

Can Difference in Mode of Education Cause Difference in Self Concept amongst Students at the Higher Education Level?

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Abstract

Many studies have been conducted to analyze the self concept of the individual, how different sub dimensions of self concept determine the personality pattern of the individual and self concept of students studying through the conventional mode but no where it was studied how the mode of instruction can affect the learners' self concept along with its sub dimensions. In this study the researcher has tried to find out the difference between two groups of student, one studying through Distance mode, and another studying through the Conventional mode with respect to their self concept. For the purpose 400 students were selected; 200 from the conventional mode and 200 from the distance mode. Personal Information Sheet and Self Concept Inventory were used to collect data from the students. The collected data was analyzed quantitatively. T- test was conducted to find out if there is any significant difference between the self concept of the two groups of students. It was found that there is a significant difference between the two groups in respect to their total self concept and some of its sub dimensions.

Keywords: Conventional Mode, Distance Learning, Self Concept

Introduction

Philips H. Coombs in his review of non formal programme opined that no one mode or institution of education – formal, informal or non formal – is capable by itself of meeting all the essential learning needs. During the last two decades there has been an intense exploration for alternatives – innovative, unconventional, and original – to the formal system of education which is increasingly perceived as irrelevant to the needs of a great majority of disadvantaged children, as also rigid, regimented, inflexible and unproductive. Unprecedented growth of population has led to an increase in the student population. The conventional education system serves only a selected and a limited number of students. A viable alternative for the developing countries like ours is to throw open the gate of learning to the Non-Formal mode of education which includes distance education and open learning. The target group includes neo-literates, schools drop outs, unemployed and self employed young men and women, whole time or part time workers in different establishment,

peasants, elderly people, and the handicapped and other weaker section of the society.

Distance Education can be termed as a system of education run along a two-way interaction and communication between the source of teaching and the learner maintained through the conventional as well as advanced information and communication technologies with an eye on providing opportunities to the learner to engage in his self-study with a freedom of choice related to time, space, medium, access and curriculum. Development of course material is an important task in the organization and management of Distance Education program. It is to a great extent different from the writing of a text or preparing lecture notes mainly because one has to learn the technique of imparting instruction to the learner in absentia along with keeping in mind the need of establishing a two-way link and interaction between the instructional material and the learner. It is, therefore, necessary on the part of the organizers and managers of Distance Education programs to regularly follow-up the course material presented

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to the learners. For this purpose students are asked to respond to the assignments given to them along with the course material. Most of the institutes of Distance Education organize personal contact programs for their students in order to provide to them an opportunity to come in personal contact with their teachers so that they may have some face-to-face interaction and counseling which would help in sorting out difficulties they might have had while studying the lessons or writing responses to given assignments.

The distance mode has been adopted by many universities not only to meet the ever growing demand of those students who did not have the means to pursue higher education through the regular stream but also to augment opportunities for higher education as an instrument of democratizing education and making it a life-long process. Moreover through distance learning programs efforts are being made to upgrade skills at regular intervals and develop new competencies. The government of India has very well recognized the significance and compulsion of promoting distance education programs both at the school level and higher education level.

Therefore it has made it compulsory for each state to establish an Open University and an Open School to cater to the educational and training needs of the students. Degrees received through distance education courses are considered equivalent to the degrees received through conventional mode of education. The government issued a notification in 1995 stating that all qualifications awarded through distance education by the universities stand automatically recognized for the purpose of employment to posts and services under the central government, provided it has been approved by the Distance Education Council.

Reddy (1994) made a study on the learners attitude of Distance education. Singh, Bakhshish¹¹ studied the functioning of Distance Education and 29 correspondence course institutes. Mishra (1991) studied the management patterns, costs and academic effectiveness of Distance Education in Indian universities. Sahoo⁹ studied the correspondence education in an Indian University. Saxena¹⁰, conducted a study to draw profile of distance learners at IGNOU.

However, all the studies dealt with either the administrative aspect or learner profile of distance education. This paper tries to determine whether the mode of education has any significant effect on the self-concept of the learners.

From the historical point of view the study of the self-concept can be characterized by many different theoretical approaches. For instances according to James, the self is regarded as an entity consisting of fluctuating material – i.e., the same object being sometime treated as a part of me, at other times as simply mine and then again as if I had nothing to do with it at all. This concept of 'self' is divided by James into 3 parts involving a) its constituents b) the feeling and emotions they arouse c) the actions to which they prompt. Despite James elaborated discussion of the latter two aspects of the self, the first aspect is at present most studied. The constituents of the 'I' involve the self as 'knower', i.e., the self as subject and includes aspects like continuity, distinctness, volition and self reflection. The 'Me' involves the self as known, i.e. the self as object. Here a number of different ways in which a person may know himself are specified, as the material, the social, and the spiritual. While the self as known can be empirically studied, the self as knower is much more difficult subject of inquiry; it is that which at any given moment is conscious where as the 'me' is only one of the things which it is conscious of (James 1992).

