

A STUDY OF ATTITUDE AND PERCEPTION OF POST GRADUATE STUDENTS TOWARDS DISTANCE LEARNING

Dr. Sonia

Assistant Professor

Beacon institute of Technology

Meerut

INTRODUCTION

Distance education or distance learning is a field of education that focuses on teaching methods and technology with the aim of delivering teaching, often on an individual basis, to students who are not physically present in a traditional educational setting such as a classroom. It has been described as "a process to create and provide access to learning when the source of information and the learners are separated by time and distance, or both."

As a force contributing to social and economic development, *open and distance learning* is fast becoming an accepted and indispensable part of the mainstream of educational systems in both developed and developing countries, with particular emphasis for the latter. This growth has been stimulated in part by the interest among educators and trainers in the use of new, Internet based and multimedia technologies, and also by the recognition that traditional ways of organizing education need to be reinforced by innovative methods, if the *fundamental right* of all people to learning is to be realized. The globalization of distance education provides many opportunities for developing countries for the realization of their education; and the technological system-wide goals. Two main factors have led to an explosion of interest in distance learning: the growing need for continual skills upgrading and retraining advances that have made it possible to teach more and more subjects at a distance.

The term 'Distance Education' refers to an educational approach in which there is a quasi separation of the learner and the teacher in time and space (Keegan 1996). In distance education, the instructor and the instructional strategy/methods are subsumed into the learning material (popularly referred to as Study Materials), that have been designed as a self-directed learning guide for the student. The term 'Open Learning,' on the other hand, refers to the philosophical construct that seeks to remove barriers and constraints that may prevent learners from accessing and succeeding in quality, lifelong education. ODL as an educational method and a philosophic construct has been identified as the most potent instrument for combating the educational problems assailing a nation like India. Moore and Tait (2002) asserted that "...in developing countries, human knowledge resource development through initial and continuing education is not only seen as crucial for growth and competitiveness, but also has

far reaching social impact, for example in influencing birth rate, increasing the independence of women, and improving standards of health and rural environment" .

This affirms the crucial role that education can play in developing countries like India. Education is an important ally in the role of social and economic development. The potential of ODL in realizing these educational goals has been viewed ambivalently, however. In efforts to meet the new and changing demands for education and training, ODL may be seen as an approach that is at least complementary - and in some circumstances a more appropriate substitute - for face-to-face classroom methods that still dominate most educational systems. Despite the rapid growth in the popularity of distance learning, the quality of higher learning via distance education has been called to question (Dede 1996; Harrison 2001 as cited in Peat and Helland, 2002). Walter Perry the first vice-chancellor of the Open University of United Kingdom noted the "scepticism garnished with ridicule and hostility" of distance education universities (Young 1994). According to empirical evidence, however, there is no significant difference between learning outcomes that can be attained at traditional institutions versus distance learning (Verduin and Clark 1991).

JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

After independence, India had made tremendous progress in the field of education, though mostly quantitative in nature. Earlier, education was available only to the elites in society, and a large majority of poor and marginalized people remained illiterate. Political considerations have an important role in the expansion of higher education, especially at the state level. The state government experienced tremendous pressure from the public to establish more and more colleges and universities. In a democratic society, even the strong governments find it very difficult to resist such pressures and are compelled to succumb to the same. These considerations have led to fast expansion of higher education in our country, which in turn, have adverse impact upon its quality. Therefore, in order to insure access and education of a reasonably good quality, we must think of some alternative system capable of supplementing the role of conventional system, and distance education is one of such alternatives.

The distance education mode was adopted by many universities to meet the ever-growing demand of those students who lacked means to pursue higher education through the regular stream. Also, there were economic constraints. Consequently, many universities in India in various regions started correspondence courses or programs by providing notes, developing a system of evaluation of response sheets. The success of these courses led to the establishment of Indira Gandhi National Open University, which is now rated as one of the best distance courses university in the world.

