



Quality concerns of teacher training through distance mode

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Abstract

There are two modes of Teacher Training that are organized for preparing teachers. One of them is the conventional teacher education and the other is the distance education program. Distance education or distance teaching has emerged as a very useful mode of facilitating education to learners in every field since its conception. It had begun in a very humble way as correspondence education in traditional institutions and used only print as medium of instruction but very soon evolved into independent, autonomous organisations as Open Universities offering open education through multimedia instruction. For teacher education too it has evolved into an alternative and almost parallel means of education today. Today a professional degree in education for a teacher has become mandatory and due to the lack of enough trained teachers schools and colleges are compelled to recruit untrained graduates. Thus in an attempt to find solution to many such questions we have no second opinion today that distance education is the need of the hour. The question however arises that looking at the nature of contact sessions in a distance mode how do we ensure quality of the teachers who get their degree through the distance mode until and unless they are self-motivated.

Key words: Distance Education, Teacher Training

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Introduction:

We are aware that the conventional system of education takes place in the classroom where the teacher and the student meet regularly at fixed timing. This is common for all level of teaching. But today what one would learn through the face to face situation, most of it can be learnt at a distance too if the necessary arrangements can be made. Thus today Distance Education has evolved into an independent system of education where the educational mode is supplementary, complementary and alternative to conventional / traditional system of education. Thanks to the various modes of communication variety of educational programmes has become possible through distance mode of which one is teacher education. During the last decade, because of the frequent changes in society, different education system has come to realize the inadequacy of conventional face-to-face system of education. Further, due to incompatibility of accommodating the growing needs of the society, effective alternative educational system was born and out of these ‘Distance Education’ system was one of them. In fact, an upsurge of enrolment rate in the educational institutions is one of the vital factors that makes distance mode of teaching and learning a social necessity.

Definition and Meaning of Distance Education:

“The various forms of study at all levels which are not under continuous immediate supervision of tutors present with their students in lecture rooms on the same premises, but which, nevertheless benefit from the planning, guidance and tuitions of a tutorial organization.” - BorjeHomberg (1981)

Distance education means the separation of the teacher and the student and the consequent use of a large media to enable the learning process to take place. It is an alternative mode of receiving higher education, professional education and technical education. It is a method of indirect instruction.

Distance Education and Policy Perspectives -An Indian Scenario

Higher education in post-independent India had always been a matter of discussion in its growth and development, quality vs. quantity, elitism vs. equal opportunities, selective vs. open and formal, to name a few. There has been a vast expansion in the institutions without giving considerable thought to the resources, which has led to compromise with the quality. The Indian Constitution provides for the equal educational opportunities for all, but at the same time because of the limited resources at its disposal the institution has also been selective. Also there are many who could not go for higher education mainly due to social, economic or environmental compulsions. Distance education at the tertiary level was introduced in India for the first time in 1962 by the University of Delhi.

Distance education with its low cost of instruction is more popular than the costly conventional system of education. Moreover, discipline is also a major problem and this mode of education keeps away students from activities which otherwise create a problem for the establishment. Distance education has therefore gained more popularity among the masses. Also keeping students away from the Campus through distance education can help to keep a check on the student's politics in the traditional system of education. Keeping in view the heavy pressure on the formal system of higher education, for the first time emphasis was laid on distance education in the form of correspondence course in the Third Plan.

Policies for Distance Education:

- The policy of the Government of India towards distance education has been considerably favourable since the beginning of the sixties. The demand for higher education after independence and the resultant increase in the expansion of educational facilities prompted the Planning Commission to spell out strategies in this regard.

- The CABE resolved that the matter be studied in detail and the Ministry of Education then appointed an Expert Committee under the chairmanship of Dr. D.S. Kothari, which made significant recommendations.
- The University of Delhi in 1962 for the first time started correspondence courses at the university level though the first clear statement on distance education was made in the Report of the Education Commission (1964 – 66). *It was the Education Commission which suggested facilitating professionalism of teachers in remote areas*
- The National Policy of Education (1968) incorporated the recommendations of the Educational Commission
- In 1974 the University Grants Commission issued guidelines on distance education
- The Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) was established in 1985 by an act of the Parliament.
- In 1986, the Government of India announced its New Education Policy which laid special emphasis on distance education and open learning system.
- In May 1991, the Board of Management of IGNOU formulated the Statute for the establishment of the Distance Education Council (DEC) for promotion, coordination and maintenance of standards in the open university and distance education system.
- In 1992, the Government of India revised the National Policy on Education (1986) and specific recommendations were made therein.
- In 1995, the CABE Committee on Distance Education, recommended establishment of an open university in each state of India.

