



Distance Science Learning Challenges and Experiences

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Abstract

Even though the history of distance education goes back to the late 1800s, distance science programs or applications are not that dated at all and it has recently and rapidly become popular all over the world. Moreover, not only growing demand for distance science education but also ongoing research and teaching interest in technology integration in science instruction are clear indications for its widespread use. Distance science programs are also differentiated from distance social sciences in respect to learning environments and learning strategies employed. At this point, sharing any kind of experiences in distance science learning would therefore be a valuable source of information for literature. Within this context, the current paper attempts to express experiences, concerns, and expectations of distance learners in an associate degree program in Chemical Technology at the College of Open Education at X University.

The program integrates a wide variety of learning media, teaching, and assessment strategies including print materials, eBooks, eCourse, eConsultant via asynchronous and synchronous interactions, virtual experiments, face-to-face lab activities in the Summer term, weekly assignments, multiple choice and open-ended tests. Interpretative research approach was employed to examine learners' perspectives toward the programs and distance learning. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with seven students during the Summer- 2010. Issues raised in the data were tabulated into three main categories: Administrative, Educational, and Technological opportunities and limitations. Learners' overall impression of the program was highly positive and they indicated that they recommended the program to friends. They have also admitted that being a distance learner both enhanced their professional life and was a demanding process comparing to their previous educational experiences.