Due to limitations of the formal system of education, policy makers were attracted towards non-conventional modes of education for providing non-residential studies like correspondence courses. The Distance Education mode, in which it is not necessary to bring all the students together to listen to the face-to-face lectures, was considered worthwhile. However in distance education system, the provision of occasional meetings between the teachers and the student is made. These meetings are popularly known as Personal Contact Programmes (PCPs). The learners receive their study material through postal services for study at their home or workplace. The efforts of the students are supplemented by assignments, which are checked and evaluated by the concerned subject experts. So, Correspondence education is a piece and part of open learning. Distance education system is also known by some other common names like Correspondence Courses, Correspondence Education, Distance Education and External or Private Appearance etc. This system of education is suitable for the persons who wanted to enhance their qualifications but were not in a position to attend classes on a regular basis. Such distance courses proved a boon for the service persons as well as others desirous of pursuing higher education. As a result, a large number of in-service persons, professionals, entrepreneurs, job-less youth, school teachers, housewives and old aged free persons made a beeline for admission to distance education study programmes

For the successful implementation of the program for target population, it is necessary to study the attitude of the students. So the present study was to study the attitude and perception of post graduate students

towards open and distance learning.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM:

From the above rationale the present study may be undertaken as under

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OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF THE TERMS

Attitude

An **attitude** is a favorable or unfavorable evaluation of something. Attitudes are generally positive or negative views of a person, place, thing, or event. People can also be conflicted or ambivalent toward an object, meaning that they simultaneously possess both positive and negative attitudes toward

that particular things, place, and person for the present study.

Perception

Perception is the process of attaining awareness or understanding of the environment by organizing and interpreting sensory information. For the present study perception means that awareness of distance education among students.

Distance Learning

The term *open and distance learning* reflects both the fact that all or most of the teaching is conducted by someone removed in time and space from the learner, and that the mission aims to include greater dimensions of openness and flexibility, whether in terms of access, curriculum or other elements of structure. The historical evolution of distance learning systems has been in four main phases. Open and distance learning systems can usually be described as made up of a range of components such as: the mission or goal of a particular system, programmes and curricula, teaching/learning strategies and techniques, learning material and resources, communication and interaction, support and delivery systems, students, tutors, staff and other experts, management, housing and equipment, and evaluation.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

1. To compare the attitude and perception of post graduate students towards distance learning on the bases of gender.
2. To investigate the attitude and perception of post graduate students towards distance learning on the bases of their residential status i.e. rural & urban.
3. To study the attitude and perception of students towards distance learning between professional and general stream post graduate students.

HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

1. There exists no significant difference in attitude and perception between male and female post graduate students towards distance learning.
2. There exists no significant difference in attitude and perception between urban and rural post graduate students towards distance learning.
3. There exists no significant difference in attitude and perception

between professional and general stream post graduate students towards distance learning.

DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

1. The study is limited to Meerut district of Uttar Pradesh.
2. A sample of 120 students are taken for the study.
3. The present study is delimited to students those are doing graduation from different distance learning.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

There are many methods of collecting, analyzing and reporting research data. The decision about the method depends upon the nature of the problem and objectives to be achieved. There are three types of method namely: (i) Historical Method: this method is used to establish connection and relationship among past events and facts and arriving at conclusion concerning them. The purpose of historical research is to develop full and complete understanding of the past events so as to interpret the present day happening, (ii) Experimental Method: This method is most classical method borrowed by social science from physical science and life science. It is the most exciting and difficult of all view because it derives the basic relationship among phenomenon under controlled conditions or more simple to identify the conditions underlying the occurrence of the given phenomenon, (iii) Descriptive Method: Descriptive research, sometimes known as Normative survey Method, deals with the relationship between the variables, the testing of hypotheses, and the development of generalizations, principles, or relationships that have universal validity. It is concerned with the functional relationships. This method of research is related to gathering of evidences in the existing situations. It collects three types of evidences in the existing situations. It collects three of information- what exists what we want and how to get the goals

POPULATION AND SAMPLE

Here Population means the aggregate or totality of individuals regarding which inferences are to be made. One of the important steps in the design of a sampling is the specification of the population to be studied.

