
Knowledge management through distance education

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Abstract

Globalization means free movement of capital goods, technology, ideas and people. It is the process of integrating various economies of the world without creating any hindrances. In this era of globalization it is necessary to create an environment in which human race can sustain itself on this planet Earth with its various aspects like energy, environment, education, technological back up and governing policies. Education therefore becomes an important aspect for the human race to sustain itself in the global environment. Education is the foundation for a vibrant democracy, growth of productivity and generation of income and employment opportunities. Education in India today is provided by both the conventional mode i.e., in schools and colleges and through the distance mode. The provision of distance education is a major breakthrough in the development of human capital. Distance education is therefore an important means by which the human race would be able to sustain itself in this global environment. Distance Education is a generic term that includes the range of teaching, learning strategies variously described as home study or independent study. It is a highly welcome step in the direction of taking education to the door of those willing to acquire higher education but unable to do so owing to lack of resources or paucity of time. In India distance education opportunities at the University level have increased enormously. Many new developments and modern trends due to globalization are putting new pressures on the conventional education system, forcing many institutions to review and amend their existing policies and procedures. The enrollment rates in various Distance Education institutes have improved over the years. But to achieve the goal of one hundred percent literacy the nation should aim at establishment of more number of Distance Education centres and make it known and affordable to the rural masses. In this context the present paper attempts to trace the development of Distance Education in India., to enumerate the objectives of Distance Education, to highlight the strengths and weaknesses of Distance Education, to ascertain the choice of the sample group between conventional and Distance Education mode, to determine the factors influencing the choice of the mode and to suggest policy measures to improve the quality of Distance Education.

Keywords: Globalization, vibrant democracy, distance education, learning strategies.

Introduction

Globalization means free movement of capital goods, technology, ideas and people. It is the process of integrating various economies of the world without creating any hindrances. In this era of globalization it is necessary to create an environment in which human race can sustain itself on this planet Earth with its various aspects like energy, environment, education, technological back up and governing policies. Education therefore becomes an important aspect for the human race to sustain itself in the global environment. Education is the foundation for a vibrant democracy, growth of productivity and generation of income and employment opportunities. Education in India today is provided by both the conventional mode i.e., in schools and colleges and through the distance mode. The provision of distance education is a major breakthrough in the development of human capital. Distance education is therefore an important means by which the human race would be able to sustain itself in this global environment. Distance Education is a generic term that includes the range of teaching,

learning strategies variously described as home study or independent study. It is a highly welcome step in the direction of taking education to the door of those willing to acquire higher education but unable to do so owing to lack of resources or paucity of time. In India distance education opportunities at the University level have increased enormously. Many new developments and modern trends due to globalization are putting new pressures on the conventional education system, forcing many institutions to review and amend their existing policies and procedures.

Objectives of the study

1. To enumerate the objectives of Distance Education.
2. To highlight the strengths and weaknesses of Distance Education
3. To ascertain the choice of the sample group between conventional and distance education mode.
4. To determine the factors influencing the choice of the mode.
5. To test the satisfaction level of the respondents through chi-square test.



Table 1.1. Gender wise classification of sampled respondents.

Gender	Distance mode of education	Conventional mode	Total	Percent
Male	37	9	46	80%
Female	32	2	34	94%
Total	69	11	80	

The major objectives of Distance Education are:

1. To provide an alternative cost-effective non- formal avenue for higher education
2. To provide "second chance" education to those who have had to discontinue their formal education or could not join regular colleges or universities owing to social, economic and other constraints.
3. To improve the accessibility of higher education to large segments of the population, in particular the disadvantaged groups such as those living in remote and rural areas, including working people, women and other adults who wish to acquire and upgrade their knowledge and/or skills.
4. To strengthen and diversify the degree, certificate and diploma courses related to employment and which are necessary for building the economy of the country on the basis of its natural and human resources.
5. To provide an innovative system of university level education, which is flexible and open in terms of methods and pace of learning, combination of courses, eligibility for enrolment, age of entry, conduct of examination and operation of the programmes with a view to promoting learning and encouraging excellence in new fields of knowledge.

Table 1.2. Choice of course of distance mode respondents.

