Chapter III

Online Learning and Lifelong Learning: Implications for Transforming Teaching and Learning

Glenn Finger, Gold Coast Campus Griffith University, Australia

Abstract

This chapter explores ways in which new and emerging information and communication technologies (ICT) might transform the learning experience through online delivery. After presenting a conceptualisation of ICT use by educators in terms of inaction, investigation, application, integration, and transformation, two diverse learning settings are examined to develop insights into the implications of online learning for lifelong learning—namely, the delivery of educational services to preschool children (aged 4 years old) through to Year 10 students (aged 15 years old) in rural and remote communities in Australia, and the dimensions required for designing online learning for adult learners in higher education. Through the presentation of a case study of a School of Distance Education in Australia, which reflects technological improvements using telephone teaching, and the affordances of improved connectivity, the case study demonstrates that this has enabled the use of more constructivist approaches to teaching and learning to transform the delivery of education to rural and remote students. Subsequently, this chapter provides a synthesis of the literature relating to the critical factors influencing learner satisfaction in online learning.

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Introduction

The concepts of lifelong learning and online learning have become central to educational policies and curriculum development in Australia. This chapter explores ways in which new and emerging information and communication technologies (ICT) might transform the learning experience through online delivery. After presenting a conceptualisation of ICT use by educators in terms of inaction, investigation, application, integration, and transformation, two diverse learning settings are examined to develop insights into the implications of online learning for lifelong learning—namely, the delivery of educational services to preschool children (aged 4 years old) through to Year 10 students (aged 15 years old) in rural and remote communities in Australia, and the dimensions required for designing online learning for adult learners in higher education.

Through the presentation of a case study of a School of Distance Education (SDE) in Australia, which reflects technological improvements using telephone teaching, and the affordances of improved connectivity, the case study demonstrates that this has enabled the use of more constructivist approaches to teaching and learning to transform the delivery of education to rural and remote students. Subsequently, the chapter provides a synthesis of the literature relating to the critical factors influencing learner satisfaction in online learning. That synthesis identifies considerations for online learning related to the learner dimension, instructor dimension, course dimension, technology dimension, design dimension, and environmental dimension.

Lifelong and Online Learning

Accompanying and contributing to the centrality of lifelong learning and online learning has been the emergence of new and emerging technologies known as ICT and the implications of the knowledge economy. For example, in 2000, the Ministerial Council for Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) which enables a collaborative approach between Australian State and Territory, and New Zealand governments, endorsed the report Learning in an Online World: The School Action Plan for the Information Economy (MCEETYA, 2000). In the same year, the Department of Education, Training, and Youth Affairs (DETYA) in Australia released Learning for the Knowledge Society: An Education and Training Action Plan for the Information Economy (DETYA, 2000). Both documents provided an educational vision which “was based on the understanding that ICT have the potential to transform all aspects of school education and contribute to the achievement of all learning goals” (MCEETYA ICT in Schools Taskforce, 2005, p. 3).

MCEETYA established the MCEETYA ICT in Schools Taskforce (MCEETYA, 2002) which has the responsibility for “ensuring that the nature and role of ICT