

Chapter 1

Well-Recognized Experts in Distance Education: Code of Ethics and Professional Practice

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ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this chapter is to define, analyze, and discuss the qualifications of distance education experts to comprehend the relation between distance education knowledge and exceptional performance in action. The key focuses are the following: (a) Who are the distance education experts in action? (b) What are the main behavioral, social, cognitive, and emotional characteristics of distance education experts? (c) What are the main critical and creative skills of distance education experts? (d) What is the main professional knowledge of distance education experts? and (e) What are the main intellectual and distinguishing characteristics of distance education experts? The overall objectives and mission of this chapter are to carefully define distance education experts based on the current and future trends, needs, and priorities, which affect and modify the development of distance education experts in a post-modern world; we need to learn how to break down the digital walls. Past and future developments must be considered in order to devise a unique, open, and democratic system of distance education through management, communication, pedagogy, technology, and evaluation in the education system. There is an urgent need to define and discuss distance education experts recognized as a reliable resource of techniques and skills.

INTRODUCTION

Recent years have seen rapid movements in distance education, a powerful utilization of new approaches, and methods and techniques that will

have an impact on social and political issues and problems. A major issue is the identification of a set of global values, norms, and ethics to relate to the diverse needs of users in the digital world. One of the major issues appearing perpetually

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throughout this concern is how to identify global values, norms, and ethics. Establishing appropriate interactive online environments empowered by distance education is essential and complex. Making right decisions to maintain and improve distance education experts' sense of social responsibility in the Information Age is important not only because of our increased dependence on distance education, but these online communication technologies pose complex challenges, which will have an even greater significance in the near future (Zhu & Baylen, 2005). When addressing major priorities and needs, and examining the major research issues and challenges for distance education in the near future, it is essential to clearly identify, rank and categorize distance education environment design and to take into account the distance education experts' values, norms, and ethics in relation to these revolutionary communication technologies.

The Internet society has been growing since the last decade of the 1900s (Kollock & Smith, 2001; Benshop, 2006). Distance education and its applications are also growing as a mega trend in the Internet environment among organizations, distance educators and distance learners. Interaction styles have changed from traditional face-to-face communications to medium-supported (the Internet) and distant communications in e-learning milieus as a reflection of distance education. Therefore, methods, strategies and competences are changing to deliver contents and courses (Ribetro, 2006). This situation indicates that they are characterized considering this medium's features. Besides, this point of view highlights that there is a changing from the needs of distance learners to the needs of the organizations (Rosenberg, 2001) as well as the needs of distance educators in the application process. Moreover, the roles are changing and new professionals involve the process according to this perspective. The roles are changing because the Internet breaks the walls of the traditional classrooms and enables globally

open-classrooms without caring the distances with interactive communications among the participants from distance educators and distance contents to e-learners basically. New experts are involving the process since there are a lot of duties to perform in an application from production to presentation and providing continuum.

Distance education is the scientific and practical approach to computation and its applications, and also is a discipline that involves the understanding and design of learning and communication processes. Distance education is a discipline that spans theory and practice, and also requires thinking both in abstract terms and in concrete terms. Some special words are used to explain some specific conditions of the Internet environment among people like virtual reality or online communication. This is a need because of countless features and characters of this environment. Besides, these special words help to explain some situations to the other people more clearly and focus them relevant issues. It is possible to connect all the persons of distance learning-based distance communication and interaction environment in a concept called *Distance Education Experts*.

The term distance education experts should include the experts as programmers, systems analysts, technical writers, academic professionals, researchers in the information technology area. Besides, this term is frequently used to include people outside of information technology, such as lawyers, teachers, scientists of all kinds, and also students of all kinds (TechTarget, 2011). Moreover, these people are experts if this concept is handled as a person who works at a specific occupation (WordNetSearch, 2011). In some cases, a concept like distance education experts may not be enough to explain the people who work on the specific aims. Distance education experts concept is used to highlight the people who work for distance educational aims in online learning environments in this article. There may be countless program designers, as an example, in

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