While NCTE facilitates teachers training through distance mode in order to maintain standards of such teachers training, it has prescribed in the regulations that apart from other conditions, B.Ed. /M.Ed. through distance mode are offered, by 13 universities with a total intake of 8800 seats. Similarly, M.Ed. through distance mode is being offered by 4 universities with an intake of 1275 seats.

Why Distance Mode in Teacher Education?

1. Problem of growing population and limited access to education

Though there is an upsurge in the number of educational institutions and facilities today there is still a major population that is deprived of educational facilities. The government is increasingly laying more emphasis on elementary education which requires a greater number of trained teachers for recruitment. These demand distance mode of teacher education.

2. Quality of Education:

The meaning of quality is different for different people but one thing is certain that the standard of education is not equal throughout our country and even more if we consider the few pockets in the rural area. To spread quality education it is important that a standard form of teacher education is accepted throughout the nation but due to lack of resources this can only become possible through distance education.

3. Relevance in the present day:

In today's age of professionalism and ever changing science and technology we need larger scope for part time education with flexible arrangement, specialized courses for those in-service, intellectual stimulation for interested individuals, need for certification without undergoing the formalities of conventional system, and many more.

Characteristics features of Distance education:

- Separation of the teacher and the learner
- Organised efforts of an educational institution
- Use of multi-media
- Provision of two way communication
- Absence of face to face group learning and occasional meeting with peers and teachers through contact sessions
- Learner centered education

Certain Concerns regarding Teacher education through Distance Mode:

There can be no second opinion regarding the usefulness of Distance mode in teacher education but there are a few concerns regarding the same that are mentioned below:

- Why does every teacher regardless of experience require the same length of training?
- Why does the program not grant benefit of prior learning of teachers and allow them to enter the program at a more advanced level?
- Do the distant education program developers get the required quality in return of their investment? If yes, then to what extent?
- Why not include the stakeholders in some form in the program development stage of the distance education?
- The costs of Distance education is much lower as compared to the conventional system of education is a known fact but was the course cost effective in the true sense both for the individual and the program developers?
- What are the provisions made for quality assurance following the distance mode in teacher education?
- What indicators can be used to judge the effective implementation especially in terms of the impact on teaching and learning in the distance mode as you cannot have a day to day check on the student teachers as in a conventional system?
- Lesser number of human interactions in different forms is a matter of concern too.
- Does the course succeed in sustaining the learner's interest and motivation or it is only for the sake of the certification that the learners need to complete the course?
- Does the program have a measurable change in the participant's level of understanding and ability to perform related skills by the end of the course as compared to before?
- Whether the geographical reach of the program extends every year?

Some suggestions:

- Interviews with the learners from different socio – cultural background, who have completed their course, can be done to find out how the distance mode can be improved.

- Surveys can be distributed to students asking them for a variety of responses regarding their experiences during the distance mode of the training program to gain a wider view and identify the areas which need improvement
- The program of teacher education should be evaluated both at an early stage, while the program is in progress (Process evaluation) as well as at the end of the course or program (outcome based evaluation).
- The program should be related not only to the teachers who enroll for the course but to all the interest groups at all phases of development. These interest groups may be politicians, local administrative officials, conventional teacher education institutions, schools, parent organisations, etc. so as to get their support at every step.
- Take a feedback of the institutions where the teachers go back and serve to find the effectiveness of the program through distance mode.
- Regular revision of the curricula needs to be made keeping in mind the challenges of teacher education
- The criteria for admission are mainly experience based and based on the qualifying test but the eligibility criteria for the teachers should be strict and laying more emphasis on the quality perspective.

Conclusion:

Thus, Distance mode is an essential component of teacher education and it is basically through the planned effort of every conventional and alternative mode that we can achieve a quality teacher education and thus achieve our goal of complete literacy for our country.

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