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Student Support Services in Distance Education & Training

OMDE 608- Section 9040

Assignment 1: Annotated Bibliography (Sections 1 & 2)

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## Section 1: Introduction and Overview

### **Topic A: Learner Support**

Brindley, J. E. (1995). Learner services: Theory and practice, *Distansutbildning i itveckling, Rapport nr. 11* (pp. 23-34). Umea, Sweden: University of Umea. Retrieved September 12, 2002 from WebTycho, <http://tychousa1.umuc.edu/OMDE608/0102/9040/>

This article analyzes the importance of developing student support services within theoretical guidelines and provides practitioners with a systematic framework for student support. The author discusses how educational access, technological innovation and economic changes have influence years of pedagogical research in the field of learning, but highlights the marginal research conducted on the topic of learning support. After identifying the need to design learner-centered support strategies, the paper illustrates a three level (factors, goals and intervention) model that broadly links a relationship between theory and practice. The objective of creating this theory is to provoke thought on articulating a commitment to the needs of distant learners while improving, evaluating and strengthening student support services. The article emphasizes that these services are not just add ons to an educational experience, but act as an integral part of the whole process. It concludes that within an effective system, support services can enhance and benefit the quality of the entire learning experience.

Dirr, P. (1999). *Putting principle into practice: Promoting effective support services for students in distance learning programs. A report on the findings of a survey.* Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education. Retrieved September 12, 2002, from <http://www.wiche.edu/Telecom/Projects/studentsservices/index.html>

This article summarizes the recent telecommunications project "Putting Principles into Practice" which identifies the effects of current student support services in distance education. The project analyzes surveys targeted from more than a thousand two- and four-year institution, and reviews practices consisting of both academic and non-academic responsibilities. The results are compiled from less than half of the institutions targeted, and the findings support how the influence of student services depend on various factors. These factors cover technology experience, knowledge of learner s' needs and characteristics, and services bound to place and time. A data summary is collected and confirms that common practices today are in areas of registration, advising and graduation, and least practiced in areas of counseling and social interaction.

Krauth, B., & Carbajal, J. (2000). *Guide to developing online student services*. Western Cooperative for Education Telecommunications, Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education. Retrieved September 12, 2002, from <http://www.wiche.edu/telecom/resources/publications/guide/guide.htm>

This publication offers guidelines and recommendations to colleges and universities for assistance in using the World Wide Web to provide online student support services. It includes helpful resources, a review of educational websites, and illustrations on how to effectively design webpages for student support. The review analyzes best practices and evaluates delivery methods that successfully address the needs and characteristics of a distance learner. Although the guide discusses the challenges of providing a general framework for all higher educational institution, it concludes that every institution will develop a unique mission and be at various levels of technological integration. These guidelines serve as an introduction for using internet technologies for student support services, and capture tips on how to create an online environment that enhances the learning experience for both distant and traditional learners.

Robinson, B. (1995). Research and pragmatism in learner support. In F. Lockwood (Ed.), *Open and distance learning today* (pp. 221-231). London: Routledge. Retrieved from WebTycho, <http://tychousal.umuc.edu/OMDE608/0102/9040/>

This chapter addresses the challenges of the limited research done in the field of distance learning support and highlights the importance of evaluating a theory to improve future distance learning practices. The author draws on the many widespread conclusions being addressed in today's distance education literature, and explains the difference between pure and applied research. He defines various research topics, including diversity and generalization, and illustrates how theories are generally taken from practitioner studies performed within a given institution. After identifying how research minded practices are helpful and pragmatic for planning additional services, the author argues that unfortunately these practices do not accurately represent building a theory. He concludes that these findings are inconclusive and not easily transferred to other institutions. The chapter ends by summarizing that good research takes repeat testing not anecdotal speculations.

Rumble, G. (2000). Student support in distance education in the 21st century: Learning from service management. *Distance Education*, 21(2), 216-235. Retrieved from WebTycho, <http://tychousal.umuc.edu/OMDE608/0102/9040/>

This article highlights some interesting trends currently being addressed in the service-side of distance education and views student support through a consumeristic lens. After outlining a transformation in today's education systems to focus more on customer satisfaction, the paper illustrates how distance education institutions are becoming more involved in providing innovative support services for the purpose of maintaining quality. The author explains how various distance education systems are developing services that model practices from a service management industry, and how educational systems are more concerned with issues such as learner characteristics, needs, access and support. The summary is complete with charts and tables embedded in distance education literature, which support a systems approach to distance learning. It concludes by challenging traditional practices to value these services as an integral part of the whole learning system.

