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Definition of DE

Distance education began its development in the mid-19th century during the industrial revolution. It was a response to the economic times and answered the call of supply and demand. Correspondence schools were a response to a demand of those residing in remote areas. Mass production and distribution ensured a profit through commercial competition. In light of the origin of distance education, I am inclined to favor Moore and Kearsley's explanation of distance education. Moore and Kearsley argue that "distance education is teaching and planned learning in which teaching normally occurs in a different place from learning, requiring communication through technologies as well as special institutional organization". (Moore and Kearsley, 2012, p. 2) Special institutional organization is an emerging attribute of distance education. Therefore, Moore and Kearsley recognize distance education as an evolving methodology.

Special institutional organization is yet another developing phases whereby the next level of evolution takes place. The mid-19th century appealed to the self-learner looking to gain information. The 70's and 80's engaged those looking to accelerate their income or diversify their career options. The 90's embarked upon the digital era utilizing the Internet to explore emerging technology. Consequently, I define distance education as an evolving methodology of teaching by an expertise in a specified field of study; and learning by way of planned objectives and course materials, while teacher and learner are in separate physical locations facilitated by a two way media using various forms of synchronous and asynchronous interaction. This definition is intended to accentuate distance education as an evolving methodology with the next phase focused on institutional organization.

There have been many interpretations of distance education. Garrison insists that distance education is a mere form of independent study, not an evolving pedagogy. Terry Anderson's, Professor at Athabasca University, response is that distanced education cannot be confined to one type of technology or pedagogy; doing so "...denies the reality of fundamental changes in our conceptions of knowledge and the ways in which it is constructed by learners and teachers". (Anderson, 2009, p. 23) Holmberg stresses the importance of the "pedagogical heritage" of distance education. (Holmberg, 2005, p. 13) He recognize the evolution of distance education and place emphasis on the psychological, social and cultural period in which distance education takes place. I formulated my definition recognizing the need to shift pedagogy to appeal to the learner, teacher, technology, economy, and culture.

In summary, in defining distance education, emphasis should be placed on the ability to transform with the times. Distance education must answer the call of supply and demand. Moore and Kearsley's definition relates back to the mid-19th century mind-set where the objective of distance education was to answer the call of supply and demand; proving even further that distance education is ever evolving. The use of special institutional organization is an example of a shift in pedagogy which will allow higher education to pursue market-oriented activities for the purpose of added revenue, increased enrollments, and visibility.

References

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