

How Much Distance Education is Too Much Distance Education?

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There may be a tendency among distance educators to advocate for an increase in the amount of instruction that is offered at a distance—to attempt to offer all courses, most programs, and many degrees at a distance. All

with little or no rationale for this movement toward totality.

There was a time when distance-delivered instruction was a relatively insignificant percentage of all teaching being offered. To most distance educators it has been refreshing to see virtual schooling, online learning, and e-learning move from the periphery to the mainstream, and for learners at all levels from K–12 schools to corporate training to ask, is this offered online? Most readers of this journal would probably say if the course is not offered online, then it ought to be.

Is this the right approach to take? Is distance-delivered instruction of all courses at all levels the ultimate goal of the field? Alternatively, is there a “tipping point,” a point of critical mass, or an edge of practicality? Is there research on how much is too much, or rather, how much is just enough?

Certainly, there is no simple formula that determines what amount of any type of instruction is too much, or not enough; mission statements, client characteristics, geographic limitations, and finances play a determining role. However, what if a group of researchers could develop a

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