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## ASSISTED LEARNING SUPPORT SYSTEM OF DISTANCE LEARNING

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### ABSTRACT:

**D**istance education has provided handful of opportunities for working professionals, students and housewives to achieve their dreams of pursuing higher education. Different people have different perceptions regarding distance education. Distance education was earlier perceived to be similar to correspondence education. But with their good experiences while pursuing higher education in distance education mode, students have now clearly understood the dividing line between distance education and correspondence learning. Distance education and its importance are clearly understood by people living in urban area. In the same time availability of the resources differ from rural and urban area. The assisted learning support system is vital role of every individual in their learning. This can be gauged by the number of students pursuing distance education in urban. But in small towns and rural there is less awareness regarding distance education. People in rural still consider a regular degree superior to distance education degree. Distance learning has provided an excellent platform to students for learning at their own convenience and at their own pace. In this rapidly changing system of learning, if you are working and need a good degree as well as specialized knowledge to enhance your career then Distance education can be your cup of tea.

**KEYWORDS:** Open and Distance Learning, Support Services, Access Control, Confidentiality.

### INTRODUCTION

Importance of distance education lies in the importance of education in life. Education is immensely important for every individual for proper grooming and mushrooming. Words of Swamy Vivekananda in this context are very relevant indeed. He said, "Education is the manifestation of knowledge already within". He compared a child with a plant. To grow up properly a plant requires suitable atmosphere alike a child. But in our country most of the children are bereft of the desired suitable environment. As a corollary, their growing is not impeded but hardly reached the coveted level. The desire of the individual remains mostly unfulfilled. Distance education provides the opportunity to exchange the cultural and regional heritage as persons from different cultural and language areas get admission together into various courses. Since, by and large the candidates join such courses at their matured stage; they exploit this opportunity positively to eliminate the wrong views towards the culture of others, which is an essential aim of modern curriculum of education. So, in my opinion

distance education is a concept worth getting a lot of importance today and even more in the coming future. The scope of distance education is very bright in the future.

Developing computer technology has brought innovations. Increasing of computer use filed has provided many opportunities, and has made the computer takes place in education. In computer technology, the use of internet network with the aim of communicating with other people has provided opportunity to deliver education to people who are away (Varol, 2007; Tuncay, N., & Uzunboylu, H., 2010). The success of distance education system largely depends on the effectiveness of its student support services. These services beside their roles in students' successful are important from the emotional perspective. Traditional students have many physical clues of their attachment to the institution. Providing support services to the distance education population is an important part of creating the feeling of belonging for students who do not have access to traditional clues (Usun, 2004).

## REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Farajollahi and Moenikia (2010) conducted a study revealed that the relationship between students support services and its component with academic achievement in distance education. The population of this study consisted of Tehran province Payame Noor University' students in 2008-2009 academic year. The 1098 participants selected from print based population through cluster sampling and 172 participants selected from web based population through random sampling according the share of tow population. Formula for accounting the number of samples was Cochran's formula. Data accumulated by 52 scale questionnaire ( $\alpha = 0.93$ ) from print based participants through fill up paper questionnaire and from web based participants through fill up electronically questionnaire. Analyzing of gathered data via Pearson correlation showed that: relations between students support services and its components with academic achievement were statistically significant

Kanwar and Daniel (2010) made a study even though distance education has been in existence for over 150 years, it is only in the last 40 years that its growth has been so phenomenal and it is now a serious alternative to the formal education system. This article examines the evolution of open and distance learning (ODL), what it means, and the current trends that impact ODL in the twenty-first century. ODL will be an important element of future education and training systems across the world. While in the educationally advanced countries, ODL provides a more convenient learner-driven model of education, in the developing countries, challenged by inadequate resources, ODL can be a cost-effective option and can reach out to larger numbers, if certain key issues are addressed.