Tait, A. (1995). Student support in open and distance learning. In F. Lockwood (Ed.), *Open and distance learning today* (pp. 232-241). London: Routledge. Retrieved from WebTycho, <http://tychousa1.umuc.edu/OMDE608/0102/9040/>

This chapter discusses the growing interest in developing student support services for open and distant learning programs, highlights the benefits of providing these services, and presents a model for planning them. It illustrates a framework for identifying learners' needs and institutional characteristics, which consist of management style, technologies, cost, and quality assurance. Cultural, economical, and technological factors are outlined to help an institution articulate a unique planning mission, and samples of support infrastructures are reviewed, including student centers, virtual environments, and electronic classrooms. The chapter identifies how each element of support will be continually examined, documented and evaluated, and it concludes that for an institution to conceptualize a learner driven approach, the system must be flexible and receptive to change.

## **Section 2: Elements of Student Support**

### **Topic A: Tutoring and Teaching**

Berge, Z. L. (1995). The role of the online instructor/facilitator. *E-Moderators.com*. Retrieved August 2, 2001, from the [http://www.emoderators.com/moderators/teach\\_online.html](http://www.emoderators.com/moderators/teach_online.html)

The purpose of this article is to capture the role of today's online facilitator and address computer conferencing as an effective communication medium for instructional support. The author first explains how technology has made a profound impact on traditional education, and then confirms how instructional systems are more than just combining innovative technologies to deliver subject matter. He outlines the responsibility of providing online instruction and includes suggestions on how to develop computer conferencing that fosters two-way communication. The article summarizes the importance of online interaction and recommends various pedagogical, managerial, social and technical solutions for using computer-mediated technologies conducive to learning.

McLoughlin, C., and Luca, J. (2000). Cognitive engagement and higher order thinking through computer conferencing: We know why but do we know how? In A. Herrmann and M.M. Kulski (Eds.), *Flexible futures in tertiary teaching*. Proceedings of the 9th Annual Teaching Learning Forum, 2-4 February, 2000. Perth: Curtin University of Technology. Retrieved February 11, 2002 from <http://cleo.murdoch.edu.au/confs/tlf/tlf2000/mcloughlin.html>

This paper provides a summary, complete with charts and graphs, of asynchronous, text-based communication conferencing for collaborative learning environments. Drawing from research of other distance education literature, the study addresses how to analyze computer-mediated communication to encourage online interaction and facilitate higher order thinking. It evaluates the effectiveness of computer conferencing and provides a framework for task design, learner participation, facilitation, and scaffolding. The authors state that planning technology-mediated environments effectively enhances learning that fosters interaction, knowledge, and critical thinking. Several topics are discussed, including the role of student and teacher, cognitive interactions, and pedagogical approaches to help manage online discussion.

Thorpe, M. (2002). Rethinking learner support: the challenge of collaborative online learning. *Open Learning*, 17 (2), 105-119. Retrieved September 15, 2002 from WebTycho, <http://tychousa1.umuc.edu/OMDE608/0102/9040/>

The explosive growth of computer mediated technologies and the increasing popularity of learner support is the focus of this paper, and it conceptualizes how to use interactive computer-mediated communication (CMC) for teaching and learning. It raises questions concerning social interaction and course design, and offers recommendations on how to integrate collaborative learning methods for course content and learning support. A variety of topics are discussed, including the meaning of learner support, its key functions, contextual factors influencing an institution, and faculty's role in online teaching. The author reflects on DE literature to help educators understand the importance of learning support, and reviews the interactive capabilities of computer mediated technologies for designing instruction, supporting learners, and achieving educational outcomes.

Wolcott, L. L. (1995). The distance teacher as reflective practitioner. *Educational Technology (January/February)*, 39-43. Retrieved from WebTycho, <http://tychousa1.umuc.edu/OMDE608/0102/9040/>

This paper addresses how telecommunications technologies have placed precedent demands on practitioner to rethink current teaching and learning practices. It discusses the pedagogical shift from traditional teaching methods toward computer-mediated methods and poses critical concerns during the transition. The author describes how teaching in distance education does challenge traditional roles because of reduced interpersonal interaction through distance and separation, but she further suggests how reflection on traditional teaching methods can prepare and benefit distance practitioners to approach new roles and responsibilities. She addresses how educators can positively reflect on face to face teaching methods to re-examine a teaching style that will benefit planning strategies for both traditional and distance education.

