

Telecommunications and Distance Learning

EDCI 5774

Final Exam

Mark Rash

markrash@vt.edu

April 2, 2010

1. **Use the terms "synchronous" and "asynchronous" as you describe Coldeway's "four quadrants." Give an example of a course delivery mode for each quadrant.**

Same Time, Same Place (ST-SP) refers to traditional instruction and is synchronous, since the instructor and learners are participating in the process at the same time and in the same environment. Traditional classroom instruction is an example of ST-SP. Different Time, Same Place (DT-SP) describes asynchronous learning that occurs at various times but in the same environment, such as independent learners within a learning center. Same Time, Different Place (ST-DP) is synchronous learning, since it occurs at the same time for all participants, who are at various locations. A live online lecture is an example of ST-DP instruction. Different Time, Different Place (DT-DP) is asynchronous learning in which learning occurs at various times for participants in different locations, as with web-based instruction such as ITMA.

2. **Applying Richard Clark's argument about the use of media in education, explain why the statement "students learn more at a distance than they do in a traditional classroom" would be false.**

Clark finds that media and technology do not directly impact the effectiveness of instruction. While technology and media can improve efficiency, they do not bring about real change. True change occurs as a result of doing things in a new way enabled by the media and technology. Therefore, Clark says it is important to avoid claiming that distance learning – or any technology-based learning – is better or worse than any other form. Indeed, evidence suggests that no single form of instruction is inherently more effective than all the others. It is more important for the form of instruction to make sense for the message being communicated and that both the instructor and learners are supported in the process.

3. **After describing three characteristics of a distance learner, discuss how his or her responsibilities are similar to or different from those of a student who takes on-campus courses.**

Distance learners tend to be of varying ages and educational levels, have an increased commitment to learning, and generally are highly motivated.

The responsibilities of a distance learner are very similar to those of an on-campus student. Both distance and on-campus students need dedication and must be motivated to succeed. Perhaps a difference worth noting is that a distance learner needs an even greater level of focus, discipline, and time management to reduce outside interferences and stay the course. In many cases, the distance learner has additional responsibilities, such as understanding how to use any equipment and resources needed to be successful, how to submit assignments and evaluate performance, and how to successfully balance time on-task with other life responsibilities.

4. Explain the concept of psychological distance and explain at least two ways distance instructors can minimize it.

Also known as social distance, psychological distance refers to the psychological effects of physical separation, as well as the mental element of separation or differences between people. It describes the extent that members of various classes or groups within a particular society stay apart from one another. It also refers to the internal feeling of disconnect a person has with respect to some group of society. Distance instructors can minimize psychological distance by building rapport, such as through active listening, using activities that require student collaboration, and being clearly approachable. Distance instructors can also reduce social distance by decreasing isolation, which can be done by delegating specific activities to groups or individual learners, encouraging open communication, and connecting course content with learners' goals and expectations. Finally, distance instructors can reduce social distance by enhancing interaction, such as by pausing to give learners time to think and respond, providing timely feedback, using activities that address higher-order skills, and incorporating active learning techniques.

5. Referring to the three considerations that must be balanced when selecting a distance learning technology, defend or oppose the following statement: "Using two-way video is the best method for teaching a distance course."

When selecting a distance learning technology, one must discover balance between quality, cost, and access. It would be incorrect to assume two-way video makes the most sense for every distance learning situation. In fact, research suggests that two-way video is often oversold as the best method of distance teaching. At any rate, selection of any particular distance learning method requires a balance between the same three elements of quality, cost, and access.

Depending on the type of system used, two-way video can certainly be of good-to-excellent quality in terms of the delivery, assuming both the

instructor and the learner have the knowledge needed to operate the equipment. Quality can also refer to the learning situation itself and thus two-way video may not be the ideal method for communicating a particular message and supporting the instructor and learners in achieving the desired outcomes.

Two-way video can be expensive, as equipment is required at both the sending and receiving sites, and a network of some sort is needed to broadcast, whether that is via Internet, cable, satellite, or other technologies. Additionally, since not all sending and receiving locations have this equipment and technology, lack of access could prevent the offering of a distance course that could be delivered just as effectively using another form of distance instruction.