

The role of Distance education in improving adult education

Maryam Zandieh¹ and Mona Habibi²

^{1,2} Bojnourd Branch, Islamic Azad University, Bojnourd, Iran

*Corresponding author: allahyari121@yahoo.com

Abstract: Distance learning is one of the fastest-growing components of higher education. Almost 3.5 million students were enrolled in at least one distance learning course in the fall of 2006 and online enrollments are increasing every year. The convenience of taking classes at any time from any location appeals to today's adult learner, especially those who work, have families or live in rural areas. Today a growing number of paralegal and legal secretarial programs have a distance learning component (no law schools currently grant credit for distance learning studies). However, not all distance learning programs are of equal quality. Moreover, the increasing popularity of distance learning programs have led to "diploma mills" or "accreditation mills" that offer bogus degrees and certificates. Choosing a distance learning program requires careful research and evaluation. Below are several important factors to consider in choosing a distance learning program. In evaluating distance learning paralegal programs, determine if the school is accredited by one of the regional accrediting bodies and by the American Bar Association (ABA). ABA-approval signifies that the school has met certain standards in terms of academics, facilities and instruction. Graduating from an ABA-approved school may give you an advantage in the legal job market.

[Maryam Zandieh and Mona Habibi. **The role of Distance education in improving adult education.** Journal of American Science 2011;7(6):327-331]. (ISSN: 1545-1003). <http://www.americanscience.org>.

Keywords: Distance education, adult education

Introduction:

Adults learn best when learning is focused on them, not the teacher. This is called andragogy, the process of helping adults learn.

Malcolm Knowles, a pioneer in the study of adult learning, observed that adults learn best when:

1. They understand why something is important to know or do.
2. They have the freedom to learn in their own way.
3. Learning is experiential
4. The time is right for them to learn.
5. The process is positive and encouraging.

Teaching adults can be very challenging, but also very rewarding. Most teachers would agree that the benefits derived from a successful adult education program in agriculture far outweigh the costs. In addition to the direct benefits to adult participants, the teacher, the school, the community, and the secondary program also benefit from a quality adult education program in agriculture.

Adults in agriculture use a number of sources to gain new information that can be used to help them solve problems. Persons employed in agriculture utilize newspapers, magazines, newsletters, radio, television, government publications, internet, and meetings to gather information which can be directly utilized in their business activities. In many communities, the agriculture teacher is the primary source of agricultural information.

Successful adult education programs develop and utilize an Agricultural Education Program Advisory Committee to assess the informational needs of adults in the community. Agriculture teachers should utilize the expertise and communications link, which an effective advisory committee provides. Specifically, the advisory committee should be asked to provide advice regarding planning, conducting, and evaluating the adult education program in agriculture. Adult education programs in agriculture should emphasize practical application of the information presented. Topics and information included in adult programs should be provided which fulfill needs of the local community. Providing information which cannot be applied to solve a local problem or address a local issue will generally be viewed as frivolous and over time will result in decreased interest (i.e. participation) in the adult education program.

The role of the agriculture teacher should be as a facilitator of the learning process. Most adults reject the traditional teacher-student relationship, which is necessary to maintain in secondary programs. Teachers should be encouraged to view themselves as partners with adult participants in the learning process. The democratic philosophy of shared responsibility for planning, conducting, and evaluating adult education programs distinguishes adult education from secondary education.

A local plan for adult education in agriculture should consist of two major components. Namely, a broad statement of philosophy, goals, and objectives of the

local adult education program, and an annual calendar of program activities.

Adult education in agriculture is important for continued community prosperity, growth, and improvement.

The local Agricultural Education program has a responsibility to provide up-to-date information, training, and retraining for all adults interested in agriculture.

The goals of the Adult Education Program are:

1. To assist adults in establishing personal and business goals.
2. To enhance the self-confidence and decision making skills of adults in agriculture.
3. To develop agricultural leaders.
4. To maintain the local agricultural knowledge and technology base.
5. To improve the home, living, and business conditions of persons employed in agriculture.
6. To encourage adults to participate in cooperative efforts.

