

TEACHER-STUDENT INTERACTIONS IN DISTANCE LEARNING

Serdal TERZİ, Abdurrahman ÇELİK
sterzi@tef.sdu.edu.tr

Suleyman Demirel University, Computer Sciences Research and Application Center, 32260 Isparta, TURKEY

ABSTRACT

Rapidly developing distance learning models which are connected to development of Internet Technology, has brought a lot of easiness for both students and teachers. There are three considerable topics must be taken into consideration for a distance learning study: teacher roles, education goals and student learning.

In this study, especially for university students, the importance of teacher-student interaction on knowledge and aptitude improvement by distance learning in isolated environments has researched. As a consequence, not only the solution of this problem for a distance learning practice, but also the problems that will be faced in the future distance learning trainings has been suggested.

Key Words: Distance Education, Distance Learning, Internet Aided Learning

UZAKTAN EĞİTİMDE ÖĞRENCİ-ÖĞRETMEN ETKİLEŞİMİ

ÖZET

İnternet teknolojisinin gelişimine bağlı olarak son yıllarda oldukça hızlı bir biçimde gelişen uzaktan eğitim modelleri hem öğrenciler hem de öğretmenler için bir çok kolaylığı beraberinde getirmiştir. Bir uzaktan eğitim çalışması için düşünülmesi gereken üç önemli konu vardır: öğretmenin rolü, eğitimin amacı, ve öğrencinin öğrenmesi.

Bu çalışmada, özellikle üniversite düzeyindeki öğrencilerin coğrafi olarak tecrit edilmiş bir ortamda uzaktan eğitim ile bilgi ve yeteneklerinin gelişiminde öğrenci-öğretmen etkileşiminin önemi araştırılmıştır. Sonuçta, bir uzaktan eğitim çalışması için bu sorunun sadece çözümü değil aynı zamanda ileride gerçekleştirilecek uzaktan eğitim projelerinde karşılaşılabilecek problemler de sunulmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Uzaktan Eğitim, Uzaktan Öğrenim, İnternet Destekli Eğitim

1. INTRODUCTION

Internet and World Wide Web (www or WEB) have been having a profound effect on higher education. Undoubtedly, this evolutionary trend will continue to exert a revolutionary influence for years to come. WEB teaching, and its ensuing modifications to teaching methods that currently are common, is evolving at a time of increased pressures on institutions of higher educations to adapt to decrease public funding and simultaneous demands for solutions to global problems having potential for catastrophic ramifications. Internet offers on improved communications capability which may play a significant role in both of these areas (Mann, 1998).

2. DISTANCE LEARNING

Distance learning is a new trend of education. One of the reasons that accelerate this trend is Internet. The revolution of Internet technology has changed our daily life. From reading news, sending e-mails, to education as well as entertainment, Internet with multimedia technologies provides a new paradise for information exchange. Among these impacts, distance learning seems to be very important and interesting. One of the attractions of distance learning is its flexibility of instruction. Since students and instructors can be separated spatially and temporally from each other, students are in a remote area (Chang, 2002).

Distance learning is generally used in industry, in schools and in the academy in order to reduce cost, reach as large an audience of geographically distanced students as possible, allow students who are unable (physically) to come to the learning institution a change learn, and allow each students to progress at his/her own appropriate individual rate (Frank et all, 2003).

2.1. Advantage of Distance Learning

WEB instruction advantage is that student's trend to communicate more frequently with teachers and classmates than they otherwise would person-to-person or with ever present e-mail systems alone. Several apparent advantages for this include (1) it can be done at any time of day or night, when a questions arises during study or they are having a problem with an assignment, (2) less embarrassment resides in asking the questions in class, and (3) contact is made without fear of bothering the professor because communication will be seen only when they are ready to be "bothered". An additional advantage for both student and instructor is that WEB courses are teaching students the educational value of the Internet. This is important because Internet presumably will be a

major asset during their lifelong learning, or continuing education, after leaving the university. Not only will www be an easy, effective, and rapid method of continuing education, which traditionally has been filled by short courses, extension courses, colloquia, and extended conferences, but it also may be more current and timely (Mann, 1998).

2.2. Disadvantage of Distance Learning

A current disadvantage is that not all data, which are available on the WEB, are suitable for some beginning courses. Students may not have acquired sufficient knowledge of a particular field necessary to use available data sets, although these data sets are suitable for many advanced undergraduate courses. Too often, data require professional judgments be made or assume a specialist's knowledge. Desirable attributes when specialists use data, may become a handicap, however, when beginners are exposed to them. Perhaps, data sets that are more appropriate will appear to fill these gaps as more educators recognize needs in their particular area of specialty (Mann, 1998).

