

duration), how they want (modes of learning), and what they want (that is, learners can define what constitutes learning to them). These flexible learning principles may be applied at a distance. If so then the term "distance learning" is used. In such cases the learners can choose where they want to learn (at home, at an institution or company, at a training centre, etc.)

Those wanting to promote the distance learning industry require terminology which does not exclude potential customers by targetting too narrowly. At the same time it is important to appreciate the differences of terminology used within sectors when niche marketing is required.

1.2 The Distance Learning Industry

The distance learning industry supplies products and services to meet the needs of learners at home, in the workplace and in institutions. The word 'distance' is used to identify that the learner is separated from the instructor for some or all of the learning program.

Distance learning technologies include those which have been developed to enable valuable interactions between learners, their instructors and their fellow learners. Some distance learning technologies seek to replace face to face interactions and instructor controlled media presentations, with combinations of audio, print, graphic, data and video interactions, which can take place in real time (synchronous) or in delayed time (asynchronous). Fully self-contained, media, such as some computer based training, seek to engage the learner by dialogue with a "built in" tutor. The process of engaging the learner in an active, "internalised conversation" is recognized as a powerful element of effective instructional design for distance learning.

The distance learning industry is undergoing dynamic change and growth influenced by the developments of advanced communication and learning technologies which have precipitated the convergence of a wide range of previously separate segments of the industry. This convergence has led to new models of teaching and learning which tend to reflect the outcome of different educational and training systems worldwide and differences in preferences for, and use of, technologies for learning.