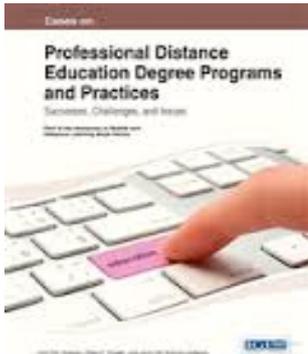


## **CASES ON PROFESSIONAL DISTANCE EDUCATION DEGREE PROGRAMS AND PRACTICES: Successes, Challenges, and Issues**

**Sullivan, K. P., Czigler, P. E., & Sullivan Hellgren, J. M. (2014). Cases on Professional Distance Education Degree Programs and Practices: Successes, Challenges, and Issues (pp. 1-315). Hershey, PA: IGI Global. DOI: 10.4018/978-1-4666-4486-1. 315 pages.**

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### **INTRODUCTION**



The book is edited by Kirk P & H. Sullivan from Umea University, Peter E. Czigler from Örebro University, and Jenny M. Sullivan Hellgren from Umea University, Sweden and published in 2014 by Information Science Reference (Hersey, PA), an imprint of IGI Global. The book (ISBN: 978-1-4666-4487-8) has a total of 411+xxv pages. The book includes a total of 12 chapters and 21 authors have contributed to the chapters. The authors are selected from 7 countries; they are mainly from Sweden, Cyprus, Cayman Islands, Sri Lanka, UK, New Zealand, USA.

Distance professional degree is a life-long learning and adult learning event. It offers the working professional a life-long learning experience and meets their professional performance needs or gain the new professional skills in order to improve career or find a new job.

Adult learning is a self-concept and intellectual responsibility of adults as learners (Knowles, 1990). Adults have personal learning contexts and demands. On this ground, if distance professional education degree program is appropriate for their self-directed learning situations, they can be motivated and complete courses successfully. Personal interest is an important key for lifelong learning to keep going (retention) on the professional program. The combination of these factors make academy complex in designing and implementing distance professional education degree programs.

Therefore, all experiences on designing and implementation of the professional online degree programs become meaningful to be able to understand complexity. *Professional Distance Education Degree Programs and Practices: Successes, Challenges, and Issues* presents a set of 12 cases of the professional online education degrees during the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The book covers topics such as creating online communities, implementation of distance education courses, learning through ICT, online doctoral courses, online facilitation, peer collaboration, professional degree, plagiarism, secure e-learning and cryptography.

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS CHAPTERS AND LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS**

### **Editorial Advisory Board**

**Foreword, Virginia Langum  
Foreword, Dean Sutherland**

### **Preface**

**Kirk P.H. Sullivan, Peter E. Czigler, Jenny M. Sullivan Hellgren**

### **Acknowledgment**

**Kirk P.H. Sullivan, Peter E. Czigler, Jenny M. Sullivan Hellgren**

### **Chapter 1 (Kirk P. H. Sullivan)**

#### **Studying Professional Degrees via the Internet:**

#### **Challenges, Issues, and Relevance from the Student's Perspective (pages 1-27)**

*Chapter 1* presents the author's personal perspective on four professional degrees delivered via the Internet over the past 12 years. The four cases were evaluated in terms of six themes including initial contact, communication, support, deadlines, work, and keep going. In this context, the author describes some issues, challenges and questions of relevance with regard to professional degree program via Internet.

Based on her experience, the chapter presents 10 tips (*Computer Skills, Literacy Skills, Peer Skills, Create A Social Network with Your Peers, Time Management Skills, Be Prepared for Feedback, Leadership Skills, Support from Employer, Support from Family, Support from Friends*) to help the student read the professional degree via the Internet to keep going and three tips (*Benefits, Consequences, Risks*) of things to consider before enrolling. These tips might help the lecturer to design the professional course. The chapter concludes by presenting a set of recommendations in order to assess how well the professional degree program via Internet is.