Research is invariably conducted by means of sample. A good sample will produce a result very much approaching the population and generalization would be effective. The sample was selected with the help of simple random sampling technique across the colleges.

As sample is smaller representation of a larger whole i.e a population. A sample survey involves the

selection of a subset of the population. Selecting an appropriate sampling design is also very sensitive issue. A good sampling design should meet certain requirements. Kish (1965) has identified four broad criteria for a good sampling design such as (i) Goal orientation (ii) Measurability (iii) Practicability (iv) Economy.

Keeping in mind the above stated criteria, the researcher went in for the purposive sampling techniques was used to select the sample. Data was collected from the different IGNOU study centers & directorate distance education of Uttar Pradesh

TOOL USED

There are many techniques and tools have been developed for collection and acquisition of data, such as questionnaire, rating list, interview, check list, psychological test and observation. These are different from each other in several ways format, recording quantification and the nature of the data generate. Each practically appropriate for certain sources of data. The selection are tool is difficult task in research and is depend upon various considerations such as objective of the study, hypothesis of the study, availability of the time and availability of tool itself. In the present study, the tool was developed by investigator herself with the help of her research advisor. Self made questionnaire prepared by the investigator herself for students will be used for the collection of data.

STATISTICAL TECHNIQUES USED

Statistics is a mathematical technique or process of gathering describing, organizing, analysis and interpreting numerical data. For the present study the investigator used Mean, Standard Deviation to classify data into various groups and 't' - test was employed to analyze the score.

MAIN FINDINGS

- There is no significant difference in attitude and perception between the male and female post graduate students towards distance learning. It indicated that both male and female students' post graduate students had same attitude towards distance learning.
- There is a significant difference in attitude and perception between the urban and rural post graduate students towards distance learning. It indicated that both urban and rural post graduate students had different attitude towards distance learning.
- There is a significant difference in attitude and perception between the professional and general post graduate students towards distance learning. It indicated that both professional and general stream post

graduate students had different attitude towards distance learning.

EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATION

With the delivery of distance learning in today's society, the changing roles of both the teacher and the learner need to be seriously considered. This is particularly relevant with the use of new technologies to deliver courses in locations with entirely different cultural and academic traditions. International education of this kind currently faces difficulties in facilitating cross-cultural learning. While problems of limited communications technologies, lack of teacher training, inadequate competence of university administration and general cultural differences may be known, global changes call for the development of new pedagogies with new communication technologies in ways, which are sensitive to issues of cultural diversity. The result of the present study indicated that there is no significant difference in attitude between male and female post graduate students towards distance learning, the findings implicated to the all the students of higher education to enrolled more and more in different course of distance education.

Further the findings of the present study also reveals that there is a significant difference between urban and rural post graduate students in their attitude towards distance learning and rural students have not so good attitude towards the distance education, so awareness programme should be given to the rural areas students. Following suggestion may be give for making positive attitude towards distance education.

- The students have to be motivated for the extensive use of internet.
- The teacher can help the student with extra study material and time while sitting at home.
- Proper training programme have to be conducted in outside the colleges for training the teacher . The extensive use of interne in instruction and its application for personalized instruction should be taught to them periodically.
- The attitude towards post graduate students for open and distance learning to developed among colleges by designing special curriculum and this deserves attention in view of the educational need of the country.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

On the basis of the finding of the present investigator the investigator

would like to suggest the following suggestion for further researcher.

- The further study can also be conducted on the other level of the students.
- The present study confined only to Uttar Pradesh state, there fore more distinction can be covered taking a large sample.
- A differential study can also be conducted between post graduate and post graduate students towards distance learning.
- The present study was largely a comparative one; correlation study can be conducted to see the relationship between other variables like SES and different psychological variables.

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