Review of distance education research (2000 to 2008): Analysis of research areas, methods, and authorship patterns

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education research based on a validated classification of research areas. The articles \( (N = 695) \) published in five prominent distance education journals between 2000 and 2008 were reviewed for this study. The conclusion is that distance education research is strongly dominated by issues related to instructional design and individual learning processes; whereas, other important areas (e.g., innovation and change management or intercultural aspects of distance learning) are dreadfully neglected. There is a significant trend towards collaborative research and more qualitative studies. Over 80% of all articles originate from only five countries.

Author Biographies

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Olaf Zawacki-Richter holds a Ph.D. from the School of Education at Oldenburg University (Germany). Olaf is faculty member in the MBA in Educational Management offered by the Faculty of Education at Oldenburg University. He is also teaching in the rank of an Adjunct Associate Professor in the Online Master of Distance Education programme, jointly offered by University of Maryland University College (USA) and Oldenburg University where he was a member of the academic staff of the Centre for Distance Education from 1999 to 2003. Between 2003 and 2007 Olaf worked as project manager at the Frankfurt School of Finance & Management in Frankfurt. Early in 2007 Olaf returned to the University of Oldenburg and joined the team of the Division of Continuing Education and Educational Management. In September 2009 Dr. Zawacki-Richter started a fixed term professorship in educational technology at the FernUniversity in Hagen.

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A review of research and expository articles on distance education was conducted, with a restriction to post-1990 articles. Mathematics distance education course articles were an additional focus. While many articles were reviewed, two articles offering summaries of research through 1999 stand out. The majority of the original research articles indicated that distance education had positive outcomes in all three of these areas. The AAHE’s principles of good practice include those methods that:

- Encourage contacts between students and faculty,
- Develop reciprocity and cooperation among students,
- Use active learning techniques,
- Give prompt feedback,
- Emphasize time on-task,
- Communicate high expectations,
- Respect diverse talents and ways of learning.

Review of Distance Education Research (2000 to 2008): Analysis of Research Areas, Methods, and Authorship Patterns. Article (PDF Available) in International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning 10(6) · December 2009 with 222 Reads. DOI: 10.19173/irrodl.v10i6.741. Cite this publication. This paper presents a review of distance education literature to describe the status thereof and to identify gaps and priority areas in distance education research based on a validated classification of research areas. Online interaction patterns are a very prominent area of research in online and distance education (see Zawacki-Richter, & Anderson, 2014; Zawacki-Richter, Bäcker, & Vogt, 2009), and this issue is covered in several of the selected MOOC articles.