Chapter 21

Epilogue: Directions for Future Research

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ABSTRACT

This chapter undertakes to provide directions for future research that has been highlighted by the authors and, consequently, the editors of this book. The suggestions made for future research indicate a need for further research that can build on issues and concerns investigated throughout the various chapters. New areas are also raised for investigation that link either indirectly or directly to the research themes.

INTRODUCTION

This volume has focussed on comparative global issues and perspectives in distance and flexible education, providing a set of emerging perspectives from diverse corners of the world. Section 1 discussed global issues from several important perspectives. Section 2 presented a set of institutional case studies that focussed on collaboration and capacity development.

Zawacki-Richter, Bäcker, and Vogt (2009) found that the major research gaps in distance education are at the macro and meso level, with the most neglected areas of research being the globalization of education and cross-cultural aspects; innovation and change; and costs and benefits of distance education. Even though some contributions within this volume attempted to address these neglected areas the gaps are still evident. With this in mind, the editors felt that each volume required some concluding thoughts that would focus on a set of emerging questions for future research and investigation. These suggestions fall out of the work in this volume. The field certainly requires more qualitative studies to capture a deeper and richer range of data across many areas. We would also suggest that there is scope for numerous meta-analyses of various field areas and particularly of the case study research or ‘war’ stories from practice that could capture generalisable findings.