ABSTRACT

The advent of the internet has resulted in the development from mail, radio and telephonic modes of delivery to electronic mode of delivery in distance education. It has been predicted that the impact of the internet on distance and online education will result in benefits such as wider reach of learners who might be disadvantaged by geographical locations and distance, greater flexibility and increased convenience for distance and online learners. However, the envisaged benefits seem to be elusive as a result of a range of impediments, including issues related to the digital divide. In this case study, focused on on-line students at a college of distance and open education in Botswana, students perceptions of both the benefits of and the impediments to their study are described, together with their perceptions of support strategies. Findings indicate the need for support strategies consistent with the nature of online learning in the 21st century. In particular, the findings of this study suggest that Web 2.0 technologies have the potential to enhance learner support, and that there is a need for careful exploration of the ways in which such technologies can be exploited and applied in support of on-line learners.

KEY WORDS: Distance Education, Online Education, Learner Support, Web 2.0, the Digital Divide; Social Networking
DECLARATION

I declare that this research report is my own unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree of Master of Education at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other University.

____________________
Edward Selelo

_______ day of February in the year 2011
Dedicated to:

My Grandfather - Kediretswe Abraham ‘Kedes’ Monyadiwa Segobane Tshwene a Selelo

My Grandmother – Lorina ‘Mma ‘M’ragi’ Mma Ragele Selelo (R.I.P)

And my uncle - Edwin Mogae Selelo a.k.a ‘Mkuzi’ (R.I.P)
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ABBREVIATIONS

AU  Actual Usage

BI  Behavioural Intention

BOCODOL  Botswana College of Distance and Open Learning

BPC  Botswana Power Corporation

BTC  Botswana Telecommunications Corporation

DAFE  Diploma in Aids and Family Education

EDN  Education Data Network

ICTs  Information Communication Technologies

IGNOU  Indira Ghandi National Open University

LMS  Learning Management System

PEOU  Perceived Ease Of Use

PG  Postgraduate

PU  Perceived Usefulness

RNPE  Revised National Policy in Education

RSS  Really Simple Syndication

SAIDE  South African Institute for Distance Education

TAM  Technology Acceptance Model

UG  Undergraduate