According to Mead, the self is essentially a social structure and it arises in social experience. The person gets to know himself through other – i.e., he cannot experience himself directly as such, but only indirectly from the particular standpoint of other individual member of the same social group as a whole to which he belongs.

Self concept is the composite of ideas, feelings and attitudes that a person has about his or her own identity, worth, capabilities and limitations. Such factors as the values and opinions of others, especially in the formative year of early childhood, play an important role in the development of self-concept.

The importance of self concept stems from its notable contribution to personality formation. Self

esteem has to do with social competence, since it influences how the person feels, how he or she thinks, learns, values himself or herself, relates to other and ultimately how he or she behaves (Clark, Clemes and Bean, 2000; Clemes and Bean, 1996).

Self concept as a component of human personality development has its own nature and peculiarity. Several authors (Shavelson et al; 1976; quoted by Garma and Elexpuru, 1999) have looked at self concept as a compendium of seven characteristics or fundamental aspects: self concept constitutes a psychological dimension ; it is multidimensional ; it has a hierarchical organization (a general self concept and specific self concept); it is stable but as we go lower on the hierarchy, self concept becomes more specific and ,more susceptible to change ; the different facets of self concept become more differentiated among themselves with age and experience ; self concept includes both descriptive as well as evaluative aspects ; self concept can be differentiated from other constructs which it is related to such as academic performance.

Self Concept and Performance

Despite abundance of studies, however, there are no conclusive studies that clearly identify the direction of the link which joins the two variables – self concept and performance. In results obtained one perceives different extraneous variables that can alter the results to differing degrees (Nunez and Gonzales Pienda, 1994). These authors indicate the need to differentiate four possible patterns or causal models between self concept and academic performance.

1. Academic performance determines self concept:
 - Academic experience of success or failure significantly affect the pupils self concept and self image more than vice versa, this being explained by the role of evaluation by significant others or by the theory of social comparison (Tajfel and Turner 1986).
2. Levels of self concept determine the degree of academic achievement: self concept in turn can be strongly influenced by contingencies provided by the pupils significant others, among whom

we must not underestimate teachers (Pygmalion principle), we can infer that it would be possible to increase levels of school performance by previously optimizing levels of self concept and very specifically levels of perceived competence.

3. The third model of causal relationship postulates that self concept and academic performance influence and determine each other mutually.
4. Other authors who support this model postulate the existence of additional variables that may be the cause for both self concept and academic performance among which we might find as personal and environmental variable.

Some of the sub dimensions of self concept are:

- Self confidence:- It refers to the belief in one's personal worth and likelihood of succeeding.
- Physical self concept:- It refers to the belief of the individual about his own physique and physical ability and what others think about the same.
- Intellectual and school status:-It refers to one's belief about the worthiness of his intellectual ability and where does actually he stands in his school i.e. his status in the school group.
- Anxiety and Emotion:- It refers to the individual's self concept about the incidents of which he or she feels anxious and emotional.
- Happiness and Satisfaction:- It refers to the individuals self concept about the incidents of which he or she feels happy and satisfied.
- Social self concept and Popularity:- It refers to the individuals belief about how much popular or socially desirable.
- Self Worthiness:- It refers to the individual feeling how worthy he or she is to others.
- Job Related Self-Concept:- It refers to the individual's idea about his or her satisfactory job and environment.
- Belief and Conviction:- It refers to the individuals concept about his belief and conviction

While most self-concept theorists continued to write and conduct research during the 1970's and 1980's, general interest in self-concept declined. Fortunately, there is a new awareness on the part of both the public and professionals that self-concept cannot be

ignored if we are to successfully address such nagging problems as drug and alcohol abuse, drop-out rates, dysfunctional families, and other concerns. In addition to this growing awareness, new ways are being developed to strengthen self-concepts. For example, researches by cognitive theorists (McAdam, 1986; Ryan, Short & Weed, 1986) are demonstrating that negative self-talk leads to irrational thinking regarding oneself and the world.

Chishty³ found Boys and girls differ significantly. Boys mean self-concept was higher than that of the girls. It was found that self-concept also affected the learning behavior of the children which predict their learning outcomes.

Marsh⁵ found that the components of academic self-concept are more differentiated (i.e., less correlated) than the achievement scores and that relation between academic self-concept and academic achievement is more content specific than has been previously assumed.

