



DISTANCE EDUCATION OF ENGLISH TEACHERS IN UNDERDEVELOPED AREA OF CHINA

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ABSTRACT

The problem investigated by this study is the distance learning and learning style of middle school English teachers in underdeveloped area of China from life-long education perspectives. There are few empirical studies on the role of distance learning from the middle school English teachers perspectives. Furthermore, there are few studies on the relationship between teacher age and studying style. The study investigates this gap in the research, identifying factors that impact teacher's life-long education in rural west China.

Key words: distance education; English teachers; underdeveloped area of China

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INTRODUCTION

Middle school English teachers in rural west China as adults are not only learning as individuals, but as members of a group. Teachers expect information that is up-to-date and authoritative, courses that are flexible and accommodate different learning styles, guidance on what and how to study, opportunities to do something with what they learn (assignments and projects), feedback on their work and progress, and help dealing with administrative or personal problems related to the program. In addition to influencing the design and implementation of courses, these expectations should be considered when determining the nature of instruction and support services provided. The most important criteria are determining the best supports to ensure student success^[1]. Three areas of support services that are critical include

advisement and counselling, administrative support, and teachers' interaction with faculty and others.

BASIC THEORY

Distance education students may require additional advisement throughout their student tenure which may include advice on course selection, course requirements and testing modes, and assistance in understanding the relationship of various courses to program completion. Distance education may impose a greater demand on student time than expected. This can impact their work and family responsibilities. While issues should be addressed during the students' orientation process, counselling support services should be made readily available to address additional family, health, and employment issues that may arise. Counselling support services should be proactive as well as reactive to ensure that students who may not seek assistance when in crisis can be identified in order

that the proper intervention and assistance can be provided.

Distance education students, however, must rely on other means of communications, such as in rural west China, telephone, e-mail, or websites. Frustration enters the process early if the student cannot locate the proper office or person to address issues. Because most forms of communications for distance education students are asynchronous, it can be a time consuming process. It may take students days or even weeks to get answers to simple questions if the appropriate office or person cannot be identified. To properly meet their needs, distance education students need a well designed student handbook to guide them to the proper office or person. In the best of situations, students should have a single point of contact at the college or university who can address their needs or direct them to the proper office or person.

Human beings need interaction with other human beings. Because distance education students are physically isolated from other students and instructors, isolation may become a critical issue. Students need the ability to communicate with other students or faculty to solicit feedback on ideas and observations, to raise questions or concerns, to solicit advice, or simply to satisfy the need for social interaction^[2]. Colleges and universities must provide a means for distance education students to interact effortlessly whenever they wish. For distance education students, this interaction may be by telephone, email, facsimile, or computer messaging^[3]. Faculty must be available within a reasonable period of time when a student initiates contact. Perhaps the best approach is for faculty to schedule office hours in order that students know when they have the best chance to contact them. In properly designed distance education courses and programs, students should have access to chat rooms or other technological means for carrying on a synchronous conversation with other students and faculty.

Distance education students need support services unique to the instructional delivery mode being employed. While some of these services are unique to distance learners, specifically the technological support required ensuring adequate student/institutional communications; many are similar to the on-campus services provided, with

modifications to meet the unique needs of distance education students. These support services may include advising and tutoring services using electronic media rather than the traditional face-to-face model. Distance education students should be idled with appropriate support services to ensure that they are offered an equivalent educational experience as their on-campus counterparts.

As the popularity of distance education continues to increase, institutions must ensure that appropriate support services are implemented if they expect to remain competitive. Colleges and universities may have excellent distance education course offerings, but if technical and other support services are inadequate, students will feel frustrated. The technical support provided to students must match the level of technological sophistication expected of the students or used by the institution's delivery mode^[4]. Any possible questions the students may have or any technical difficulty that they may encounter while pursuing course requirements must be dealt with in the shortest amount of time.

DISTANCE EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN TEACHER'S LIFE-LONG EDUCATION

Needs of distance education

The modern educational direction is represented by long range education of the satellite, television with the technical in multi-media in calculator. The long range education has many of functional advantages, such as, "the share of educate the teaching resources, the information exchanges of Internet, Internet the teaching and the long range education" etc. So, it is presenting the quick the positive developing situation. But accompanying with the fast fierce development, its developing time is not very long in the domestic or abroad all, the some urgent questions about modern long range educate is coming forth, the network education quantity makes person misgiving because some studying centres are not norm etc, All these seriously restrict the development of modern long range education. At the same time, the network education is a kind of new education form. It still exists some shortages in the aspects of theories studying and practice work, especially in west area of our country like this an economic unbalance development the nation^[5]. At the situation of the big development in western region,

how should we face these problems of the western region and a present condition of the Internet education? How to push forward the human resource development of the western region by the modern long range education? We analyses the problem appeared on the modern long range education development in our country by some means of science, reasonable and system, has find some solutions many problems from the each key link of the long range education. Under the guidance of the system theories, spreads learning, the study theories, the opening education thought and principle, the long range educates theories, the west management study, information science, educate technique theories, The main thought of study is to analyze modern long range education system and find some schemes in order to be seasoned with falls behind of and not balanced development long range education station in western region. according to modern education system theories and long range education programming and designing theories, taking teaching design general process mode as basic frame, regarding education need analysis, district characteristic analysis as point of departure, the author studied by the numbers problems and development actuality of modern long range education in region of western region ,and open out many of questions, such as the fixed position misty to long range education, no pure to run a school regulation and consciousness, the lag of foundation facilities and environment building, the weakness of quantity management and supervising and controlling degree, no of perfecting service support the system, the shortage of resources building and using etc ^[6]. On the basis of the previous analysis and inquisition cause of formation of these problems, we will discuss modern long range education system mode and frame in keeping with western region, put forward some answering measures to at the particular western region realizing sustained development, in order to enhance to educate the study ability of the English teachers in middle school, make run a school leading thought decorum, set up the open long range education terrace, enhance the quantity guarantees the system developments, healthy study support service system, realize intensives development and

well make use of current resources etc. Some references are offered for development of modern long range education experimental unit at western region of China.

