

Distance Learning: Identifying Conditions That Influence Web-Based Education Outcomes

Susan WG Batten RN PhD and Carlos AC Baptista MD PhD

The transformation in higher education from classroom to web-based format continues to gain momentum. Students expect dynamic presentations in a format amenable to individual learning style; meanwhile, faculty attempts to reconcile with the appeal for a new teaching style and mode. The purpose of this longitudinal exploratory study was to identify factors that contribute to increased learning by students engaged in web-based study and to identify faculty factors that contribute to quality course development.

378 students and 142 faculty participated in the study. Preliminary findings are student and faculty preferred learning channel influence development and utilization of web-based material, as well as appreciation for the online study. Faculty are diverse in relationship to computer proficiency and online course production; students are dissimilar in computer skills and application of web-based content.

Time and travel efficiency are positives related to online study, however access and quality continue to be issues. Faculty acknowledged that having options for learning is positive, but are uncertain about what constitutes effective online course management.