The objectives for the local Adult Education program are:

1. To increase the net farm income of local agricultural producers.
2. To improve the safety practices of adults employed in agriculture in the local community.
3. To educate the public about the significant role in agriculture in the local economy.
4. To encourage the use of practices that protect and conserve natural resources to maintain a good environment for everyone.
5. To assist local producers in the development of marketing plans that are tailored to their individual needs.
6. To assist local producers in developing strategies to make optimum use of agricultural support agencies (e.g. FSA, MO Department of Agriculture).

A comprehensive program of adult education in agriculture includes three major components: (a) organized instructional classes for adults, (b) a Young Farmers/Young Farm Wives Chapter, and (c) Farm Business Management Analysis (FBMA). State Agricultural Education Program standards implemented in 1992 indicate that a minimum of 20 clock hours of organized adult education classes be provided. Many local agriculture programs will far exceed this minimum standard. Salary reimbursement Procedures for "Full Time" and Short Term adult programs are.

Getting a college education can be difficult for people with inflammatory bowel disease (IBD). Frequent trips to the restroom, exhaustion, doctor

visits, and medication side effects are all barriers to the traditional college experience. What if you could get the degree without ever setting foot on a campus? You can do just that through distance or virtual learning. Distance learning has been around for a long time (we've all seen the commercials on TV). While there is still prejudice surrounding some distance learning, it is increasingly being accepted as an alternative to traditional classroom learning. Courses can be offered via the Internet, where students are able to interact with instructors and other students without physically being in the same room. Before considering if distance learning is a viable option for you, there are several questions you should ask yourself:

- What course of study would you pursue?
- Are you interested in pursuing a degree? Brushing up on existing skills?
- Would your course of study require some traditional classroom time (such as laboratory or field work)?
- After obtaining a degree, would you be able to obtain employment that allows for your illness (such as telecommuting or flexible hours)?

Distance Education:

Distance education is any type of schooling that takes place away from a physical campus. Distance education is also known as:

- distance learning
- virtual learning
- online learning
- e-learning
- online education
- web-based training

Types of Distance Education Programs:

There are two types of programs offered by distance education schools: synchronous learning programs and asynchronous learning programs. With synchronous learning, distance education students must log on to the school's website at a set time. Often, they interact with their peers and professors via group chats, web seminars, video conferencing, and phone call-ins. With asynchronous learning, distance education students complete all coursework on their own time. They often learn via assignment sheets, message boards, email, pre-recorded video lectures, mp3s, and traditional mail correspondence. Many students find that distance education courses give them the freedom to complete a degree while meeting their personal and professional obligations. Motivated learners are often able to complete distance education degrees in a fraction of the time often required. Distance education courses also allow students to network with participants from all over

the nation. On the downside, distance education courses do not offer the face-to-face interaction found in traditional classrooms. Some students find that they struggle to stay motivated and meet deadlines due to the independent nature of distance education courses.

When searching for a distance education program, the most important factor to consider is accreditation. Make sure the distance education school you choose is recognized by a regional accreditor or the Distance Education Training Council.

Choosing a Distance Learning Program:

Distance learning is one of the fastest-growing components of higher education. Almost 3.5 million students were enrolled in at least one distance learning course in the fall of 2006 and online enrollments are increasing every year. The convenience of taking classes at any time from any location appeals to today's adult learner, especially those who work, have families or live in rural areas.

Today a growing number of paralegal and legal secretarial programs have a distance learning component (no law schools currently grant credit for distance learning studies). However, not all distance learning programs are of equal quality. Moreover, the increasing popularity of distance learning programs have led to "diploma mills" or "accreditation mills" that offer bogus degrees and certificates. Choosing a distance learning program requires careful research and evaluation. Below are several important factors to consider in choosing a distance learning program.

1- Accreditation. Accreditation is a means of ensuring the quality and effectiveness of higher education institutions and programs in the United States. Eight regional accrediting agencies accredit most of the colleges and universities in the United States. A host of national and professional accrediting organizations also exist, including the Distance Education and Training Council (DETC), an organization that identifies and accredits distance learning programs. These twelve questions outlined by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation are helpful in examining a distance learning program's claims of accreditation.