Efklides⁴ investigated the relation of induced mood with mathematical ability and self concept in mathematics as well as the effect of induced mood on mathematical performance and meta cognitive experiences.

Bornholt² found common and diverse pathways to children's participation in physical activities that have important application in education and clinical programme for children's health and wellbeing.

Bano¹ found the group and social category to which an individual belongs play an important role in the development of self concept and perception of other in intergrowth comparison situation.

Studies related to self concept were conducted by Chishty³ Marsh⁵ Efklides⁴, Bornholt² and Piccolo², Bano¹, Marsh⁵ all dealt with students in the Conventional mode.

Objectives

The objective of this study is to assess and compare the self concept of the students in the conventional and distance mode of education.

Delimitation

The sample of the research was limited within the under graduate level.

The study has been limited only to two variables, namely, Distance mode and Conventional mode, self concept, gender.

Methodology

Variables: The independent variable of the study is mode of instruction and the dependent variable is self concept of the students.

Sample: 400 students were selected from South West Bengal, a prominent state in the Eastern part of India. 200 students were from distance mode and 200 were from conventional mode, of which 121 were boys and 279 were girls.

Self Concept Inventory

Initially 192 items were selected and distributed to 3 experts for their rating. On the basis of expert rating 70 items for measuring the Self Concept were selected.

It is a Likert type (5 points scale) having Reliability 0.792 (Cronbach Alpha method) Inter dimension correlation was also calculated using Pearson correlation method. All the dimensions were found to be significantly correlated with each other and all dimensions have significant correlation with the total self concept score at 0.01 level.

The content validity of the test was determined from the judgement of 3 experts. Inter rater agreement as the basis for content validity was also calculated and found to be 0.74 which is significant.

Hypothesis

H₀1:- There is no difference between the two groups regarding their total self concept.

Table 1: Distribution of Sample.

	Distance Mode	Conventional Mode	Total
Boys	66	55	121
Girls	134	145	279
Total	200	200	400

Tools: 1) Personal information sheet

2) Self Concept Inventory:

Constructed by researcher

H₀2:- There is no difference between the two groups regarding their self confidence.

H₀3:- There is no difference between the two groups regarding their intellectual and school status.

H₀4:-There is no difference between the two groups regarding their physical self concept.

H₀5:-There is no difference between the two groups regarding their anxiety and emotion.

H₀6:-There is no difference between the two groups regarding their happiness and satisfaction.

H₀7:-There is no difference between the two groups regarding their social self concept and popularity.

H₀8:-There is no difference between the two groups regarding their self worthiness.

H₀9:-There is no difference between the two groups regarding their job related self concept.

H₀10:-There is no difference between the two groups regarding their belief and conviction.

Analysis

For the purpose of quantitative data analysis t-value has been computed to find out whether there is any significant difference and direction of difference between the students of conventional and distance mode regarding their self concept.

Major Findings of the Research

H₀1 is rejected at 0.01 levels. So it can be said that there is a significant difference between the students from Distance Education and Conventional mode of education in respect of their total self concept. From the Mean Values we find that the self concept of those in Distance Education (234.92) is less than those in the Conventional system (240.47). This may be due to the fact that Distance Education is

Fields of differences	Between	Mean	t-value	df	Sig.	P
Total self concept	Conventional	240.47	2.294	398	0.022	0.01
	Distance	234.92				
SCI 1(Self confidence)	Conventional	30.75	1.272	398	0.204	NS
	Distance	30.38				
SCI 2(Intellectual and School status)	Conventional	26.65	3.105	398	0.002	0.01
	Distance	25.42				
SCI 3(Physical Self Concept)	Conventional	33.62	1.377	398	0.169	NS
	Distance	32.88				
SCI 4(Anxiety and Emotion)	Conventional	22.92	0.105	398	0.916	NS
	Distance	22.88				
SCI 5(Happiness and satisfaction)	Conventional	23.64	1.347	398	0.179	NS
	Distance	23.05				
SCI 6(Social Self Concept)	Conventional	32.85	2.274	398	0.024	0.05
	Distance	31.49				
SCI 7(Self Worthiness)	Conventional	25.33	0.307	398	0.759	NS
	Distance	25.21				
SCI 8(Job related Self concept)	Conventional	24.42	2.613	398	0.009	0.01
	Distance	23.27				
SCI 9(Belief and Conviction)	Conventional	20.75	1.361	398	0.174	NS
	Distance	20.27				

practical in nature and is also conducted in a very casual way in the practical situation. The students also have a pessimistic outlook towards the educational experiences and the job opportunities available for them. As majority of parents are more accustomed to the Conventional system of education they have a less favorable opinion towards the social acceptability of distance education system than the conventional system. These may be the contributing factors towards lowering of self concept amongst the distance learners.