One disadvantage that may be encountered when using WEB sources, in any manner for education, is that addresses may change frequently. Presumably, well-established institutions will be less likely to be included in this complaint; nonetheless, currently some fall into this category. Often computers will be upgraded, new local networks established, or administrations altered without new addresses being posted at old sites benefit of visitors (Mann, 1998).

3. TEACHERS ROLE OF DISTANCE LEARNING

Some teachers who fear distance-learning courses, however, assert that distance-learning technologies change the role of the professor into a deliverer of corporate values and goals, instead of deliverer of traditional, liberal humanist goals. With the imagined and real collaboration between corporations and academia through distance-learning initiatives, faculty members fear that they will be forced to reshape themselves into the image of corporate trainers. Those who share this fear link distance learning to for-profit, online universities whose goals are controlled by big business and not by a progressive view of education (Peterson, 2001).

The role of the teacher in the technology age is not a new issue in the field of rhetoric and composition. In fact, for over a decade now, computers and composition specialist have been claiming that one of the benefits of using computers in the writing classroom is that the teacher is de-centered, thus inviting students to become co-constructors of knowledge in the classroom (Peterson, 2001).

4. STUDENT LEARNING OF DISTANCE LEARNING

How is student learning changed, bettered, or damaged by distance learning courses? This issue encompasses the other two key areas discussed here because both teachers' perceptions of their roles and schools' assertions about academic goals influence the experience that students have in courses. At the heart of a teacher's role is a desire to affect certain kinds of learning outcomes for students. This key issue is, like the others, often presented as two-sided debate. On one side are those who argue that because distance provides access to some students who could not go to the "actual" college or university, it benefits students and promotes lifelong learning. These scholars also suggest that the experience of an online course can be as rich and fulfilling as the experience of traditional course. On the other side are those who identify the difficulties that students have with online courses (Peterson, 2001).

5. TEACHER-STUDENT INTERACTIONS IN DISTANCE LEARNING

In a distance environment the student's ability and disposition to self-monitor and accurately evaluate content comprehension and request help accordingly may represent a crucial variable, which affects both learning and teaching processes. In a distance learning environment, instructors lack direct access to verbal and nonverbal feedback from their students. This feedback enables the teacher in a conventional learning environment to use verbal and nonverbal signals to adjust the instructional process in real-time, in order to meet their student's needs. For example, effective instructors will often re-organize and repeat content in response to student's confused expressions and off-task behavior. However, distance learning instructors, as opposed to instructors in a conventional learning environment, are unable to simultaneously monitor, decode, and use student feedback to modify instruction "online." In a synchronous distance learning environment the instructor frequently stops teaching in order to ask students whether they understood the presented content (Offir et al, 2003).

The use of communication techniques by students is very important in distance learning. Many of the students have already created, on their own initiative, and use forum, discussion lists and bulletin boards. Of course, the most important means of communication between students and teachers is the e-mail. The majority of students can read e-mails even if they do not have computer at home. It is, however, noticeable that certain students who

use both computer and e-mail at home prefer to send their written assignments using regular mail. This is partly due to the fact that submission by post office is considered as more 'official' than by e-mail. Fig.1 illustrates the student distribution with regard to the use of e-mail for communicating with the tutor and sending the written assignments and confirms the widespread use of e-mail (Xenos et al, 2002).

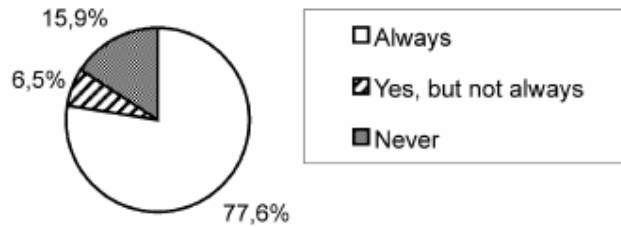


Figure 1. Use of e-mail for submission of written assignments.

The quality of interaction in distance learning education has been steadily increasing with the advancements of communication technologies from printing press to radio, television, satellite, and Internet (Motiwalla and Tello, 2000).

6. CONCLUSIONS

The importance of teacher-student interaction on knowledge and aptitude improvement by distance learning in isolated environments was researched. The quality of interaction in distance learning education has been steadily increasing with the advancements of communication technologies from printing press to radio, television, satellite, and especially Internet.

Teacher interactions data related student data enable to identify specific types of interactions. This data correlated with positive student outcomes. Collation of student related data with teacher-related data represents integrative approach that helps clarifying the complex interrelationships between person, process, and product variables in a distance learning environment. Online collection of data thus helps to solve student's cognitive and affective difficulties, and formulate operational guidelines for preventing these difficulties in future distance learning projects.

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