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Abstract

Integration of technology in all forms of education has narrowed down the gap between the on- and off-campus students and has resulted in the use of the more broad-based term 'distributed learning'. Consequently, distance learning is seen as a subset of distributed learning, focusing on students who may be separated in time and space from their peers and the instructor. The new forms and meanings it is acquiring, its convergence with traditional learning and its global impact pose several challenges. It has caused a serious concern to the governments and the quality assurance agencies all over the world about the safety of the national systems, legitimacy of the providers, protecting the public from fake providers, quality of the offerings etc. the common element being 'concern for quality'. Many quality assurance agencies have responded to this need and there is considerable dialogue about ensuring quality in distance education. Some think that quality assurance practices for distance education are essentially the same as those used for traditional education. Others argue that distance education tests conventional assumptions and hence the present mechanisms of quality assurance are

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not adequate to ensure the quality of distance education. This paper highlights the aspects of distance education that deviate so markedly from what has been practiced for hundreds of years and argues that quality assurance of distance education has to be approached differently. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)