By accepting H_02 it can be said there is no significant difference between the students from Distance Education and Conventional Education with respect to their self confidence. However, there is a difference between the mean values of the students with respect to their self confidence. The mean value of the students of Conventional and Distance Education are 30.75 and 30.38 respectively. This difference can be due to the psychological feeling of being valued, respected in society and college which in turn make them feel confident which is absent in case of those students pursuing distance education. A sense of support from encouraging adults like teachers, counselors etc. is lacking for students in the distance mode which can be responsible for lowering their confidence level.

H_03 is rejected which means there is a significant difference between the students from Distance Education and Conventional system in respect to intellectual and school status. The mean value of the students of conventional and distance mode are 26.65 and 25.42 respectively. This can be due to the absence of direct teacher-taught interaction in open classes. A student has to feel worthwhile and appreciated. A teacher should recognize that he or she can have a positive effect on their students.

It is also found that there is no significant difference between the students from Distance Education and Conventional system in respect of their physical self concept. So H_04 is accepted. The mean value of Conventional mode students is 33.62 and the Distance Education student is 32.88, which proves that the students of conventional mode are more influenced by the views of others especially peer group

about their physical appearance than the Distance Education students.

There is no significant difference between the students from Distance Education and Conventional system regarding their Anxiety and Emotion. So H_05 is accepted.

There is slight mean difference between the two groups. The Conventional mode students have higher self concept regarding anxiety and emotion

It can also be said there is no significant difference between the students from Distance Education and Conventional system in respect of their happiness and satisfaction. So H_06 is accepted; which means both the group SOF students are satisfied with themselves.

As revealed from the above table there is a significant difference between the students from Distance Education and Conventional system in respect of their social self concept and popularity, so H_07 is rejected. The Conventional mode students mean social self concept is higher than that of Distance Education learners, but the difference is not significant. This slight difference is caused by the general belief of people that those who take admission into the distance course are either disadvantaged or drop outs or engaged in some work. In normal situation parents or students cannot even think of getting admitted to this mode. That is why in our society Distance Education has not yet achieved the status of being an alternative to conventional education. It is still a second ranked education. So the students are looked down upon in our society. This makes them less popular in social set up.

There is no significant difference between the students from Distance Education and Conventional system in respect of their self worthiness. So H_08 is accepted. But from the mean value it is found students of Distance Education have lower self concept than students of Conventional system which can be due to the fact that majority of the parents are from conventional schooling and have less favorable opinion towards the social acceptability of Distance Education.

The status of Distance Education is not gaining the same honor as conventional education. Distance

education may not be perceived as best means for achieving the educational needs of the country. It might have been perceived as a second rate arrangement for the people. Self worthiness develop through daily life experience which is very depressing and demotivating for the distance learners leading to lowering of their self worthiness.

Ho9 is rejected. There is significant difference between the students from Distance Education and Conventional system in respect of their job related self concept significant at 0.01 level of significance. In corporate sectors or government sector the conventional students are more acceptable and welcomed and thought to be more eligible than the Distance Education learner which raise their job related self concept (24.42) than distance learners (23.27).

H₀10 is accepted as there is no significant difference between students from distant mode and conventional system regarding their belief and conviction. But the descriptive analysis proves the mean value of Distance Education learners is lower (20.27) than that of Conventional mode students (20.75). Which means the Conventional mode students are more driven by belief and convictions, all reasoning is blunt against their convictions.

The students of Conventional mode of instruction scored significantly higher in total self concept, self concept related to intellectual and school status, social self concept and popularity, job related self concept, aspiration related to past experience and goal period than the students of distance mode. This can be due to the fact the outlook of parents, teachers, peer group and society as a whole help to develop students' aspiration and self concept. It has become a general belief of our developing society that the students coming to the Distance Education are those who do not have access to conventional education, or are deprived of proper educational facilities, or are unable to continue conventional education, or are physically, economically, geographically and socially disadvantaged. So the society is reluctant to give equal prestige and respect to the distance mode students even though they don't differ significantly in physical self concept, anxiety and emotion,

happiness and satisfaction, social self concept, self worthiness and belief and convictions.

Significance

The Distance Education may modify its self instructional material according to the needs of the learners in order to raise their self concept.

The students may be given more openings for participating in seminar presentation and competitive exams to broaden and change people's outlook towards Distance Education system.

For the vocational courses there can be scope of campus interview to assure job security to increase their job related self concept.

Scope for Further Studies

A study can also be conducted to find the causes of distant students' low self concept in comparison to Conventional education students.

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