Current situations of distance education

With the rapid increase in distance education courses and program offerings, learning outcomes are being redefined. Historically in the traditional setting, outcomes were determined by observing graduation rates, degrees earned, and the number of students passing licensure examinations. While the outcomes are reasonable measurements indicating the number of students successfully completing courses or graduating from higher educational degree programs, they may not provide a reliable measurement of knowledge gained. Beginning in the late 1990s, accrediting and state agencies began to move towards a new understanding of educational outcomes. These agencies now expect colleges and universities to answer questions pertaining to what students have learned in a particular course, whether offered through the traditional or online model. Distance education has had an impact on and may accelerate this educational outcome process because proponents of distance education programs feel compelled to prove the merit of this instructional model. Rather than the more traditional measurement, they have been measuring course-learning outcomes^[7].

The distinction between distance and local education is disappearing. Campus-based students spend a great deal of time studying independently. Some may find the independence offered when taking a distance education course attractive because this model of instructional delivery includes readily available tools and resources. This may also be the reason that most online students reside at or near the institution offering their online course.

The need for effective course management systems and Web services is growing. As online education continues to grow, the need for sophisticated student and course management systems also grows. Because online distance education is a relatively new delivery model, software and data exchange standards are still in their infancy.

There is an increasing need for learning and teaching strategies that exploit the capabilities of technology. Distance education courses offered over the Internet continue to lag behind technological advancements. Strategies need to be developed to put into place faculty development and training opportunities to properly blend pedagogical methodology with the technological advancements available through distance education.

These current trends in distance education are important indicators which point to the future direction of this form of educational delivery. The indicators suggest that technology continues to be a major factor in distance education offerings, the current infrastructure may be inadequate in the future, distance education providers must be able to meet today's more demanding students as they determine if their educational needs are being met, present completion measurements are shifting toward a competency model, faculty development and tenure issues are in need of attention, and availability of distance education courses continue to increase at a dramatic rate.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

Minorities continue to lag behind in owning computers and being exposed directly to technology. While there are a number of programs supported by minority organizations and the federal government to address this inequity, further study should be conducted to determine if these programs are sufficient to close the technological gap. Faculty compensation, incentives, and development were rated high in priority by faculty interested in using the online distance education delivery model ^[8]. A study to investigate faculty supports to encourage faculty involvement in distance education is most non-profit public and private institutions of higher education currently offer faculty for-profit institutions do not offer faculty tenure. The benefits and drawbacks of the process should be studied in light of the rapid growth of for-profit institutions. Several federal regulations affect funding of distance education programs. These regulations may be overly restrictive to the student or the institution ^[9]. A review of existing legislation would be valuable to higher education administrators as they evaluate the feasibility of expanding or discontinuing distance education offerings.

Accrediting agencies and organizations must keep up to date with their standards and procedures for reviewing the quality of distance education courses and programs. A study of assessment practices of colleges and universities would offer insight to the accrediting agencies and organizations as they attempt to redefine their processes.

Historically institutions of higher education have not embraced the idea of outsourcing or partnerships. It would appear that the time has come to open a dialogue in this area. Additional research and study is required to identify possible collaborations and partnerships and the benefits and drawbacks of such initiatives.

Colleges and universities unable to offer distance education courses and programs to meet students' educational needs are in danger of being left behind in this competitive market. Shared governance may become a significant inhibitor to an institution's ability to adapt its curricula to such needs. Further study is required to evaluate the impact of shared governance on the timely development and implementation of distance education courses and programs.

To improve the overall quality of primary and secondary school English teachers is the key to implement new curriculum reform of basic education and further promote quality education. Teacher web-based training in improving the overall quality of teachers plays an important role, and is to implement the new curriculum ideas, an important way to enhance the level of teachers ^[10]. Teacher web-based training is a set of teaching, research, training and integration of teacher training model. Trainees can discuss with the curriculum experts and instructors and each other on the new curriculum in variety of ideas in depth. Teaching communication has become the vitality of the teacher web-based training. Improve the effectiveness of teaching communication has become the key of the teacher web-based training. On the base of careful analysis about distance education, teacher training, teaching communication, etc.

CONCLUSIONS

Adult learning and education represent a significant key component of a holistic and comprehensive system of lifelong learning and

education which integrates formal, non-formal and informal learning and which addresses, explicitly or implicitly, both youth and adult learners. Furthermore, Adult learning and education play a critical role in responding to contemporary cultural, economic, political and social challenges. Today's globalization has paved the way for many opportunities, among them the possibility of learning from and exchanges between rich and diverse cultures that transcend geographical boundaries. Such learning and exchanges can certainly be facilitated with the learning of a foreign/second language or with the aid of an interpreter. Ultimately, adult learning and education are about providing learning contexts and processes that are attractive and responsive to the needs of adults as active citizens of the "global village".

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