Distance Education: Coming Of Age

Abstract

Time was, and not very long ago that hardly anybody had ever heard of distance education. Then, just a few years ago, most students and university instructors believed that distance education was a troublesome but necessary evil -- distance learning was education’s ugly cousin. But the times, they are a-changing. Distance education is improving and rapidly adapting to its diverse environment. The instructor plays a very important role in designing the course, launching the course and providing feedback to learners. Attitudes, skills, and strategies they employed in distance teaching are making a remarkable effect. It has now become education’s close cousin. Therefore, constant effort is needed to ensure that the same kind of attention and care is given to serving distance education students that has always been a hallmark of American education.

Detailed description

Time was, and not very long ago that hardly anybody had ever heard of distance education. Then, just a few years ago, most students and university instructors believed that distance education was a troublesome but necessary evil -- distance learning was education’s ugly cousin.

Instructors struggled to have their distance courses contain the same course content, rigor, and materials that were present when instruction was held in a conventional classroom (Martin & Rainey, 1993). University administrators were also frustrated because some course content, particularly mathematics, science, engineering, and computer technology classes, contained materials and symbols that were almost impossible to be presented on a computer screen.
With the growth of the internet-based instruction, they are a-changing. Some researches show that there is no significant difference in the amount or quality of learning for students taking web-based instruction as compared to classroom instruction (Riddle, 1990).

“What is causing the change in student attitudes toward their perceived effectiveness of web-based classes?” and “What are instructors doing to make distance instruction more effective than traditional face-to-face instruction?”

First, needs assessment is done before designing the courses, such as target learner analysis, communication and technology analysis, course content and course planning and delivery method analysis etc.

Second, how important the role the instructors made in the development of successful distance teaching, such as the attitudes of instructors, the technology skills instructors apply, and the instructional strategies instructors plan, develop, and utilize.

In addition, students are viewed as the customers of education who are like customers and clients in the business. The moderate tender of care can encourage their study motivation and get better learning outcomes.

Above all, distance education is improving and rapidly adapting to its diverse environment. It has now become education’s close cousin. There is no significant difference in the amount or quality of learning between distance education and conventional education.

(For this conference, we will use PowerPoint slides or Flash to present our paper.)