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Kristi Archuleta Frush

Kalpana Gupta

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EAST MEETS WEST: MEDITATION IN DISTANCE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

Kristi Archuleta Frush¹, Kalpana Gupta²

ABSTRACT: This study investigates the infusion of eastern philosophy, specifically meditation into distance learning environments. How does adding meditative practice alter the learning setting for adult learners in distance learning environments? Literature on learning, yoga, meditation, compressed video, online learning, and neuroscience will be reviewed and addressed to look at the values of practice.

Distance instruction can be adapted to serve a more diverse group of participants and it is incumbent upon educators to identify ways to provide inclusive environments to support the exchange of ideals and ideas online. One initiative that aids educators to reach this goal is to infuse eastern philosophy into distance settings. Committees, such as Stress-Free Schools have been formed throughout the United States are researching the benefits of meditation for not only learners, but instructors as well (Micucci, 2005).

Through meditation, one can achieve enlightenment by becoming a detached observer, obtain clarity, and pursue a more focused and purposeful approach upon returning to daily activities and routine (Pilou, 2000). The use of meditation to introduce learning sessions, to pace self-directed learning, and to encourage intent reflection can help educators to respect multiple ways of learning and cultural norms outside of the western perspective.

In this study, learners from various ethnic backgrounds are introduced to segments of distance courses with and without meditative practice. Surveys capture learners' perspectives of how meditation alters the learning setting. Various distance formats including compressed video, hybrid, and online are explored along with a variety of meditative techniques including yoga, guided (verbal) meditative training and musically infused meditation.

Supposed implications from this research are new trends in arts-infused or meditative course design resulting in the creation of more motivating distance learning environments.

¹ Ed. D., **Assistant Professor**, Adult Education & Safety Science Dept. University of Central Oklahoma.

² Ed. D., Affiliate Faculty, Regis University, CPS, School of Education & Counseling.

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