In evaluating distance learning paralegal programs, determine if the school is accredited by one of the regional accrediting bodies and by the American Bar Association (ABA). ABA-approval signifies that the school has met certain standards in terms of academics, facilities and instruction. Graduating from an ABA-approved school may give you an advantage in the legal job market.

2- Reputation. The reputation of the distance learning program you attend may hinder or enhance your post-graduate employment prospects. In evaluating the

reputation of a distance learning program, you should not solely rely on the school's website or marketing materials. Other ways to investigate the reputation of a distance learning program include:

- Visiting the school.
- Talking to alumni (contact the career services department for alumni names and contact information).
- Researching the distance learning program's record with the Better Business Bureau.
- Talking to paralegals, attorneys and legal employers about the reputation of the school you are considering.
- Researching the school in print publications, news articles and on the Internet.

3- Academic Offerings. When evaluating distance learning programs, it is also important to consider the program's academic offerings. A quality distance learning program offers a comprehensive curriculum with a variety of options, electives and advanced coursework. Talk to professors or an academic dean regarding the content and delivery of courses. The American Association for Paralegal Education (AAfPE) recommends that paralegal instructional content include courses in legal research and writing, litigation, ethics, contracts, business organizations and torts. In addition, courses should develop students' critical thinking, communication, computational, computer and organizational skills, and competency to handle ethical issues, according to the AAfPE.

Legal programs should also offer an experiential learning component such as an internship, practicum, pro bono work or clinical experience. These are great resume-building opportunities and allow you to learn practical skills and gain real-world experience.

4- Instructional Technologies. Distance learning courses can be delivered in a variety of ways through a growing array of technological tools including audio tapes, CD or DVD ROM's, e-mail, telephone conferences and web-based delivery systems. Questions to ask include whether the program employs a mix of instructional technology? Is hands-on training and support provided? Can students preview courses online and try out the technologies before enrolling?

5- Teaching Staff. The faculty is the backbone of any distance learning program. Are the courses taught by professors or are the courses pre-taped correspondence instruction? If the courses are taught by instructors, what is the background and qualifications of the teaching staff? Are classes taught by paralegals, attorneys or a mix of both?

6- Career Services. Another important consideration in any distance learning program is the extent and quality of its career services program. Research indicates that the greater the resources offered by the career services department, the greater the program's job placement success. You might inquire as to what percentage of graduates find related employment following graduation and whether the career center offers personalized career counseling, job placement assistance, job search seminars, online job boards or resume assistance.

Conclusion:

To improve the quality of life, learning materials should reinforce the skills they acquired previous. This material should have access to information and provide new technology. should also have to make learning more fun. Additional materials should provide opportunities for literacy skills to read and to strengthen their cognitive awareness.

Track materials (continued) which increased literacy skills and knowledge gained is also effective in enriching learning environment for learners are important. Participatory materials to ensure the participation of learners in the learning process and codification are included out of class activities, dialogue, role playing, etc. In traditional programs that the principles of psychology and curriculum planning, less attention is the form of content presentation ie codification and providing books, original format and have the dominant form, while for adult content that could have valuable experience in addition to writing, other ways also be provided Affect the selection of pictures and images related to the concepts and content produced by including them. Learning activities such as activities outside the classroom, dialogue, role playing and ... Another type of content is presented. Duties are placed on the learner, a resource for developing knowledge, skills and insights he considered. Curriculum content only from the training provided to learners or not, but put together their learning through activities that can inform or does, skills and attitude to achieve. In this case, apart from learning that the essays taught learners directly to sustainable and effective learning occurs in his.

Another way of providing content that is educational activities outside the learning environment possible for learning more and better enables adult learners. For example, hits, field trip experiences for learners or transfer is provided, develop knowledge, insight and skills they will.