### **Topic B: Advising and Counselling**

Frankola, K. (2000). Why online learners drop out. *Workforce.com*. Retrieved August, 2002, from <http://www.workforce.com/archive/feature/22/26/22/index.php>

This article discusses the current state of the e-learning industry and covers various reasons for high dropout rates, including technical issues, lack of support, poorly designed courses, and inexperienced instructors. The author reviews several corporate university infrastructures to better understand how student support services can improve the involvement, persistence, and satisfaction of corporate learners. Various systems are identified, including online community groups, blended learning sessions and workplace incentives, which emphasize the importance of integrating social learning activities, student interactions, two-way communication, and online facilitators. The paper ends with addressing the need for managers to supervise learning in the workplace and presents ideas on how to motivate corporate learners for a more productive training experience.

McLoughlin, C., and Marshall, L. (2000). Scaffolding: A model for learner support in an online teaching environment. In A. Herrmann and M.M. Kulski (Eds.), *Flexible futures in tertiary teaching*. Proceedings of the 9th Annual Teaching Learning Forum, 2-4 February, 2000. Perth: Curtin University of Technology. Retrieved February 11, 2002 from <http://cleo.murdoch.edu.au/confs/tlf/tlf2000/mcloughlin.html>

This article makes a significant contribution on how to design effective online teaching practices, and explores the skills needed to teach and learn online. The authors offer suggestions, embedded in educational, social and psychological learning theories, that help pave a way to design, develop, and implement well planned networked learning environments. Lifelong learning competencies, such as articulation, self-regulation, learning strategies, and self-evaluation are discussed and identified in a table to demonstrate strong and weak ways of learning to learn. The article further presents a conceptualized framework, equipped with theoretical principles, to define scaffolding as an essential design for monitoring learning, assisting in learning and creating an effective online learning environment.

O'Rourke, J. (1995). A piece of the jigsaw: Student advising in distance education. In A. Tait (Ed.), *Collected Conference Papers, Sixth Cambridge International Conference on Open and Distance Learning* (pp. 136-145). Cambridge, UK: The Open University. Retrieved from WebTycho, <http://tychousal.umuc.edu/OMDE608/0102/9040/>

This paper highlights the importance of the human touch in distance education and focuses on building a relationship between learner and institution. It provides practical advice from online advisors who demonstrate how intangible services such as tutoring, academic advising and personal counseling are essential components towards the overall success of the learning experience. The author introduces collective stories and personal testimonies to successfully highlight the benefits of the human elements involved in the learning process. She further illustrates this point by using an analogy representing a jigsaw puzzle, where she concludes that each piece of the puzzle is independently shaped, but has a significant contribution on the completed design. Her metaphor suggests that designing student support services are essential in an effective distance learning system.

Phillips, M., & Scott, P. (1999). Multimedia advice, guidance and counselling on the Web: A prototype learner's guide. In A. Tait (Ed.), *Collected Conference Papers, Sixth Cambridge International Conference on Open and Distance Learning* (pp. 121-130). Cambridge, UK: The Open University.

This paper presents a snapshot of an interactive guidance program and identifies how to use web-based multimedia, including streaming audio, video, and imagery, for online support services in areas of advice, guidance, and counseling. The project highlights certain pros (extended human interaction) and cons (technological access for home users) when using web-based interaction, and then illustrates these points by presenting various templates from the program's website. The authors demonstrate how a user would navigate through the system, and provide samples of multi-level support, including admission services (i.e. guidance and enquiries), course selection, study planning (i.e preparation and progress), career interests, special needs, and evaluation and feedback. The guide acts as an experimental prototype for exploring the potential of integrating web-based technology with online student support.

Simpson, O. (1992). Specifying student support services in the OU - the so-called Student Charter. *Open Learning*, 7(2), 57-59. Retrieved from WebTycho, <http://tychousal.umuc.edu/OMDE608/0102/9040/>

The purpose of this article is to present an idea of creating a customer care charter for student support services in higher education. It discusses concepts such as student contracts and a learner bill of rights, and uses these documents to evaluate if students would take advantage of services, including teaching, counseling, administrative and tuition support, if they knew these services were made available to them prior to their educational experience. The hidden agenda for this document is to create a standard for the student to seek help by recognizing services being offered. Unfortunately, however, the preliminary results only provided limited evidence supporting a substantial conclusion and although the document was not theoretically sound, it does provide insight into a binding commitment between a learner's emotional complexities and institutional support.

