Abstract

Distance education (DE) has been defined as an educational process in which there is a separation between the students and their instructors or their institution. Since distance education has been used for mass education, the teaching and learning process has tended to use a monologue approach, i.e., information transmitted from the instructor or learning materials to the students. This has led to students feeling isolated from their instructor and the other students and has resulted in relatively low completion rates. The effective use of the Internet could be a way to reduce this isolation by using an online dialogue approach in the teaching and learning process.

The main goal of this study was to investigate if using a dialogue approach in UT’s online learning tutorials for Early Childhood Education would reduce the banking concept of education. Other goals included investigating what students would learn from this approach, if they felt that this would make them better teachers, and whether this approach would be beneficial to UT. I applied a dialogue approach inspired by Freire and Vella and developed a set of eight criteria that are required in a true dialogue process. These included: show respect, create and maintain a safe environment for self and students, assess needs and context, exercise praxis: action with reflection, exchange teacher-student roles, and engage in the learning process.

A qualitative case study was used to explore the use of a dialogue approach in an online tutorial and how the online tutor and students who participated in the dialogue-based online tutorial would learn from this experience at the Indonesian Open University (Universitas Terbuka or UT).

The results of this study showed that, with a small amount of advance training, students and their tutor are able to engage in a dialogue approach in the online tutorials at UT. In this study, the banking concept of learning for ECE students was reduced, students and tutors learned many useful things, and both the students and the tutor felt that this dialogical form of online learning was helping them experience a meaningful learning process.

Keywords: dialogue, distance education, online tutorial, banking concept of education, Open University of Indonesia, Universitas Terbuka