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Institutional Aspects of Distance Education

**Introduction**

Peters’ explains the different classification schemes in the pedagogical approach to distance education as the following models: examination, correspondence education, multiple mass media, group distance education, autonomous learner, network-based distance learning, and technological-extended classroom. Each model can be distinguished by different characteristics such as delivery mode of the course materials, technology/media used, and types of interaction and levels of interaction. In each model I will demonstrate how each characteristic can be applied to different distance education institutions around the world.

**Correspondence**

The correspondence delivery models provide printed and electronic documents of learning materials for the course. Paper files of course materials are available to the student via email or mail. Interaction between the instructor and student is medium and assignments and questions can be submitted to the instructor online (Classification Scheme: Pedagogical Approach)

The College of Progressive Education provides a tutor for each student. Tutors provide feedback and guidance by communicating via the phone. The students are also mailed a packet that includes textbooks, course materials, and assignments. There is a limited amount of social interaction except for workshops sessions. Computers are not required to submit assignments. Assignments can be submitted in writing through the mail (Introduction to Distance Learning).

**Multiple Mass Media**

Multiple mass media models provides students with books, prepared course materials

and study units. The lectures and course material are provided on audio cassettes, video conferencing, teleconference, CD ROMs, and DVDs. The student interacts with both teachers and a tutor for face-to-face meetings, conference calls, and online. The interaction with the tutor can be high (Classification Scheme: Pedagogical Approach).

National University of Singapore provides course materials through webcast, podcast, web conferencing, teleconferencing, and video conferencing. Self-service lectures are digital service recording through software such as Relay and Ink2go (NUS Educational Technologies). Communication can be conducted between the instructor and the student through questionsSMS which allows you to ask questions and offer feedback during a lecture or seminar. Classroom clicking is also used to promote interaction and participation in lectures and conferences (NUS Educational Technologies).

**Group Distance**

Group distance model allows students to meet in groups to watch broadcasts of course materials through a satellite, television or radio. Interaction is high between both learner-learner and learner-teacher (Classification Scheme: Pedagogical Approach).

Virtual University of Pakistan provides distance education lectures through broadcast, teleconferencing, internet, CD, and free-to-air television. Text, reading materials and lecture notes can also be available on the learning management system (LMS) (About Us). Interaction can be through the LMS site with instructors to ask questions and discussions. The university also has four television channels throughout the country (Frequently Asked Questions).

**Autonomous Learner**

Autonomous learner model delivers materials through interactive multimedia, books, and virtual seminars. Interaction is between learner-content, learner-instructor, and learner-learner which can be low to a high (Classification Scheme: Pedagogical Approach)

The Higher Education Academy, the center of Languages, Linguistics, and Area Studies, provides e-packs or online exercises for the course. E-pack assists the autonomous or independent learner in the course material online through multimedia environment (Online self-study- the way forward). Teacher roles now become the learner role and student can provide feedback regarding the course instead of asking questions. Students are allowed to do the exercises in the e-packs in the order that they desire (Online self-study-the way forward).

**Network-based**

Network-based delivery provides virtual spaces for students to login to access course materials and ask questions. University provides online library and database for research needed for student in the course. Interaction can be through phone, email, chat and discussion boards between learner-learner and learner-instructor. The interaction level can be high (Classification Scheme: Pedagogical Approach).

University of Phoenix provides students with services in an online environment that they can login to for the course. Communication can be online with classmates, instructors and counselors (Campus and Online learning formats). The university uses web-based technology such as personal websites, blogs, video, podcast and audio (Fostering Technological Innovation in the Classroom. Instructors also use free online course material such as MyMathTab, ElementK, and ALEKS (Assessment and Learning in Knowledge Spaces) (Fostering Technological Innovation in the Classroom).

**Technology-extended**

Technology-extended can access course materials via satellite, video conferencing, audio conferencing, Television and web-based system. Interaction can be learner-instructor, learner-learner, and learner-content. Interaction level can be from low to high (Classification Scheme: Pedagogical Approach).

American InterContinental University provides distance education course with virtual campus. Students can access lectures through podcast. AIU mobile allows the student to interact with the instructor and to keep up with assignments. Communication can be through chat, email, SMS, and social networking in the virtual commons area. My Unique Student Experience or MUSE allows student to access course materials and listen to live lectures. The lectures can also be archived for later use (Online Learning-AIU).

**Analysis of the Universities**

Among all of the distance education universities some of the same teaching and technology methods are used. Institutions provide ways to communicate via blogs, SMS, chats and discussion boards. Course materials are provided through the internet, webcast, podcast, video conferencing, satellite and television broadcast. Also many provide support with tutors, study centers, seminars, and learning centers. However, one institute displayed additional resources for interaction. The National University of Singapore provided additional technologies such as questionSMS which allows students to ask questions and feedback via SMS during lectures, Classroom clicking is devices used to interact and participate in lectures with the instructor, and mind mapping software allows collaboration in courses with other students.

**Conclusion**

Although each distance education institute has characteristics applied to particular modes in Peter’s pedagogical approach each university can apply to more than one model. The use of different technologies such as podcast, satellite, webcast, internet and even mailing of course materials allow students the ability to further education. These resources and technology is shared across the board from university across the US, Europe and developing countries.

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