
This is the unspecified version of the paper.

This version of the publication may differ from the final published version.

Permanent repository link: http://openaccess.city.ac.uk/3207/

Link to published version:

Copyright and reuse: City Research Online aims to make research outputs of City, University of London available to a wider audience. Copyright and Moral Rights remain with the author(s) and/or copyright holders. URLs from City Research Online may be freely distributed and linked to.
Overview

- In this session, we will look at the concept of distance learning, particularly in the context of professional development
- We will look at the theoretical bases of the topic, and try to elucidate some practical consequences

What is distance learning?

- learning (mostly) at a distance from the teacher
- learning (mostly) at a distance from other students
- study is guided, in contrast to self-learning

- it is not a new concept
- it is topical today in association with concepts such as:
  - open learning
  - life-long learning
  - continuous professional development

How is distance learning different from traditional learning?

- limited support of study group
- limited "face to face" interaction with the teacher
- need to set own goals and take responsibility for learning
- (Moore 1980)
  - learning is self-directed, independent and autonomous

Why is distance learning so relevant today?

- technological advances?
- changes in society?
- changes in the place of learning within society
  - emphasis on continuous and/or professional learning
  - convenience of distance learning
Jarvis, Holford and Griffin (1998)

- list some recent changes in our approaches to learning:
  - from childhood to adult learning
  - from the few to the many
  - from liberal to vocational learning
  - from theoretical to practical
  - from welfare provision to market demand

- they also observe changes in the way learning occurs
  - from education to learning
  - from teacher-centered to student-centered learning
  - from rote learning to reflective learning
  - from learning as a process to learning as content

- and finally changes in the content of what is learnt
  - from single-discipline knowledge to multi-discipline knowledge to integrated knowledge
  - from knowledge as truth to knowledge as relative
  - from a classical curriculum to a romantic curriculum to programme

The rationale.....

- Knowles (1975)
  - "rapid change will be the only stable characteristic..."
  - the ability to learn on one's own (to think critically) has suddenly become a prerequisite for living in our world today

Critical thinking

- Brookfield (1987)
  - recognising and challenging assumptions
  - recognising the importance of the context
  - being willing to explore alternatives
  - becoming relatively sceptical

So......

- self-directed learning is more than just choosing which resources to use and what to study - it should be a process of reflection on the nature of society and the individual’s place in it, leading to personal growth
What does this mean for distance learning?

• the education process should make it possible for learners to reflect on the material they are studying, and to relate it to their own situation and experience

Adult learners

• rich in experience, with attitudes relevant to the subject
• goal-orientated
• self-aware
• ‘haunted’ by memories of school
• diverse in beliefs about learning
• concerned about money, family, work
• expect value for input of time and money

Consequences.....

• asking adults to follow unchanged college courses is rarely effective -

Competencies

• (Knowles 1980)
  – learners can specify what new things they will understand, or be able to do, after the learning
• this popular approach forms the basis of most vocational training, which offers a promise of ‘learning outcomes’
• this approach, although valuable, has its limitations

Expectations of learners

• Rowntree (1988)
  – learning as memorising
  – learning as understanding
  – learning as application
  – learning for personal development

Distance learning courses should facilitate:

• some memorising
• understanding and application
  – (knowledge and skills)
• critical reflection
content should be set within a framework of communication and interactions
• to some extent, this will depend on the technology available
  – email
  – web pages
  – video

Moore (1993)
• learner-content interaction
• learner-instructor interaction
• learner-learner interaction

Design of materials
• (Holmberg 1995)
  – presentation should be easily accessible
  – colloquial language
  – personal style of writing
  – explicit advice
  – encouragement for critical thinking
  – free exchange of viewpoints
  – careful structuring of material
  – relevant to learners situation

different styles of learning suit different people

Role of the teacher?
• learning is self-directed, not dictated by any one individual
• teachers should be facilitators and enablers of learning (Jarvis, Holford and Griffin 1998)
• teachers should themselves engage in critical reflection on their activities

A strategy for distance learning course design
• Colour code activities:
  – Blue
  – Pink
  – Green
Blue
• focus on:
  – competencies of understanding
• enables students to:
  – read and discuss relevant material with understanding
• taught by:
  – lectures, seminars/tutorials, course notes, reading lists, non-interactive online tutorials
• assessed by:
  – multiple choice questions, essay assignments, presentations

Pink
• focus on:
  – competencies of practice or skills
• enables students to:
  – carry out professionally relevant tasks, for example, internet searching, evaluation of resources
• taught by:
  – demonstrations, practical exercises, interactive online tutorials
• assessed by:
  – practical skills

Green
• focus on:
  – critical reflection
• enables students to:
  – integrate a variety of skills and knowledge, and apply it to their professional situation, for example, the design of a training course, preparation of a requirements document for a library management system
• taught by:
  – individual work, seminars
• assessed by:
  – written and/or oral presentation of student work

• in theory blue activities will precede pink, and pink will precede green
• in practice the learning process will probably be cyclical
• we shall see........

www.osi.hu/nlp
lynrobinson@cs.com