Chapter 4
Electronic Education and Lifelong Learning

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ABSTRACT

Due to de-institutionalization and open system, it is inappropriate to equate education with youth education. In the new century, education has been delivered electronically to accommodate lifelong learning. It has become a reality that the four walled classrooms have been used to complement and supplement E-learning. No need to argue that electronic education has become the norm for most universities and organizations including governmental agencies. For any providers of education to remain highly competitive, they must engage in electronic education by "breaking down" the four walls of the traditional classroom. Lifelong learning has become the impetus resulting in the extensive and intensive application of electronic education.

INTRODUCTION

Today the global education community has become the buzz term in the realm of education and training. Learners in every location around the globe must acquire new skills, be literate, and understand constantly changing dynamics in globalization (Schrum, 2000, p. 91). College courses taught in the United States of America can be taken by students in Asia. Likewise, courses taught in Europe can be taken by learners in North America. Although younger learners like to travel to a different university in a different country in order to obtain a much desired degree and to get cultural immersion in order to learn a different language, nontraditional learners prefer taking courses offered by foreign universities or corporations in foreign countries via distance education technologies (can be used interchangeably with Web 2.0 technologies from time to time) in their home countries. This is not to say that nontraditional learners do not like to travel

to foreign countries. Rather, they have multiple work and family responsibilities (Wang, 2006) that prevent them from being away from home for a long time. Obtaining a college degree is a several yearlong endeavor to anyone. This article will explore the relationship between lifelong and e-learning, historical developments in e-education, expanding horizons in e-education, limitations, the digital divide, and global barriers within the realm of e-learning.

Lifelong Learning through E-Learning

Today, people live in what could be termed a knowledge society (Jarvis, 2001). In a knowledge society, there has been a tendency to treat the term: Lifelong learning as being synonymous with lifelong education. In fact, lifelong learning and lifelong education are totally different terms. Lifelong learning can be defined as follows: (1) The process of learning which occurs throughout the life span; and (2) The learning that occurs variously in formal institutions or education and training, and informally, at home, at work, or in the wider community. Learning emphasizes the person in whom the change occurs or expected to occur. Learning is the act or process by which behavioral change, knowledge, skills, and attitudes are acquired whereas education is an activity undertaken or initiated by one or more agents that is designed to effect changes in the knowledge, skill, and attitudes of individuals, groups, or communities. Once the difference between learning and education is clarified, the meanings of lifelong learning and lifelong education become self-explanatory) is a must. People learn at every waking minute (Gagne, Wager, Golas, & Keller, 2005). Also in a knowledge society, knowledge increases at an exponential rate. By the time a student graduates from a program/department, half of the knowledge she/he knows may become "obsolete."

In essence, distance education can be defined as any form of education in which the teacher and the learner are separated in either time or space. Distance education was formerly called home study, and then correspondence education. Later, distance education was delivered via Radio and TV broadcast in different countries. Currently, more distance education is delivered via internet and computer communications technologies. In the United Kingdom (U.K.) a popular distance education is operated through the Open University. Since its inception in 1969, it has grown and is now the U.K.'s largest educational institution. Over two (2) million students from all over the world have studied with The Open University. Called 'supported open learning', students experience learning by reading text, watching videos, DVDs or videos online or by listening to audio materials. In addition, students work on assignments and activities provided by the instructor. They experience the sense of community by interacting with other students in the program through study groups and online conferencing (The Open University, 2012). Since the creation of the Open University in the United Kingdom, many other distance education universities have been born in the world. A specific example of this type of university is Anadolu Open University of Turkey which currently has over one million students. Students learn from an array of media: Printed materials, radio and television programs, video conferences, computer based materials and audio materials. Additionally students have access to live television broadcasts specifically designed for students to prepare for exams. Students can call in and speak to advisors. Anadolu Open University prides itself in providing a student-centered environment and all learning materials have been designed specifically for the students to learn on their own (Anadolu Open University of Turkey, 2012).

Distance education has been viewed as a way in which to offer lifelong learning to those who are geographically separated from traditional institutions, have obligations that limit their ability to attend regular courses or have other exceptional

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