

Evaluation of Face to Face Approach in the Formal and Distance Education at M.Ed Level

Amir Mehmood^{*}

Zia Batool^{**}

Abstract

Education makes stronger the economy of the country. Thus, the development of a country extends if all male, female and children take part in getting education. Only formal education is unable to educate all the people due to rapid population growth. Consequently, distance education, an alternate system of education was introduced in 1972 and as a result Allama Iqbal Open University was established in June 1974, but the strategies, process of teaching and approaches in the system are different. Peoples were familiar with formal system of education in formal education system; education is regularly provided through face to face meetings whereas distance education is provided through distance, where there is separation between facilitators and learners but however there may be occasionally face to face meeting with students. Thus, the article was chosen as "Evaluation of face-to-face approach in formal and distance education at M.Ed level". The objectives of the article were to identify the similarities and differences among formal and distance education and also to check the problems involved in providing formal and distance education at MEd level as well as to find out the solution of these problems. To fulfill the demand of education of the country, as many universities now started distance education mode. The population was consisted of the students at University of Education as formal education system and Allama Iqbal Open University as provider of distance education. To make the uniformity in the respondents 302 students at both universities were taken as sample. A Questionnaire was drafted for students at both universities. The questionnaire for students was tool of the study. The main findings were tutors/teachers attend the classes regularly, both systems involved the students into studies, tutors/teachers encouraged discussion method in their teaching and workshops. Tutors/teachers help the students in their study difficulty. There was a lack of teleconferencing at M.Ed level. Thus, it is recommended that teleconferencing as face to face component may be encouraged.

Keywords: Distance education, Face to face approach, Formal education, Teacher/Tutors, Tutorials

^{*}PhD Research Scholar at Preston University, Islamabad, e mail: amir mahmood <goodamir@gmail.com

^{**}Chairman, Private Educational Institutions Regulatory Authority (PIERA), Government of Pakistan.

Introduction

Education is main concern of today's world. Every nation has developed different approaches for prosperity of education. Education binds discipline, responsibility, understanding, commitment, and economic development among masses. In present era, both public and private sectors are contributing to educate masses. State government is also playing a vital role to provide educational opportunities to its nation for progress and poverty alleviation. In this regard Rao (2014) states that the income criterion is low due to poverty, it also led to low percentage of male and female employment. If general and vocational education is provided, then a nation will be capable to maintain its progress in every field of life.

It is also evident that people's thinking can be changed with the help of education which ultimately brings economic and social development of a nation. Further, to fulfill the demand of education, it was expanded with the new modes of education. Among other different modes of education, both formal and distance education are contributing for imparting education to community and nation. The demand of education has increased due to population and the formal system of education is unable to provide education to the masses. According to Government of Pakistan (2014) education is low even at primary schools' level from the age 5-9 years due to lack of trained teachers, especially female teachers. There are also missing facilities, boundary walls of schools, conservative tribal culture, lawlessness, compelling many children in same class etc. thus an alternate system distance education is welcomed to cater the demand.

While discussing the alternative system Newby (2012) says that distance education serves learners at their doorstep who are disadvantaged socially and economically. Distance education helps learners and uses different resources such as electronic media, computer and internet, two-way communication such as telephony, audio and video conferencing, e-mail, and online chatting. There are also increasingly new forms of provision of distance education such as e-learning and m-learning.

In the scenario of distance education, it is the best source to provide education at all levels to masses, because it makes possible to cover a large number of students as indicated by Rashid (1999) that:

Distance education is adopted as an alternate to meet national needs both in its methodology and its content". The rapidly population growth rate in the developing countries is alarming, whereas their resources are not being generated as per needs of the population.

Holmberg (1986) adds that distance education includes various forms of study at all levels. Distance education also provides students' guidance through tutors and tutorial meeting. Now in distance education modern and conventional teaching

approaches are being used. Therefore, distance education system is the best supplement of formal system.

