. These have been found through practice by institutions, course developers, instructors, and students. Guidelines are presented on the three stages of the distance education development cycle: resources, practices, and results. In addition, two distance education programs are described as case illustrations that exemplify the successful application of success factors.

Chapter 12 looks at factors that promote development and implementation of successful online distance learning environments from the perspectives of educators and learners. Schrum and Benson provide an overview of current tensions between the requirements of the faculty, the needs of the students, and the forces driving the development of online programs. This work is based on the authors' current research and past experiences in the design and development of online distance learning environments.

Chapter 13 describes the unique distance education consortium called CCC Online developed by the Community Colleges of Colorado System (CC of C). CC of C is comprised of fourteen Colorado community colleges and delivers courses, certificates and degrees to more than 250,000 students per year. The CCC Online consortium, managed by the Colorado Electronic Community College (CECC), provides centralized management of faculty and curriculum, and the consortium member colleges provide most of the student services to their students enrolled in the program.

Chapter 14 presents the results of a study comparing classroom performance and student attitudes of distance education students to on-campus ("live") students enrolled in classes leading to a Master of Business Administration (MBA) degree. The faculty from the School of Business and Management at the University of San Francisco developed the program. Contracts to deliver these courses were negotiated with two large Chinese companies. The off-site students of this distance education attended class sessions in Hong Kong and in three other locations within the Peoples Republic of China, using a Tutored-Video Instruction (TVI) methodology.

Chapter 15 provides an overview of the different models that have emerged, and addresses the key issues that need to be resolved for integrating Internet-based learning in traditional universities. The breadth of strategic, administrative, academic and technological concerns encountered through the evolution of an Internet-based education system, from its inception to implementation, are discussed and illustrated by the e-learning initiative of Middle East Technical University in Turkey.

Last and, the chapter 16 discusses the needs and opportunities for teaching comprehensive business applications, Enterprise Systems, in the form of academic distance education courses. Specific factors of the educational market in Enterprise Systems, such as high demand, limited resources and the increased importance of Application Hosting Centers will be described. An appropriate learning model will be selected, which stresses the role of the lecturer as a moderator. The subject, Process Engineering at Queensland University of Technology, is used as an example to discuss different forms of distance and collaborative education in Enterprise Systems. The summary includes recommendations and sketches possible future directions.

In general this book is interesting and useful for the people who is working and studying in the field of learning technologies and distance education. Drawing on their own experience, the authors of the papers identify and explore the most practical and complex issues faced and reflect upon the lessons learned. Since the authors are from different countries, so, the experiences are quite different. The chapters which are placed in the book come in the areas of policy development, teaching skills, learner guidance, evaluation and reflective practice.

This book must be emphasized since it draws attraction to gender issues related to distance education practices. Thus, the book provides diversity and richness of the content for readers. It will serve as a major source of information and knowledge for further research not only for students, distance educators, researchers and policy makers around the globe but also for industrialists and business exclusives who are today players in the global higher education market place. In other words is an important resource for distance education all over the world.

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