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[OMDE 601 Section 9040]
[Individual definition and understanding of DE at this point in time/Assignment #1]

It is difficult to summarize the vast background, potential, and complexities of distance education into a short essay. Moore and Kearsley (2005) begin their book by offering the following definition of distance education: "Distance education is planned learning that normally occurs in a different place from teaching, requiring special course design and instruction techniques, communication through various technologies, and special organizational and administrative arrangements" (p.2). Moore and Kearsley further provide the following terms to describe and supplement the meaning of distance education: "synchronous learning", "asynchronous learning", "e-learning", "open education", "open learning", "distance learning", and "distributed learning" (p.3).

Distance education can offer more than classroom-based instruction by lowering restrictions. Historically we find that distance education thrives when classroom based instruction has either been unavailable or could not be reached easily. This includes early 20th century correspondence courses in rural Midwest America, all the way to early 21st century web-based classrooms attended by working professionals.

Moore and Kearsley (2005) explain that:

policy makers and governmental levels have introduced distance education to meet what they perceive as certain needs which include: increasing access to learning and training opportunities, providing opportunities or updating skills, improving the cost effectiveness of educational resources, supporting the quality of existing educational structures, enhancing the capacity of the educational system, balancing inequalities between age groups, delivering educational

campaigns to specific target audiences, providing emergency training for key

target groups, expanding the capacity for education in new subject areas, offering

combination of education with work and family life, and adding an international

dimension to the educational experience (p.8).

Distance education not only matches classroom-based instruction, it can also surpass

it for certain populations. Distance education has the potential to change the field of

education in general because it allows for aspects of education beyond the brick and

mortar classroom to be explored. Moore and Kearsley (2005) point out "the future

educational system will have no geographic boundary, but each organization will be more

focused and specialized in the range of subjects it offers" (p.22). The authors appear to

suggest that just as online shopping has given us a much greater variety of choices than

we would have had in our own town's stores, distance education will allow the student to

be able to find and utilize precisely the kind of training he or she hopes to obtain. Modern

media like digital audio/video and multimedia, as well as traditional media like text will

continue to allow for the crafting of educational content and programming which do not

depend on the traditional classroom to be effective for the student.

Additional opportunities and benefits afforded by distance education, beyond

traditional classroom-based education, relate to the way each student can learn. Bernath

and Rubin (2001) explain the concept of the ripple effect to describe the way a student in

asynchronous distance education has time to read various responses by other students, to

a particular concept or item. That student then has an opportunity (previously not

afforded by classroom-based instruction) to actively think about a response on his or her

own time to at once summarize previous comments, add content, and raise additional

questions (2001, p.13). A drawback of this scenario is that a large amount of written text is generated that must be read, and not heard. New ways need to be developed to manage and organize such an expanding volume of written data (2001, p.14).

References

Moore, M., & Kearsley, G. (2005). *Distance Education: A Systems View* (2nd ed.). Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth.

Bernath, U., & Rubin, E. (2003). *Reflections of Teaching and Learning in an Online Master Program: A Case Study* (Reprint). Oldenburg, Germany: Bibliotheks- und Informationssystem der Carl von Ossietzky Universitat Oldenburg.