Allama Iqbal Open University, Islamabad has been imparting education to the millions of people annually. According to Vice Chancellor's Annual Report (2010-11) provides as:

It is a unique institution in many ways, particularly in terms of using distance education as its basic teaching methodology. It offers an opportunity to working people to enhance their qualification without giving up their jobs or place of living.

Distance education is a process of teaching and learning through distance where there is a separation between facilitator and the learners whereas the formal education is that system of education where students and teachers are at the same place. Thus, provision of education is through face-to-face contact. According to Coombs, Prosser and Ahmed (1973) formal education is "hierarchically structured, chronologically graded 'education system', running from primary school through the university and including, in addition to general academic studies, a variety of specialized programs and institutions for full-time technical and professional training".

While commenting on Formal education, Jeffs and Smith (1999) describe that formal education is curricula-driven, content defined. It takes into account the social and physical setting while the lesson is supported through familiar daily examples which are easily used in the classroom. Formal education involves the students into conversation, gives values and raises the behavior of students.

Formal education is provided through classroom setting. Teachers teach through pedagogical techniques. It includes all audio-visual aids, the lectures may be supported group discussion, demonstration and questions answers techniques.

Objectives

The objectives of this article were:

1. To identify the similarities and differences between using the face-to-face approach for formal and distance education at M.Ed level.
2. To argue on the various approaches used in teaching through formal and distance modes at different M.Ed level.

Literature Review

A wide range of concept of formal and distance education were described by different authors. A few of them are stated as:

Formal and Distance Learning

Formal education is not capable to fulfill the educational demand of masses as compared with the population growth. OECD (2012, p.415) define formal education as “education provider in the system of schools, colleges, universities and other formal educational institutions, which normally constitute a continuous ‘ladder’ of full-time education for children and young people”. While Tyson (2013) states that formal education follow a standardized curriculum, which is organized by the teacher/educator and is presented in the classroom setting or environment.

The concept of distance education is prospered with the idea that education is right of all people. It is life-long process. The prosperity of the nation is directly linked with the education of masses. The system of distance education is the best system for the provision of education to masses.

Perraton (1982, p.4) defines distance education as “an educational process in which a significant proportion of the teaching is conducted by someone removed in space and /or time from the learner”. Peters (2006, p.9) describes “Distance education is on the one hand neither new nor alien. It has its roots in and makes use of the teaching forms used in traditional universities. On the other hand, it is exactly these forms of teaching that demonstrate the special pedagogic structure of distance education, because it is in fact combined and integral with other focal points”.

According to Rashid (2010, p.1)

The term ‘Distance Education’ is used to describe various forms of study at all levels. One of the main characteristics is that there is not a continuous and immediate supervision of tutors, but there is planning, guidance and tuition through tutorial organization. It is an educational process in which a significant proportion of the teaching is conducted by someone removed in space and/or time from the learner.

Bates (1995) in comprehending the distance education states that “students study at the time and place of their choice (home, work or learning centre) and without face-to-face contact with a teacher” while Ruhe.and Zumbo, (2009, p.2) gave an overviews of distance education as “With its origins in print distance delivery, distance education delivery methods include print distance, video teleconferencing, and CD-ROM, and can serve either on- and off-campus learners”.

According to Fuller, Kuhne and Frey (2011, p.4) “most contemporary definitions of distance education focus on the use of print or electronic communications media to deliver instruction when teachers and learners are separated in place and/or time”. This means that distance education provide flexibility to learners. As far as third generation is considered, the distance education is parallel to the swift up-gradation of educational technology. This includes interactive technologies, mostly networked and

involving multiple participants interacting with one another – first audio, then text, video, web and, most recently, immersive conferencing.

Approaches of Formal Education System

Formal education is institutionalized and involved the traditional methods. In this regard Kolb (2014) states that the approaches used in formal education are apprenticeship, internship, study program, co-operative education, laboratory studies, field trips etc. mostly the learning is experimental, while the experiences and ideas are discussed in classroom.