Tavukcu et al. (2011), the study found that the 21st century, depending on the development of information and communication technology tool, restructuring studies have been also made on education as it is made on each sector. World states strike out the education policies in parallel with the development of communication technologies. Distance education concept has gained a different dimension by using Web 3.0 tools of internet instead of Web 1.0 and Web 2.0 tools. Educational institutions have created new opportunities thanks to development of the internet and increasing the frequency use of it, and they also provide e-learning environment to provide Web support in Distance Education. Distance Education is a field of education that focuses on the pedagogy, technology, and instructional system designs that aim to deliver education to students who are not physically "on site" in a traditional classroom or campus. Now-a-days, researches on the use of computer networks are becoming increasingly common in distance education technique. In this article, we have studied the history, limits, and advantages of distance education, and also the applications of distance in education in our country today and in future.

## Distance Education - Innovative Methods Support Sistem

- Radio lesion
- Face-to-Face sessions
- Audio Cassettes Listening
- Internet
- Video Conferencing

### BENEFITS OF DISTANCE LEARNING

- ✦ In today's competitive scenario, an increasing number of the corporate companies are requiring efficient, hardworking people with influential personalities who are eligible and well equipped of managing their resources. That's why MBA and MCA education has gained popularity in recent years and in the past too in India and abroad as well.
- ✦ The global companies are also investing across the world. These companies have established large offices in different parts of the world no one can manage these offices better than MBAs and MCAs who have some experience in their respective areas.
- ✦ Distance learning has several benefits that are absent in classroom education. One of the benefits is that a learner can learn at his or her own pace. In classroom learning, the faster learners have to wait for the slower learners to catch up with the lesson before the teacher can move on to the next topic.
- ✦ They have to slow down their pace for the benefit of the slower learners. With distance learning, this huge problem can be solved very effectively. Moreover, in classroom learning, a learner has just one chance to learn a lesson. But, with distance learning, the learner can again play a portion of the audio tape or video, or read again the notes for a particular module as many number of times as he would like.
- ✦ Class room learning is very rigid in the sense that each lesson of the course is given an emphasis and amount of time that the teacher considers necessary. But in distance education, students have the flexibility to spend the amount of time they choose for each module. Distance learning provides any time - anywhere access to education. There are no restrictions on their study time and location. Students can easily learn while keeping with their family and work life. They do not need to adjust their family and work commitments to attend fixed class schedules. It also helps in saving travel time and travel costs. They can spend the saved time and money on other areas.

### STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

It is evident that everybody needs support as they go through life, especially when there is a paradigm shift in what had been obtainable and accustomed to in the past. On its part, this study has established that non distance learners require learner support services to ensure assure them of a rich learning experience and promote success on distance education programmers. Finally, there is need for better understanding of the characteristics of adult learners as a precursor to the development of an appropriate learner support system and services that would enhance learner participation in active and challenging ways in the learning process. Hence the study stated as "Assisted Learning Support System of Distance Learning".

### OBJECTIVES

- To find out the perception on assisted learning support system of distance education.
- To find out the difference in the perception on assisted learning support system of distance education with regard to gender.
- To find out the difference in the perception on assisted learning support system of distance education with regard to locality.
- To find out the difference in the perception on assisted learning support system of distance education with regard to age.

### HYPOTHESES

1. There is no significant difference in the perception on assisted learning support system of distance education in terms of gender.
2. There is no significant difference in the perception on assisted learning support system of distance education in terms of locality.
3. There is no significant difference in the perception on assisted learning support system of distance education in terms of age.