**Chapter 2 (Despina Varnava-Marouchou, Mark A. Minott)**

**Experiences of an Online Doctoral Course in Teacher Education (pages 28-48)**

*Chapter 2* describes benefits and challenges of online learning. The reflective experiences of two students who had completed successfully doctorate of education degree via a combination of face-to-face and online methods at University Kingdom University are examined as a case in order to illuminate areas of online learning in need of improvement and offer practical insights to those who currently enrolled, or are thinking of enrolling in an online doctoral education course. The authors then further explain why they chose a United Kingdom University and a doctoral degree program in teacher education.

Based on their experiences, the benefits of the online doctoral program are accessing courses from anywhere in the world, engaging synchronous and asynchronous communication, and the development of creative thinking and reflective skills. The chapter highlights importance of fulfilling the dream of achieving a doctoral degree in teacher education while maintain family and work life as the most important benefit of online learning program. According to the authors, some challenges of online learning programs are feeling of isolation, balancing family commitment with study, managing time, and coping with additional workload. The chapter ends with a good conclusion that online learning requires alteration in thinking and a willingness to change certain attitudes about learning.

**Chapter 3 (Hakim Usoof, Brian Hudson, Eva Lindgren)**

**Plagiarism: Catalysts and Not So Simple Solutions (pages 49-85)**

*Chapter 3* describes the domain and definitions of plagiarism, its historical and cultural context and the situation of plagiarism in Distance Education based on the students and teachers perspectives.

The chapter also discusses the actual catalysts of plagiarism and methods that have been used to detect plagiarism. The study found some factors contributing to plagiarism.

These are: lack of understanding of the meaning of plagiarism and what is really constitutes, lack of awareness, lack of education, weak teaching and assessment habits, lack of a comprehensive institutional Academic Dishonesty policy including rules, regulations and a list of appropriate actions and a plan to educate both teachers and students, and also monitor the plagiarism situations at the institutions.

The authors assert that one of the best way to avoid plagiarism is to reduce students' opportunities to plagiarize and it can happen with successful and innovative approaches in teaching and assessment processes including academic conventions, up-lifting students' moral values and self-respect, creating student-centered learning environments and creating new assessment models.

#### **Chapter 4 (Mats Deutschmann)**

##### **Creating Online Community: Challenges and Solutions (pages 86-111)**

*Chapter 4* describes on building collaborative learning into online professional degree programs and also reports on a study based on six years of online courses in English at Mid Sweden University in Northern Sweden.

The chapter illuminates how pedagogical research and models can be translated into practical design of online learning environments.

#### **Chapter 5 (Huahui Zhao)**

##### **Introducing Peer Collaboration in a Networked English Writing Class (pages 112-148)**

*Chapter 5* presents four content analyze studies for second language (L2) writing including ten studies examining learners' performance in peer assessments in Table 1, four studies examining learners' perceptions in Table 2 and four studies examining the effects of training on peer assessment in Table 3 and 12 studies examining class interaction through using InterChange (a platform for real-time synchronous computer-mediated communication especially it is used for collaborative writing) in Table 4.

These studies provide a good archive for the researchers who want to study on the same subject.

The chapter also presents a case study research which explores how peer assessment facilitated learners' developing their L2 writing capacity in a traditional face-to-face English writing class at a university in China during 16 weeks.

The chapter concludes three important training needs. These are learners' technological skills, online collaboration skills and teachers' skills of using networked peer assessment.

#### **Chapter 6 (Dianne Forbes)**

##### **Listening and Learning through ICT with Digital Kids: Dynamics of Interaction, Power, and Mutual Learning between Student Teachers and Children in Online Discussion (pages 149-176)**

*Chapter 6* reports the case which explores the interaction and social dynamics observed between the two groups, focusing in particular on how the student teachers "listened" to the children (8 pupils, 12 years old) in the context of the online discussion, with links to theoretical perspectives including constructivist and democratic pedagogies in New Zealand.

The chapter presents a good case for learning through listening skills in online environments and also a useful model consisted of six steps for peer assessment into a networked class.

**Chapter 7 (Catherine E. Stoicovy)**  
**Culturally Responsive Online Learning for Asian/Pacific Islanders  
in a Pacific Island University (pages 177-199)**

*Chapter 7* examines the socio-cultural contexts of Asian/Pacific Islanders in a Western Pacific Island to identify key components for culturally responsive online course development. The author uses McLoughlin and Oliver's (2000) ten principles as a design framework for culturally instructional design in blended courses. The chapter ends with the recommendations for online learning environments used by culturally diverse students.