### **Topic C: Library, Registry, and Other Administrative Support Services**

Granger, D., & Benke, M. (1998). Supporting learners at a distance from inquiry through completion. In C. C. Gibson (Ed.), *Distance learners in higher education* (pp. 127-137). Madison, WI: Atwood Publishing. Retrieved from WebTycho, <http://tychousal.umuc.edu/OMDE608/0102/9040/>

This chapter focuses on the importance of providing institutional support throughout a distance learner's entire educational experience and addresses issues such as identifying the external factors, including family, leisure, learning styles, culture, knowledge, skills, etc, that surround them. The authors present a holistic view of learning support and demonstrate a human infrastructure of services from inquiry through to completions. It identifies various levels of support services which include registration, financial and library support, course advising, interaction, counseling, graduation and follow up. At the end of the chapter it discusses how faculty play a leading role in supporting the learning process and how essential it is for an educational institution to facilitate learning that motivates a successful return.

King, T. J. (1995). The identification of high dropout risk distance education students by the analysis of student records data. In D. Sewart (Ed.), *17<sup>th</sup> World Conference for Distance Education: One World Many Voices: Quality in Open and Distance Learning* (Vol. 2, pp. 98-101). Milton Keynes, UK: International Council for Distance Education and The Open University. Retrieved from WebTycho, <http://tychousal.umuc.edu/OMDE608/0102/9040/>

The purpose of this study is to analyze a traditional student records system to better track at risk students in distance education programs. The results compile data on common background characteristics between completers and non-completers in traditional programs and information is used to target at risk distance learners. The project found higher rates of completion among women, older adults, individuals with professional work experience and prior levels of education. It also identifies the highest at risk group to be an unemployed traditional students directly out of high school. Although this study addresses the need for early intervention strategies, it presents a problem with validity and reliability. Unfortunately the results do not accurately represent a sample balance of gender, subject area, and ethnic groups.

Phillips, S. E. (1995). The Commonwealth of Learning student record management system. In D. Sewart (Ed.), *17<sup>th</sup> World Conference for Distance Education: One World Many Voices: Quality in Open and Distance Learning* (Vol. 2, pp. 437-440). Milton Keynes, UK: International Council for Distance Education and The Open University. Retrieved from WebTycho, <http://tychousal.umuc.edu/OMDE608/0102/9040/>

Providing access to developing countries is the consideration of this chapter as the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) recognizes the need to install an easy to use management system to track and monitor students in open learning institutions. After evaluating existing systems, the author illustrates how the COL's special needs required them to design an administrative database to meet the criteria appropriate for their unique clientele. First, they identify a plan for the system they wanted to use, and then evaluated various technical features. The system developed provided support functions on all levels, was user friendly and generic in nature, had a student center focus, and inexpensive to maintain. This chapter demonstrates the decision making process toward implementing a new management system and presents a model on how to assess quality in addressing students needs. It concludes that this will always be a work in progress and requires an institution to make the appropriate changes and upgrades along the way.

Stephens, K., Unwin, L., & Bolton, N. (1997). The use of libraries by postgraduate distance learning students: A mismatch of expectations. *Open Learning*, 12(3), 25-33. Retrieved from WebTycho, <http://tychousal.umuc.edu/OMDE608/0102/9040/>

This report, the first part of an elaborate research project, summarizes the use of library services among postgraduate distance learners. It presents a preliminary conclusion on certain variables that determine library use and captures findings taken from quantitative research obtained from comprehensive surveys. Data reports, complete with charts and graphs, reveal a number of factors confirming why students use library services. These include program area of study, geographical location, course instructor's expectations, and usefulness of materials contained in library. The analysis provides significant planning implications for future funding sources and cutbacks when developing additional library services in distance education.

Wong, A. T. (1997). Valuing diversity: Prior learning assessment and open learning. In A. Tait (Ed.), *Collected Conference Papers, Sixth Cambridge International Conference on Open and Distance Learning* (pp. 208-216). Cambridge, UK: The Open University. Retrieved from WebTycho, <http://tychousal.umuc.edu/OMDE608/0102/9040/>

This article discusses the topic of a prior learning assessments (PLA), highlights the benefits and challenges of the PLA in the open learning system, and suggests future directions for assessing learning gained outside a formal institution. The author focuses on a variety of PLA concepts, including achieving and evaluating experiential learning, institutional assessment methods, and faculty's role in program delivery. She covers a range of issues such as valuing diverse groups of learners, preparing a reliable and valid assessment procedure, and presenting evidence of relevant learning. The article offers examples of Canadian initiatives and explains how the explosion of interest in the PLA movement has received increased attention from both federal and local governments because of its potential to improve workforce development.

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