According to Freitas (2014) different approaches are used in formal system of education. These include didactic approach and Socratic approach. These approaches are used for creating the mental skills and abstract concept of ideas, experiment and concrete knowledge of different things which may be learnt through demonstration. The traditional method which is used in formal system of education is the memorization techniques. This type is also called ‘memory palace’. To obtain the abstract facts, the visualization is progressed through mental mapping and explains in narrative manner. This memorization process is also called the ‘recall method’.

Approaches of Distance Education System

Distance education is a successful means which provide education at secondary or higher levels because many people do not have access to formal education. In this regard, Ivanenko (2014) mentioned that distance education has innovative learning approaches which are parallel to the formal education system. Distance education is affordable because it reduces the tuition fee and online reading material is available. Thus, the dispersed category of person like physically disables, prisoners, children and young etc. are also benefitted from this type of education.

Face to Face Components

The quality of education is increased by incorporating the computer technology and other available resources in face to face component. Marold, Larsen and Moreno (2000) describe that student achieve more if online guidance is provided to them as compared to that of the classroom teaching. Online students are more comfortable and feel fewer difficulties in solving their learning problems. In this regard Chen (1997) labels that dialogue play most important role in learning. Dialogue allows the students to access their learning material also the process of interacting with other students and community. This alleviates the students in solving their problems of isolation and can be able to check their own learning by themselves. Students may hesitate in classroom setting by raising questions to the teachers, this leads inability to dialogue but in distance education the weaknesses, isolation and their problems can be solved on interaction with online diagram.

In discussing the face-to-face components Visser, et al. (2014) describe those tutors and learner are divided into asynchronous mode. There is not only physical separation among teachers and students but also separation of sociocultural occurrence. The face to face material is adopted in different ways. This requires the great skills and knowledge for adaptation of process. This can be done through participatory approach keeping in view the sociocultural environment of the students. And it should be correlated with the material. The face to face component requires appropriate assessment and evaluation process for distance education. Students understanding can be raised through utilization of radio, television and internet.

According to Martin et al. (1996, p.77)

In a distance education context, there is hardly any face-to-face contact between students and teachers/tutors, so the learning materials must be sufficiently supportive. Therefore, an essential part of self-study material consists of embedded support devices (ESD). The central role of embedded support in distance education can be illustrated by the fact that learning materials in this context consist of about 40% of ESD.

From the above discussion, it is evident that evaluation of both the systems indicates some similarity and differences in using the face-to-face approach for formal and distance education at M.Ed. Level. It was seen that various teaching approaches are being used in both the systems.

Methodology

This research was descriptive, survey method was used to find out the different approaches which are being used in formal and distance education and to give suggestion for the improvement of face-to-face components in both systems of education. The parameters which belong to face-to-face components were taken into account. For evaluation of face-to-face component two questionnaires were drafted. After checking the reliability and validity, the questionnaires were reshaped accordingly. The questionnaires were distributed personally to collect the responses of respondents. These responses were tested on mean score and to make a comparison between two modes i.e. formal and distance education, findings and conclusions were made and suggestions were also given to solve the problems found in applying the face to face approach in formal and distance education.

Population

The population of the study is comprised of M. Ed students enrolled for the academic session 2012-13 in University of Education, Lahore and all M. Ed students of Allama Iqbal Open University, Islamabad/ Rawalpindi as indicated in Table-1.

Table 1

Population of the study

University	Status	Population
University of Education, Lahore & Okara	Students	450
	Teachers	24
Allama Iqbal Open University, Islamabad & Rawalpindi	Students	1425
	Teachers	42

Sample

The sample of study was taken randomly from each university. For uniformity among teachers and students of both the universities the sample was taken equally from each university, which is shown in Table-2.

