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This section serves as a foundation for this exhaustive reference tool by addressing crucial theories essential to the understanding of online and distance learning. Chapters within this segment provide an excellent framework in which to position distance learning within the field of information science and technology. With 60 chapters comprising this foundational base of knowledge, the reader can learn and choose from a compendium of expert research on the elemental theories underscoring the online and distance learning discipline.

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Section 7: Critical Issues in Online and Distance Learning

This section contains 30 chapters addressing issues such as gender barriers, web accessibility, quality assurance and development of e-learning in under-developed countries presenting readers with an in-depth analysis of the most current and relevant issues within this growing field of study. Models for researchers and practitioners are offered as attempts are made to expand the reaches of online and distance learning within the higher education community. The Formation of Frameworks in which to position the issues faced in this growing field is provided by research found in this section while the core psychological paradigms of education are translated into applicable ideas within the exploding realm of online and distance education. Crucial examinations of the cultural biases innate in online and distance learning are presented in this section while simultaneously enticing and inspiring the reader to research further and participate in this increasingly pertinent debate.

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Section 8: Emerging Trends in Online and Distance Learning

This concluding section highlights research potential within the field of online and distance learning while exploring uncharted areas of study for the advancement of the discipline. The introductory chapters set the stage for future research directions and topical suggestions for continued debate. Providing a fresh, alternative view of distance education, colleagues from universities all over the world explore the adaptive traits necessary as disseminators of knowledge within this evolving platform of education; a reminder that not only is the role of the learner rapidly evolving, but so too is the role of the facilitator. Educational programs throughout the world have witnessed fundamental changes during the past two decades—changes that are emphasized in the 25 rigorously researched chapters included in this section. With continued technological innovations in information and communication technology and with on-going discovery and research into newer and more innovative techniques and applications, the online and distance learning discipline will continue to witness an explosion of knowledge within this rapidly evolving field.

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