Gender	PG Courses	Professional courses MBA/MCA	Total
Male	7(19%)	30(81%)	37
Female	8(25%)	24(75%)	32

Source: Primary Data.

Strengths and Weaknesses of Distance Education System

Strengths

1. Distance Education has provided greater access to higher education for working people, women and persons residing in remote and inaccessible areas. It has been found that the proportion of women studying through distance education is higher when compared to the conventional system. Further the ratio of Schedule castes and Schedule tribes enrolled in distance education compares favourably with their proportion in higher education.
2. Distance Education programmes frequently show economies as compared with the conventional face to face education. Though the initial costs of

establishing open universities is more than conventional universities, as enrolment grows per capita costs fall proportionately.

3. Relaxed entry qualification have enabled a large number of students with no formal qualifications to enroll in undergraduate and professional programmes offered by open universities and correspondence institutes.
4. IGNOU and other open universities have been successful in restructuring the undergraduate programme in accordance with UGC's guidelines to provide for multi- disciplinary foundation courses, core courses and application oriented components.
5. Distance Education Universities are introducing courses on the basis of identified manpower requirements, which has resulted in diversification of courses to cater to the requirements of different sections of society in urban and rural areas.
6. In terms of content of courses, structure and use of instructional media, Open University programmes are a decisive break from the conventional system. The distance education system is learner based and enables students to learn at their own pace and convenience.

Table 1.3. Factors influencing choice of distance education.

Gender	Employment	Cost	Failure to seek admission in regular colleges	Marital status
Male	29	5	3	-
Female	16	8	3	5

Source: Primary data.

Weaknesses

At the same time several weaknesses have manifested themselves in the distance education system. These include:

1. The Open Universities have not yet been able to reach the rural areas and the disadvantaged sections of society to the extent desired.
2. Enrolment in open universities is still concentrated in under graduate courses in arts and humanities.
3. Avenues of students mobility between the Open Universities and the Conventional Universities are restricted.
4. Open Universities have not been able to meet the demand for more courses in Regional Languages.
5. While some of the Study Centres of Open Universities are underutilised, these are being duplicated instead of being shared.
6. The monitoring system of distance education is weak resulting in lack of feedback on performance of counsellors/tutors; utility of printed course material and audio-video components; efficiency of continuous evaluation, etc.

7. The rapid increase in enrolment in open universities has led to slippages in the delivery system.

Table 1.4. Level of satisfaction of the distance education respondents

Level of satisfaction	Male	Female
Excellent	10	6
Good	8	9
Satisfactory	7	9
Not satisfactory	12	8

Source: Primary data.

Sample analysis

A sample of 80 students consisting of both males and females were chosen at random from Anna Nagar in Chennai. Their responses regarding the choice of the mode of education, course pursued through the distance mode and factors influencing the choice were obtained. The observations made from the responses have been shown in Table .11. It can be observed from Table 1.1 that 69 of the sampled respondents were pursuing their education through the distance mode of which 37 were males and 32 were females. 80% of the total number of males interviewed and 94% of the total number of females interviewed had chosen the distance mode. Table 1.2 reveals that 81% of the male respondents and 75% of the female respondents pursued courses like MBA or MCA through the distance mode. Table 1.3 reveals the most important factor influencing the choice of distance education is employment for both males and females. Next in importance is cost effectiveness. Marital status is an important factor influencing the choice only for females. Only a small number of respondents quoted failure to seek admission in regular colleges as an important factor. To assess the satisfaction of the respondents regarding the functioning of the distance education mode the χ^2 test has been employed.

Hypothesis

The functioning of the distance mode of education is satisfactory for the sampled respondents. The calculated value of χ^2 has been found to be 1.7603 which is less than the table value 7.81 for three degrees of freedom at 5% level of significance. This leads to the acceptance of the hypothesis that the functioning of the distance mode of education is satisfactory.

Limitations of the study

The study is subject to the limitations of sampling analysis.

Conclusion

The distance education system has developed a distinct identity and ethos of its own and is now an

integral part of the education system in India There should be official parity of esteem between the conventional system of education and distance education and that the two systems should reinforce and strengthen each other to make the higher education system more vibrant and to equip it to respond to future challenges effectively.

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