To ensure that science curriculum and educational aspects, according to community needs and audiences, application form is provided or not, the content selection criteria should be considered. These

criteria is being include knowledge, effectiveness, flexibility, diversity, relevance and practical learning

***Corresponding Author:**

Maryam Zandieh
Bojnourd Branch, Islamic Azad University,
Bojnourd, Iran
*Corresponding author: allahyari121@yahoo.com

Reference:

1. Cranton, P. (1992). Working with Adult Learners. Toronto: Wall & Emerson.
2. Cranton, P. (1996). Professional Development as Transformative Learning. San Francisco: Jossey- Bass.
3. Creighton S. (2000). Participation trends and patterns in adult education: 1991-1999. United States: National Center for Education Statistics.
4. Fabry, D. L.,&Higgs, J. R. (1997). Barriers to the effective use of technology in education: Current status. Journal of Educational Computing Research, 17(4), 385-395.
5. Fletcher, W. E.,&Deeds, J. P. (1994). Computer anxiety and other factors preventing computer use among United States secondary agricultural educators. Journal of Agricultural Education, 35(2), 16-21.
6. Frye, N. (1993). The Educated Imagination. Toronto: Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.
7. Ginsburg, L.,&Elmore, J. (2000). Captured wisdom: Integrating technology into adult literacy instruction. Naperville, IL: North Central Regional Education Laboratory. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 454 408).
8. Habermas, Jurgen. (1991). Knowledge and Human Interests. Boston: Beacon Press.
9. Hair, J. F., Anderson, R. E., Tatham, R. L., & Black, W. C. (1998). Multivariate data analysis (5th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
10. Hanson, Karen. (1988). Prospects for the Good Life: Education and Perceptive Imagination. In K. Egan and D. Nadaner (Eds.), Imagination and Education. New York: Teachers College Press.
11. Hardy, Barbara. (1998). Towards a Poetics of Fiction: An Approach Through Narrative. Novel, 2, 5-14.
12. Hartree, A. (1994). Malcolm Knowles' theory of andragogy: A critique. International Journal of Lifelong Education, 3(3). 203-210.
13. Hopey, C. (1999). Technology and adult education: Rising expectations. Adult Learning, 10(4), 26-29.

14. Kim K. (2000). Participation in adult education in the United States, 1998-1999. U.S. Dept. Of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement.
15. King, K. P. (1999). Unleashing technology in the classroom: What adult basic education teachers and organizations need to know. *Adult Basic Education*, 9(3), 162-175.
16. King, K. P. (2003). Learning the new technologies: Strategies for success. In K. P. King & P. Lawler (Eds.), *New perspectives on designing and implementing professional development of teachers of adults. New directions for adult and continuing education* (Vol. 98, pp. 49-57). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
17. Knowles, M. S. (1992). *The modern practice of adult education, andragogy versus pedagogy. Author of the Classic Informal Adult Educator*, 3rd Edn. New York: Association Press.
18. Knowles, M. S. (1994). *Andragogy in action: Applying modern principles of adult learning*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc. Pub.
19. Knowles, M. S. (1999). *The making of adult educator: An autobiographical journey*. 1st Edn. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc. Pub.
20. Kotrlik, J.W., & Smith, M. N. (1999). Computer anxiety levels of vocational agriculture and other vocational teachers. In M. F. Burnett (Ed.), *Proceedings, national agricultural education research meeting* (pp. 1-9). Columbus, OH: American Association for Agricultural Education.
21. Krajnc, A. (1999). *Andragogy*. In Collin, J. T. (Ed.), *Lifelong education for adults: An international handbook*. 1st Edn. New York: Pergamon Press.
22. Lawler, P. A., & King, K. P. (2003). Changes, challenges, and the future. In K. P. King & P. Lawler (Eds.), *New perspectives on designing and implementing professional development of teachers of adults. New directions for adult and continuing education* (Vol. 98, pp. 83-91). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
23. Jaffee, L. L. (2001). Adult literacy programs and the use of technology. *Adult Basic Education*, 11(2), 109-124.
24. Jordan, W. R., & Follman, J. M. (1993). *Using technology to improve teaching and learning. Hot topics: Usable research*. Palatka, FL: Northeast Florida Educational Consortium, Southeastern Regional Vision for Education. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service ED 355 930).
25. Mazanah Muhamad & Associates. (2001). *Adult and continuing education in Malaysia*. 1st Edn. Kuala Lumpur: Universiti Putra Malaysia.
26. Merriam, S.B., Baumgarther, L.M., & Caffarella, R.S. (1999). *Learning in adulthood: A comprehensive guide*. 2nd Edn. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Pub.

5/5/2011