

RESEARCH ABSTRACTS

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The Lived Experience of Being a Distance Learner. Dickie, Simonne D. M.

A phenomenological hermeneutic approach was used to explore the process of being and becoming a distance learner and ways the distance learning environment is inhabited or known. The study's author analyzed her own distance learning experiences and those of three other individuals (two females and one male) with an interest in education and distance learning experience at the undergraduate and/or graduate levels. After reviewing the literature on phenomenology, hermeneutics, and distance and lifelong learning, the study's author recorded her own experiences and the personal narratives of her three "co-researchers" in detail. Finally, she reflected on all four personal narratives from the standpoint of the symbiotic relationship between distance learning, lifelong learning, and personal development. The following were among her 10 recommendations regarding distance learning: (1) distance learners must take ownership of their learning situation by being responsible for their learning as more independent and self-directed learners; (2) although self-pacing is important, keeping the cohort experience is advantageous; (3) the issue of isolation/con-

nection must be addressed; and (4) although technological tools are an asset, the human element must not get lost. (The document contains 119 references. Appended are a co-researcher biography form and detailed account of one co-researcher's consultation.) 1999. 241pp. ED 434 231

Assessing Faculty Beliefs about Rewards and Incentives in Distance Education: Pilot Study Results. Wolcott, Linda L.

This study examines the relationship between distance education and institutional reward structures. The study sought to develop a scale to assess beliefs of college faculty about rewards and incentives in distance education, based on the hypothesis that faculty perceptions cluster around three factors: locus of motivation, institutional values and commitment, and return on investment. The measure, which was pilot tested with 33 faculty members, consists of 38 items and uses Likert response ranking. Results corroborate previous findings that faculty are highly motivated to participate in distance education by intrinsic rewards, although respondents also felt that faculty participated in distance education to earn more money. Results suggest that the

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department chairperson plays a pivotal role in faculty rewards for distance education, but that distance education provides a questionable return on investment, especially with respect to tenure and promotion. Seven data tables summarize results of the scale items. (Contains 14 references.) 1999. 18 pp. ED 435 271

Development Research Applied To Improve Motivation in Distance Education. Visser, Lya; Plomp, Tjeerd; Kuiper, Wilmad.

This study introduced motivational strategies in the student support system of a distance education program, offered by the University of London (England) and implemented by the International Extension College in Cambridge (England). The program prepares international students for a diploma or masters degree in distance education. The study extended existing student support with motivational strategies in the form of motivational communications that should serve to help distance education students to become or stay motivated, so that they will successfully complete their courses. The ARCS (Attention, Relevance, Confidence, Satisfaction) model of motivational analysis was used for design and development of the MMSS (Motivational Messages Support System). Development research was used for addressing questions on the validity, practicality, and effectiveness of the motivational messages. The study examined the extent to which motivational messages based on the ARCS model are effective in distance education courses, and the difference in effectiveness and cost-efficiency between the personalized and collective process of enhancing motivation through motivational messages. Data were gathered through student questionnaires, student interviews, tutor records, and tutor interviews. Findings indicated that the messages were effective and appreciated by students; no significant difference was found between the use of collective and personalized messages as regards effectiveness. 1999. 11 pp. ED 436 169

Distance Interaction through the World Wide Web in Graduate Teacher Education: A Follow-Up Analysis of Student Perceptions. Thompson, Jay C., Jr.; Nay, Frederick W.

This study, a follow-up to an earlier study [reported in the 1998 *Mid-Western Educational Researcher*, 10(4)] used the World Wide Web and a "Class Page" to evaluate interaction strategies in a distance education setting. This study further examines Lev Vygotsky's social learning theories as they apply to the asynchronous learning environment available over the Web. Fifty-four graduate-student participants, mostly elementary school teachers, completed survey instruments concerning their participation in the "Class Page," interactions with the instructor and other students, and the use of linked resources. An initial survey regarding computer literacy skills and usage proficiencies was followed by eight additional surveys that focused on "Page" use and interaction patterns. Data analyses indicate responses that were in contrast with those of the additional study. The use of the "Class Page" enhanced interaction and contributed to the successful learning results from this distance education classroom. (Contains 21 references.) 1999. 24 pp. ED 437 428

Interactive Television Instructors' Perceptions of Students' Nonverbal Responsiveness and Their Influence on Distance Teaching. Mottet, Timothy P.

The objective of this study was to examine the relationships between interactive television instructors' perceptions of students' nonverbal responsiveness and the influence of these perceptions on distance teaching. The study yielded three general conclusions. First, interactive television instructors' perceptions of students' nonverbal responsiveness are positively related to their impressions of students, their perceptions of their teaching effectiveness and satisfaction, their perceptions of teacher-student interpersonal relationships, and their preference for teaching in the interactive television classroom as opposed to the face-to-face classroom. The second conclusion

is that instructors' perceptions of students' nonverbal responsiveness and the various teaching process variables are significantly higher in the traditional face-to-face classroom than in the interactive television classroom. The third conclusion is that receiving both visual and audible nonverbal cues via two-way audio/video versus two-way audio/one-way video delivery systems increases positive perceptions of both students and the distance teaching process. Contains 34 references, and 10 tables and a figure of data. 1999. 47 pp. ED 436 811

A Case Study of Using Groupware To Support Collaborative Activities in a Distance Learning Course. Luetkehans, Lara M.

This case study examined the ways a groupware tool, TWISTER (Talking-Writing-Information access-Solving problems with Technology for Education and Research), was used to create a learner-centered distance learning environment in a telecommunications in education class. Data were collected using learner participant surveys, observation field notes, interviews, computer transcripts, and course artifacts. Data analysis focused on participant use of TWISTER, characteristics of the participants and learning environment that influenced participation, and communication and interaction in the different components of the learning environment. Findings indicated that participants recognized limitations in interactivity frequency and levels in the compressed-video environment. Planned activities

successful in this environment included using a wide range of activities and providing several means of access for communication. Although open and collaborative activities encouraged rapport building and enhanced interaction, participants still identified challenges. Use of TWISTER to facilitate student-centered activities also presented challenges. The tool did not support the activities as intended, and there was low overall usage. For participants, the added value of the groupware features did not outweigh the convenience of e-mail. Existing habits and limitations in functionality and interface were likely contributors to this low use. Results suggested that distance learning environments need to be improved through devising learner-centered activities and increasing interaction. Recommendations for practice are included. (Contains 56 references.) 1999. 14 pp. ED 436 179

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