Data Analysis

**Table 1: Perception on Assisted Learning Support System of Distance Education**

	Items	Agree		Disagree	
		Frequency	%	Frequency	%
1	Allotted time for face-to-face tutorial is adequate.	115	35	215	65
2	Tutors are always accessible and willing to assist learners.	150	46	180	54
3	Tutors are always punctual and regular for face- to face tutorial.	170	52	160	45
4	Studies progress report arrives on time.	200	61	130	39
5	Centres are conducive for effective learning and interactions.	210	64	120	36
6	The Institution is proactive to students' grievances, queries and problems regarding studies.	205	62	125	38
7	The existence support groups assist in comprehension of study materials.	190	58	140	42
8	The school gives pre-course, in-course, and post course counselling.	180	55	150	45
9	All texts pedagogy are associated with necessary instructional devices to aid learning.	212	64	130	39
10	Textual materials cater for diverse learning opportunities.	200	61	130	39
11	The navigational tools in texts assist learners in finding their ways and planning their reading tasks.	205	62	125	38
12	All the outreach centres serve majority of the willing distance learners.	110	33	220	67
13	Assigning students to centres are based on students' geographical areas/locations.	150	46	180	54

Table-1 shows the perceptions of distance education learners on learning support. From the table, responses to the first question show that 215 or 65% of the students sampled were not satisfied with the allotted time for face-to-face tutorials. Their responses to item 2 from the table shows that 54% of the sample disagreed with the item that tutors are accessible and willing to assist learners with clarifications and interactive sessions. In addition, on the statement that tutors are always punctual for face-to-face tutorials, 52% of the sample agreed with this statement. Sixty-one (61%) of the sample agreed with the statement that the study progress report arrive on time, while 64% of the learners agreed that their centres were conducive for effective learning and interactions. Similarly, 62% of the students reported that the institution is proactive to their grievances, queries and problems regarding studies, while 58% of the sample felt that the existence of learner support groups assists in comprehension of study materials.

Also 55% learners reported that proper academic counselling was provided with respect to pre-course, in-course and post-course counselling, while 64% agreed that all their texts pedagogy were associated with necessary instructional devices to aid learning. Meanwhile, 61% of the sample reported that their textual materials cater for diverse learning opportunities, while 62% of them agreed that the presence of navigational tools in texts assists in finding their way and planning their reading tasks.

Finally, 67% of the sample reported that the outreach centres are yet to serve the majority of distance learners, while 54% reported that learner distribution to centres were not based on learner's geographical areas or locations.

**Table 2: Perception on Assisted Learning Support System of Distance Education based on Gender**

Group	N	X	SD	df	t-value	Probability Level	Critical Value	Remark
Male	134	28	17	328	1.48	0.05	1.96	Not Significant
Female	196	32	31					



Table-2 reveals the perceptions of male and female learners on the provision of learner support. The means representing male and female teacher perceptions are 28 and 32 respectively. However, the t-value of 1.48 is lower than the critical t-value of 1.96 at probability level of 0.05, indicating that there are no significant differences in the perceptions of learners classified by gender. This shows that both male and female learners perceived the impact of learner support on their learning experience to be the same. While Gous (1987) reported that characteristics such as age, culture, environment, occupation, gender, scholastic, skills and experiences should be examined to determine their influence on the provision of learner support services, this study has revealed that there were statistically significant differences between male and female learners.

**Table 3: Perception on Assisted Learning Support System of Distance Education based on Locality**

Group	N	X	SD	df	t	Probability Level	Critical Value	Remark
Urban	170	38	22	328	6.12	0.05	1.96	Significant
Rural	160	21	28					

Table-3 depicts that the respective means on the perceptions of rural and urban distance learners on the provision of learner support are 38 and 21. The calculated t-value of 6.12 is higher than the critical t-value of 1.96, at the 0.05 cut-off point, indicating significant differences in the perceptions of rural and urban NOUN learners.

**Table 4: Perception on Assisted Learning Support System of Distance Education based on Age**

Group	N	X	SD	df	t	Probability Level	Critical Value	Remark
Below 40	171	45	24	328	5.60	0.05	1.96	S
Above 40	159	26	36					

From Table-4, the means representing the perceptions of old and young distance education learners on the provision of learner support services were 45 and 26 respectively. The calculated t-value of 5.60, which is higher than the critical t-value of 1.96 at 0.05 probability level, suggests statistically significant differences between the perceptions of below 40 years and above 40 years in their age with respect to provision of learner support.