Table 2

Sample of the study

University	Status	Population
University of Education, Lahore & Okara	Students	350
	Teachers	22
Allama Iqbal Open University, Islamabad & Rawalpindi	Students	350
	Teachers	22

Findings and Discussion

Article was based on the responses of questionnaire for students and teachers/tutors of the University of Education and Allama Iqbal Open University. The system of former university was formal education system whereas the later university is concerned with the distance education.

The questionnaire of students inculcates that 84.11% students of University of Education states that tutors/teachers attend the student's class regularly whilst 52.65% respondents of AIOU gave the same opinion that coincide with the definition of distance education that there is a separation of tutors and students also the students attendance is not compulsory for tutorial meeting. The t-test was 5.57 which showed that there was great different between the attendance of teachers in both systems. While admission process of both universities was easy. 76.16% respondents of University of education and 74.17% respondents of AIOU describes that the study material involved the students into studies. The t-test was 1.14, which lies in the critical region. Thus, the material of both systems was up to date. The responses about the writing of study material showed that material of both universities was written by the competent teachers because 74.84% respondents and University of Education at 77.48% of AIOU were in the same opinion.

There were also found some deficiencies in the study material of both the universities that glossary of difficult words used in textual material was not given in the text. The responses were 60.60% and 55.30% of Education University and AIOU respectively and t-test was 0.88 which means that there are great similarities. Another similarity is this that tutors and teachers at both universities did not give comments on students' assignments. The responses were 56.94% for the university of education whereas 88.74% students of AIOU. This means that up to some extent the comments on the assignment were given by the University of Education but only a few teachers of AIOU give comments on home assignments. There was difference in tele-conferences made by the universities, only 22.52% students at university of education stated that tele-conferences were held occasionally but 56.62% students of AIOU explained that tele-conferences were held in the system of distance education.

Teachers at both universities i.e., the University of Education and AIOU gave their opinion that study material was received to them on time. The responses of both universities were 95% and 90.00% respectively, whereas the t-test was 0.23. This means that both universities were of the same opinion. 95.00% respondents of University of Education and 80.00% respondents of AIOU were of the same mind that lecture method was used in the teaching learning process. The value of t-test was 2.37 shows that there was a slight difference between their opinions.

85.00% respondents of University of Education states that tutors/teachers use discussion method to provide interaction between students but contradiction to this 65.00% respondent of AIOU showed the same opinion. As regard to study material developed by the competent teachers. 85.00% respondents of University of Education and 80% respondents of AIOU gave the same opinion. t-test was 1.35 and it clarify that there was a similarity among the developing of material. While discussing on the study material has self-assessment exercises, 85% and 65% respondents of University of Education and AIOU gave the same opinion. T-test also lies in the critical region, which was 1.27, predict about the same opinion.

80.00% respondents of University of Education affirm that Tutors/teachers did not give comments on the student's assignment, while 60.00% respondents of AIOU had the same opinion. Similarly, the study material had not built-in activities. This was assessed by 15.00% respondents of University of Education were agreed that the study material has built in activities. But 65.00% respondents of AIOU gave contradictory statement. T-test was 3.73 showed that study material of AIOU has built in activities whereas the study material of formal education has not built-in activities. There was contradiction between both the universities about radio broadcast used as the supplement of study material. Not a single teacher gave positive opinion about this statement, whereas 80% respondents of AIOU were agreed with this. The value of t-test was 5.93 which express the contradictory view of both universities.

Conclusion

1. Tutors/teachers attend the student's class regularly in both universities. Admission in both universities is taken without any difficulty. Study material of both universities involves the students into studies. The study material of both universities is received on time. Tutors/teachers at both universities use discussion method to provide interaction between students. Study material of both universities developed by the competent teachers.
2. Glossary of difficult words used in textual material was not given in the text of both systems. Up to some extent the comments on the assignment were given by the University of Education but only a few teachers give comment on home assignments of AIOU.
3. Study material of AIOU have built in activities whereas the study material of formal education has not built-in activities. Tutors/teachers at both universities did not give comments on the student's assignment,
4. Radio broadcasts are not used in Education University but used as a supplement the study material at AIOU. Glossary of difficult words is not given in textual material of both universities at the end of text.
5. Radio broadcasts are not used in Education University but Radio broadcasts is used as a supplement the study material in AIOU
6. The study material of AIOU has built in activities but the study material of University of Education has not built-in activities.

