

Distance Education is a revolutionary and novel approach to learning. By definition, Distance Education is “planned learning that normally occurs in a different place from teaching and as a result requires special technique of course design, special instructional techniques, special methods of communication by electronic and other technology, as well as special organizational and administrative arrangements.” (Moore and Kearsley, 1996, p. 2). In my paper, I will breakdown and elaborate on the various components offered in Moore and Kearsley’s definition. I will conclude by providing an explanation as to why I believe Moore’s definition is fitting.

### ***Planned Learning***

Planning is essential to the success of any program. Where Distance Education is concerned, to ensure program effectiveness, “planning” extends beyond the teacher and student. It requires the support of Administrators who are responsible for resource allocation and work collaboratively with faculty and management to establish policies/procedures. It requires, ensuring that inexperienced faculty/facilitators are trained and possess requisite knowledge and skills. And, of critical importance is the existence of an Information Technology Department that is knowledgeable, skilled in network design, security, shared application services, technical support and has the capacity grasp and incorporate emerging technologies.

### **Course Design**

In the World of Distance Education, course design is multidimensional. Course Evaluators play an important role, responsible for designing evaluation tools, to ensure that programming is effectively meeting faculty and student needs. Working with the Faculty, Support Staff and Information Technology Departments, they aid in the construction and/or modification of programs. In doing so they are able to ensure the continued satisfaction of non-traditional learners, by providing them with access to quality education and resources to support their academic growth and professional development.

### **Special Instructional Techniques**

In recognition of the fact that technical abilities range, a successful Distance Education program “Guiding students to online support before it is too late is critical” (Stanford-Bowers, 2008). In order to do so, Distance Education Faculty must be alert to signs that a student is not strong technologically and be able to direct students to online orientation programs or support services to prevent loss of student interest or motivation. Therefore, it is imperative that Faculty/Instructors assess from the outset each participants experience level with online learning, create an online environment that encourages open communication, and promote opportunities for productive group discourse.

### **Special Methods of Communication**

In Distance Education, creating a sense of community can be challenging to develop (Ritter et al., 2010). To satisfy the need for human interaction, provide students a chance to get to know each other and establish a sense of community, Skype, Adobe Connect, and chatting face to face via their mobile phones and course portals are some of the tools used (Betts, 2009).

### **Other Technology**

To further support distance learners, providing access to Online Tutors, Library/Research Tools, Podcasts, You Tube, and other learning tools are often incorporated. The availability of these resources provides students with access to information at a time and place that is most convenient for them.

### **Conclusion**

Prior to starting my Distance Education Graduate journey, I simply defined Distance Education as a system of learning that provides teachers/students with the opportunity to teach/learn outside of a traditional classroom setting via the use of technology. My definition failed to capture the various components. Whilst, Moore and Kearsley's definition is comprehensive it is succinct enough to be understood by most anyone.

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