DISTANCE TEACHER EDUCATION AND THE CHALLENGES OF 21ST CENTURY

Santosh Kumari and Anjana

The study focusses on the relevance of the teacher education programmes through distance mode which are facing various challenges due to globalization and technological advancements in the field of education. With the explosion of knowledge, education is going through new transformations and, therefore, it will have to evolve in the direction of the new globalised knowledge society. The alarming challenge before the distance teacher education programme is to be equipped with 21st century knowledge and skills and learn how to integrate them into their classroom practice to realize its goal of successfully meeting the challenges of this society so that the coming generation can meet the demands of a global society. This paper focuses on the need of distance teacher education programme to find innovative teaching and learning methodology and access the potential for new forms of communication using emerging technologies. In the 21st century, teachers need to be life-long learners, adapting continuously to changing opportunities and demands of the knowledge economy, producing new knowledge through research activities.

INTRODUCTION

In distance mode teacher education programme the holistic development of the students depends upon the effective teaching strategies. If we the people of the nation are to become educated and knowledgeable, we need the teachers who are experts in their disciplines and are equipped with the latest emerging knowledge. A teacher must possess novelty of thoughts and procedures; thus,

Santosh Kumari ✉
Regional Director, IGNOU Regional Centre, Ludhiana, Punjab
Email: santoshk@ignou.ac.in

Anjana
Assistant Regional Director, IGNOU Regional Centre, Ludhiana, Punjab
Email: anjana@ignou.ac.in

this can help the learners to explore life situations and enable them to find out unusual solutions to the problems they encounter. This in turn facilitates better adjustment and personality development, which is the cherished goal of education. A good teacher tries to develop realistic aspirations among the students and find out conducive conditions to reinforce better values, motivation, aptitude, attitude and personality traits among the students. Teachers being the vital members in the educational system have the responsibility to shape the future of their students.

Role of Distance Teacher Education Programme in Inculcation of Moral Values

Values can be defined as "Conception, explicit or implicit, distinctive characteristic of an individual or of a group of those desirable traits, which influence the selection from available modes and ends of action. Values are the criteria for determining levels of goodness and worth of beauty" (Gandhi, 2014). It is generally felt that with the advancement of the society, the moral values are deteriorating among the young generation. Now, it is the duty of the teacher educators to inculcate knowledge and moral values among the young generation of our country. The purpose of education is not only to impart knowledge and skills, but to help us to live for others and with others. On value education, Dr. Radha Krishnan observed, "if we concentrate only on giving education and neglect the development of the mind and the spirit, we shall have enormous power without any overriding ethical purpose". How true it is in the present day context. Swami Vivekananda has put it more succinctly when he said that "the end and aim of all education, all training should be to make good human beings". Discussing about education, Rabindranath Tagore stated, "I do not put my faith in my institution, but in the individuals all over the world, who think clearly, feel nobly and act rightly thus becoming channels of moral truth. The challenge facing the world today is mental and moral decay, breakdown of norms and discipline and pathological concentration of power and division of societies".

Technology Integrated Distance Teacher Education

In the 21st Century the challenge before teacher educators is to be equipped with the knowledge of technology. There is technological revolution in teacher education. There is a shift from e-learning 1.0 (Online learning) to e-learning 2.0 (Twitters, Facebook) to e-Learning 3.0 (Semantic Web), that is from content to community to Artificial Intelligence. There is a quick shift from web-1 to web-2 to web-3. We have initiated into Open education, Open course ware, Open content and Open research. There are proposals for e-teacher education. Smart

Classrooms are emerging, where-in; we have e-learning and e-testing. Terms like e-Book, E-Reader's E-Newsletter, Webinar, Digital lesson Designs and e-Port folios have become common.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Some studies have been reviewed to be insightful of the present study. To meet the challenges of the 21st century the classroom teaching for teacher learners is to be planned in such a way that it may cope with the changing circumstances and the technological advancements. Since the day, the concept of open and distance learning came into materialization, educationists are concerned about it and trying to give and implement various approaches for the field. The theoretical approaches by Sewart (1978, 1980), stressed on the institution's continuity of a concern for the quality of support to the student as the basis of the claim of Open Universities regarding high completion rates of courses. Here, emphasis has been given to the role of the institution and its concern for the learners. Most of the educationists who are concerned with open and distance learning, talk of student support and counselling. Careful systems for student support and counseling have been seen, as perhaps, one of the most important elements in the distance education system.