**Implications of the Study on Qualitative Educational Planning**

In addition, educational planners should come up with an action plan on the best way to respond to identified learner support needs of these distance learners. The following steps would guide this planning process:

1. Identification of policy-related questions that are faced by decision makers aiming to improve the quality of distance education.
2. Prioritisation of these questions and precise linkage of them to potential future policy decisions at the appropriate decision-making level with respect to students’ learning support in distance education.
3. Use policy-related questions to (i) identify information that is relevant to learner support that might be available in existing data collections, (ii) determine new data that might be required, (iii) eliminate redundancies due to overlaps in existing data collections, and (iv) terminate rarely-used “traditional” data collections.
4. Review appropriate coverage level of the data collection with terms of operationalisation of distance education service delivery (census or survey), timeliness of data collection (yearly or less frequently), and establishing major gaps that are common in most data collections (especially information describing student educational achievement, student time spend on various curriculum offerings, student “tracking” patterns, tutor knowledge of subject matter, competencies, efficiency and unit cost measures etc.).
5. Produce detailed specifications of distance education quality indicators that would be assessed, including the

provision and justification of construct names, operational definitions, computer-based coding systems, techniques and materials for use in data collection and detailed test blueprints that meet reliability and validity requirements.

6. Collection, analysis, and preparation of appropriate data according to acceptable scientific standards and the creation of appropriate data archives that would be readily accessible for later secondary analyses.

7. Analysis of data using approaches deemed appropriate for the questions posed and the backgrounds of the audiences that would receive the research reports, including the presentation of appropriate measures of sampling and measurement errors.

8. Develop linkages of suitable information dissemination procedures with both the policy questions posed initially and the decision-making levels at which the policy decisions would be taken, including formulation and testing of new policy questions that emerge during the conduct of the data analyses.

### SUGGESTIONS

1. Quality of study material has to be improved from time to time. New statistics should replace old statistics.
2. There should be frequent interaction with students so that they do not get out of touch.
3. The administrative queries of the students should be handled and solved very fast so that they remain satisfied.
4. There should be a deep focus on case studies as they help to gain practical knowledge and that is all that matters when it comes to professional life.
5. The focus should not just be on achieving the degree but subject knowledge is of utmost importance
6. The examination system should be very fair. There should be no malpractices so that the students can better concentrate on their study.
7. However a new welcome trend has emerged with the advancement of technology. Top most distance education institutions like SMU DE are using premium technology like EduNxt and setting up state-of-the-art technology. Thanks to programs like that concepts like e-learning and virtual classrooms are gaining acceptability across the country. So Distance Education will no more be a poor cousin of Regular Campus. It will stand by regular campus with great pride.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Tutors and students should be encouraged to attend the tutorial classes regularly so as to derive maximum benefits that face to face tutoring offers.
- Students should form reading groups that could come together to study the guide before and after the face to face classes so that grey areas can be noted for discussion during the next face to face class.
- Face to face tutoring time should timely spent since dialogue enhances learning.

### CONCLUSION

We attempted to give you an overview of the term “open and distance education ” – with a word of caution that it is not easy to define the term comprehensively. The attempt was carried out by distinguishing the system of distance teaching and learning from the other systems of education. To ward off naïve criticisms against this mode of teaching, we have, towards the end of the unit, said a few words in justifying distance education as a learning activity, which is more effective than the traditional systems of education.

In distance education the facilitation of the virtual students from the new technologies is obvious. They can work, stay at home and study without any social, family or other problem. The advantages are many, but also the compensation rather important: they are deprived the experience of student life, the freedom that this exudes, as well as social connection. Particularly in distance education the use of Internet, with peak the videoconference, can decrease the lack of contact between teacher and student and strengthen the educational process. As it appeared from the precedents, the new technologies do not constitute simply an alternative solution, particularly for distance education.



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