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OMDE 601 Section 9041  
24-February-2013  
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Introduction

Otto Peter’s describes four “peculiarities which distinguish distance education from traditional university teaching” (Peters, 2004, p. 17). The primary reason the student author chose this definition was the support of this definition by other researchers. Mediated learning, the first characteristic of distance education, is also supported by Garrison (2010), Holmberg (2005), and Moore (2012). The remaining characteristics are also supported by Moore (2012).

The four characteristics that uniquely define distance education are mediated learning, pedagogic structures, the unique characteristics of students, and the institutions themselves (Peters, 2004).

**Mediated Learning**

Mediated learning is the first unique characteristics of distance education. In the traditional classroom, the teacher speaking as the student is listening enables learning (Peters, 2004). During an engagement in a distance education course, the teacher writes and the student reads (Peters, 2004). Mediated learning as a feature of distance education is acknowledged by other researchers (Garrison, 2010; Holmberg, 2005; Moore, 2012). This characteristic is self-evident to any teacher or student engaged in distance education.

**Pedagogic Structures**

Three pedagogic structures, single-mode, dual-mode and “universities of the future” are identified as the second characteristic of distance education (Peters, 2004, p16). Peters’ (2004) understanding of single-mode vs. dual-mode is differentiated by their organization. Single-mode is developed “from the very start exclusively for distance education” (p. 15). Dual-mode is when “a traditional university provides several forms of studying parallel to one another” (p.15). Moore (2012) also defines both single-mode and dual-mode structures in the same fashion as Peters.

**Distance Students**

The type of students who are comfortable with distance education engagements are identified as the third characteristic of distance education (Peters, 2004). These students must be comfortable being autonomous (Peters, 2010). Students participating in distance education will be learning in different environments such as at home or in the workplace which can provide distractions from studying (Moore, 2012) Students must employ self-regulating behaviors to successfully complete their studies (p. 18).

**Institutions and Organization**

Institutions and organizations are identified as the fourth characteristic of distance education (Peters, 2004). Self-instructional material must be ready in time to be mass produced as well as distributed to students (Peters, 2010). The learning institution also provides the distance education environment (p.14). Moore (2012) also discusses the same processes of mass production and provision of the distance education environment.

**Conclusion**

Institutions that provide distance education must mass produce self-instructional material as well as provide the environment where distance education will take place (Moore, 2012; Peters, 2004). Students who participate in distance education must be comfortable working independently and regulating their own studies (Moore, 2012; Peters, 2010). Distance education requires unique pedagogic structures (Moore, 2012; Peters, 2004). Single-mode institutions only focus on providing distance education while dual-mode institutions provide both traditional and distance education (Moore, 2012; Peters, 2004). Finally, mediated learning which replaces speaking and listening with writing and reading is another unique characteristic of distance education. (Garrison, 2010; Holmberg, 2005; Moore, 2012; Peters, 2004).

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