**Chapter 8 (Richard J. Magjuka, Xiaojing Liu)**  
**A Case Study of Online MBA Courses: Online Facilitation,  
Case-Based Learning, and Virtual Team (pages 200-232)**

*Chapter 8* presents another case study which examines online students and instructors' perceptions and experiences in terms of online facilitation, case-based learning and virtual team in an online MBA programs.

The authors indicate that the instructors and students need to receive more guidance and support, technologically and pedagogically, in order to create a more engaging and efficient online learning environment. The authors report several recommendations to program administrations in terms of training and program support.

**Chapter 9 (Kristy Beers Fägersten)**  
**A Case Study of a Distance Degree Program in Vietnam: Examples  
from a Learner-Centered Approach to Distance Education (pages 233-257)**

*Chapter 9* describes English Linguistics distance MA degree program based on a learner-centered approach at Vietnam National University. The author highlights three design critics in the distance program, which are testing, technical training and fostering a community of learners.

The author asserts that such a distance education program can overcome some challenges including unfamiliarity with distance education, the use of English as a foreign language and cultural differences for Vietnamese students.

**Chapter 10 (Klara Bolander Laksov, Charlotte Silén, Lena Engqvist Boman)**  
**Implementation of Scholarship of Teaching and Learning through an  
On-Line Masters Program (pages 258-295)**

*Chapter 10* describes an international and online master program in medical education called as "Scholarship of Medical Education" and also presents what are intentions and pedagogical principles underlying the design, the teaching and learning activities, support services in the program. The authors report that is assessment as well as the lack of critical thinking in the courses is a challenge which requires further investigation.

### **Chapter 11 (Gordon Joyes, Tony Fisher, Roger Firth, Do Coyle)**

#### **The Nature of a Successful Online Professional Doctorate (pages 296-330)**

*Chapter 11* presents another case study of online professional doctorate in Teacher presents another case study of online professional doctorate in Teacher Education offered by School of Education at the University of Nottingham, UK. The chapter also provides us the authentic perspectives of six students, who completed the program or taking part of the degree program in its last stage, from different countries such as Hong Kong, Cyprus, Cayman Islands, Dubai. The chapter concludes with discussions of the current challenges facing the organization.

### **Chapter 12 (Wasim A. Al-Hamdani)**

#### **Secure E-Learning and Cryptography (pages 331-369)**

*Chapter 12* reports the advantages of e-learning system, the general elements required in e-learning, and cryptography algorithms in e-learning systems. The chapter also focuses on security components required in secure e-learning systems such as integrity, confidentiality and privacy, non-reputations, authentication, and access control to provide secure knowledge delivery, secure student feedback, and secure assessments.

The author presents a new cryptography e-learning model based on secure shell system using X.509 certificates (PKIX). The chapter ends with the future directions on security issue for e-learning.

### **About the Contributors**

### **Index**

## **CONCLUSION**

This book uses case study methodology in order to present the students and instructors experiences and perceptions related to the distance online degree programs. Hence, their reflective experiences show the success factors, challenges to overcome and some problems required to solve promptly in implementation of professional distance education programs.

As a whole, the book enlightens the reader about areas of online learning in need of improvement and offers practical insights to those who currently enrolled, or are thinking of enrolling in an online doctoral education course.

The book is written for academics and instructors coordinating distance education programs, initiating distance education courses and implementing such programs for those earning professional degrees. The book can also be used as guidance for adults who are interested in professional online degree programs.

Finally, the book can be useful as a library reference book for educators as well as administrators in open and distance education universities or dual mode universities.

## RESOURCES

Knowles, M. (1990). *The adult learner: A neglected species (4<sup>th</sup> ed.)*. Houston, TX: Gulf.

McLoughlin, C. & Oliver, R. (2000). Designing learning environments for cultural inclusivity: A case study of indigenous online learning at a tertiary level. *Australian Journal of Educational Technology*, 16 (1), 58-72.

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