

For this discussion, read chapter 3 in the Simonson text and chapters 1 and 7 in the Moore Handbook.

Then address the following questions.

**1. Simonson briefly discusses a number of major categories of research in distance education: learning outcomes, learner perceptions, learner attributes, interaction, barriers to distance education, and telemedicine/telehealth (which isn't really distance education, but...). Which of these do you find most interesting? Very briefly describe a study that you could conduct in that category.**

The category of research I found most interesting is interaction. In this category researchers investigate about the amount of interaction and the corresponding level of satisfaction learners have. They also investigate about interaction and technology; research about this topic indicate that different technologies allow different degrees of interaction (Simonson, Zvacek & Smaldino, 2019). Class size is another factor that affects interaction in distance education; optimal levels of interaction consider class sizes of 16 students in college courses (Simonson, Zvacek & Smaldino, 2019).

If I had to conduct a study in this category, I would investigate how interaction is affected by technology. I would investigate how the use of different forms of technologies promote learners' interaction. This investigation should consider the purpose of using the technology, if it is used to satisfy students' needs, or if it is used as new technology adopted by the institution that would require courses to be re-design so the technology can be implemented.

**2. Regarding "A History of Scholarship," by Black:**

**Who were the leading pioneers of research in distance education, and where were the centers of organized research in the field? What were the leading topics of research in the latter part of the 20th century and in the early of the present century?**

The first systematic description of American correspondence was recorded in 1926 by one of the pioneers of research in distance education, John S. Noffsinger (Moore and Diehl, 2019). Another pioneer, Gayle B. Childs wrote his doctoral dissertation about correspondence education in public school, for which he received a grant from the Ford Foundation (Moore and Diehl, 2019). In 1960s, Charles Wedmeyer implemented the idea of employing specialists in correspondence study to work in teaching teams and connecting a variety of communications media; his idea created higher quality programs than those produced by only one individual with one communication medium; Wedmeyer's ideas were incorporated into the design of the Open University of the United Kingdom (Moore and Diehl, 2019).

In the late 20<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup>, most studies have focused on which learning environment or which delivery technology or media is more effective. Results have shown that there is no significant difference between the instructional method and the student performance. Researchers, in this century (21<sup>st</sup>), have recommended not to only focus on these topics, but also on policy and management, innovation and change, technology selection an adoption, and cost-benefit/value for investment (Moore and Diehl, 2019).

### **3. Regarding "The State of Research on Distance, Online, and Blended Learning," by Bernard, Borokhovski, and Tamim:**

**Identify one interesting item from this article and describe how you could apply that information in your capacity as a graduate student or as a distance educator.**

The most interesting item in this article was the use of qualitative meta-synthesis in answering questions of research in distance, online, and blended learning. Meta-synthesis is a category of qualitative research that can be used to answer questions that meta-analysis in quantitative research cannot. Both use a systematic approach to data collection and analysis, but there are several differences between them. Meta-analysis attempt to ask and answer most of the time the same questions while meta-synthesis uses a variety of questions where some of them aim to describe the research around more purposeful reviews (Moore and Diehl, 2019).

As a distance educator, I would use meta-synthesis to investigate students' feelings about the course. Open questions surveys would be given at the beginning, the middle, and the end of the semester to collect students' opinions in certain areas such as: experience with online learning, time management, balancing school with their personal life, and instructor accessibility. It is important to mention that the first survey will be based on students' expectations from the course. The results of the study will allow me to have a better understanding of the students' needs as well as what I need to improve as instructor so students can succeed in distance education.

#### **Reference**

- Moore, M. & Diehl, W. (2019). *Handbook of Distance Education*. Routledge.
- Simonson, M., Zvacek, S, & Samaldino, S. (2019). *Teaching and learning at a distance education*. (7<sup>th</sup> Edition) IAP-Information Age Publishing