Recommendations

1. Tutors of AIOU may give comments on students' assignments.
2. Glossary of the words may be included in the textual material of both universities.
3. Radio broadcast may be encouraged in University of Education.
4. University of Education may add built-in activities in their textual material.

References

- Allama Iqbal Open University (2010-11). *Vice-Chancellor Annual Report*. Islamabad: AIOU.
- Bates, A. W. (1995). *Technology, Open Learning and Distance Education*. London: Routledge Publications.
- Chen, L. L. (1997). Distance delivery systems in terms of pedagogical considerations: A reevaluation. *Educational Technology*, 37(4), 34-37.
- Coombs, P., & Ahmad, M. (1973). *New Paths to Learning for Rural Children and Youth*. New York. ICED.

- Coombs, P. H., & Ahmad, M. (1978). *Attacking Rural Poverty* (2nd ed). Washington, D.C., World Bank Research Publication.
- Freitas, S. (2014). *Education in Computer Generated Environments*. London and New York: Routledge Flamer
- Fuller, R., Kuhne, G. W., & Frey, B. A. (2011). *Distinctive Distance Education Design: Models for Differentiated Instruction*. USA. *Information Science Reference* (An Imprint of IGI Global) 701 E. Chocolate Avenue.
- Govt. of Pakistan. (2014). *Economic Survey (2014-15)*. Islamabad: Ministry of Finance.
- Holmberg, B. (1986). *Growth and Structure of Distance Education*. London: Croom Helm.
- Ivanenko, N. (2014). *Education in Eastern Europe and Eurasia*. London and New York: Bloomsbury.
- Jeffs, T., & Smith, M. K. (1999). 'Informal Education and Health Promotion', in E. R. Perkins, I. Simnett and L. Wright (eds.) *Evidence-Based Health Promotion*. London: John Wiley.
- Kolb, D. A. (2014). *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development* (2nd Edition). New Jersey: Pearson Education Inc.
- Marold, K., Larsen, G., & Moreno, A. (2000). *Web-based learning: Is it working? Challenges of Information Technology Management in the 21st Century* (pp.351-353) Idea Group Publishing Hershey, MA.
- Martens, R., Valcke, M., Poelmans, P., & Daal, M. (1996). Functions, use and effects of embedded support devices in printed distance learning materials. *Learning and Instruction*, 6(1), 77-93.
- Newby, T. J. (2012). *Instructional Technology for Teaching and Learning: Designing Instruction, Integration Computer and Using Media*. New York: University of Virginia.
- OECD. (2011). *How's Life? Measuring Wellbeing*. Paris: OECD
- OECD. (2012). *Education at a Glance 2012. OECD Indicators*. Paris: OECD
- Peters, O. (2006). *Learning and Teaching in Distance Education*. New York: Routledge, Publications.
- Rao, B. N. (2014). *Mapping the Tribal Economy. A Case Study from South Indian State*. London: Cambridge Scholar Publishing.

- Rashid, M. (1999). *Distance Education, Study Guide MPhil (Education) Code 742*. Islamabad: AIOU.
- Ruhe, V., Zumbo, B.D. (2009). *Evaluation in Distance Education & E. Learning the unfolding Model*. New York: NY, Guilford Press.
- Tyson, B. (2013). *Social Influence, Strategies for Environmental Behavior Change*. Bloomington: Universe Inc.
- Visser, L., Amirault, R. J., & Visser, Y. L. (2014). *Trends and Issues in Distance Education, International Perspectives* (2nd Edition). North Carolina: Information Age Publication.