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Börje Holmberg

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PREFACE

The study of distance education as a discipline of its own, or as an academic field of study composed of parts of other disciplines, has developed considerably during the last couple of decades. In 1960, when I published my first monograph on what is today called distance education, that term had hardly been thought of. Very little had been written about the subject, apart from some studies of the relative effectiveness of correspondence education (home study, independent study) and of the practices of some schools and universities.

The picture looks very different in the 1990s. There is now a wealth of literature on distance education, in the form of monographs, articles and case studies of various kinds. This literature reflects the development of practice, of research on education and other disciplines relevant to distance education and of theoretical approaches. The development has been rapid and is of wide scope, on the one hand covering applications, recognition and social impact, on the other, methods and media. Information and communication technology has made considerable improvements possible, for instance by eliminating or minimizing the procrastination previously inherent in student–tutor interaction. However, the intrinsic nature of distance education has remained unaltered. Distance education did and does offer mediated teaching and learning with a one-to-one relationship between learner and tutor, it did and does serve individual learners independently of time and place. It is evolution rather than revolution that characterizes its development.

This is the second edition of this book, which was first published in 1989. The content has been thoroughly updated on the basis both of changing practice and of new scholarly

contributions to the field. The presentation is organized in a way meant to make the logical structure clearer than in the first edition.

It remains my ambition with this book to provide a thorough study of facts and thinking in the field, a vade-mecum with a reasonable degree of inclusiveness. I hope it will prove useful to both colleagues in distance education and scholars chiefly interested academically in the subject.

Börje Holmberg