Rekkedal (1985) studied the role of the teacher for the betterment of the practices and the learner. No single factor appears to cause nonparticipation; however, individual student characteristics and life circumstances appear to have the greatest impact on participation (Kerka, 1986).

Garrison (1989) pointed out that with new communication technologies the boundaries between distance education and traditional education have become blurred. This may give rise to the solutions of various problems, if implied, in Indian context. The frustrations resulting from problems with communication between student and academic institution are factors, of which distance education planners should be well aware (Wood, 1996). Distance learners demand and expect a high level of service when it comes to registration, delivery of course material and exams, quick turn-around times for grading exam and assignments and answering questions (Edge & Loegering, 2000).

The need of good quality service has been sought for the learners in various aspects of open and distance learning. Teachers with higher aspiration and achievement will make use of modern means to improve their information and quality of teaching, and incorporate modern ideas to become innovative.

Bishop and Spake (2003), reported that policymakers are faced with an array of choices related to planning ODL, such as infrastructure, student support, support to academics for their changing role as distance educators, and costs, to name a few. To add to this, distance education delivery is faced with changes such as the movement from correspondence-type delivery to open access and technology-enhanced learning where technology is changing constantly. Stella and Gnanam (2004) highlighted un-satisfaction to the approach being used for the system of open and distance learning. M-learning also facilitates designs for authentic learning, meaning learning that targets real-world problems and involves projects of relevance and interest to the learner (Kukulska-Hulme & Traxler 2007). Valk, Rashid and Elder, (2010) attempted to find possible solutions to these challenges, much hope has been placed in new information and communication technologies (ICTs), mobile phones being one example They see the use of ICT as a major solution to the open and distance learning problems.

Distance education and ODL are currently important topics for educational planners, administrators, academics, and policymakers because of the growth of distance learning and technology-enhanced learning.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the present study are:

1. To assess to what extent the distance teacher education programme is successful in facing the challenges of 21st century.

2. To find out the relevance of ODL based teacher education programme for inculcation of moral values.

3. To explore whether technology integrated education is to be provided to the distance teacher educators.

QUESTIONS FOR STUDENTS

The following emerging issues have to be explored through this research work:

1. While writing the assignment which mode do you think is convenient for searching the material?

2. Which method is more convenient to the learners for the preparation of term-end examination?

3. While preparing for examination which mode is more convenient for learning?

4. While going through the content of the study material, do you think

innovative pedagogy is employed in it?

5. While going through the course material whether you learn about cultural background, traditions etc?

6. Do you think course material inculcates moral values?

7. Have you faced any problem in getting promotion after obtaining the degree (B.Ed.) via distance mode?

8. Whether you faced any difficulty in comprehension of the course material in English medium?

9. Whether the students are facing difficulty in comprehension of the material in Hindi medium?

QUESTIONS FOR COUNSELLORS

1. During Counselling sessions which methodology you use for providing information?

2. Do you think that the knowledge of culture and traditions is provided through the study material to the learners?

3. Are you encouraging the students to participate in the community activities and functions?

4. Do you feel that moral values of the learners are deteriorating?

5. Do you think that the learners are fascinated more towards materialistic values rather than moral values?

6. Do you think that the moral values are inculcated among the learners while going through the study material?

7. Do you think that the study material needs revision as no knowledge of values is provided?

8. How many sessions you attended via teleconferencing mode?

9. How do you provide help to the learners for writing the assignments?

10. For what purpose you use social media/ Facebook?

11. For what purpose you use a smart phone?

12. For what purpose you use Whatsapp?

13. For what purpose you use Internet?

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

Two questionnaires were developed for collection of data, one for learners and the other for academic counsellors of educational programmes. The reliability and validity of these two questionnaires was found out. There were 1583 learners of B.Ed. programme for the session of 2010 to 2015 to whom the questionnaire was sent through email. The learners were informed telephonically for filling the questionnaire. SMS were also sent to the learners providing the link to the questionnaire. However, response was received from 180 learners only. The questionnaire for learners contained 11 questions and all questions were further divided into sub options to be ticked by the learners. It was a closed type of questionnaire. There were 74 approved academic counsellors. The questionnaire was developed using google form. The response was received from 32 academic counsellors.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Survey of Learners on 'Challenges in Distance Teacher Education'

There were 180 students who had responded to the questionnaire given to them out of 1583 students who were enrolled for the programme of B.Ed. in six consecutive years i.e. from 2010 to 2015. Out of 180 students 64 were male and 116 were female students. Table 1 shows the division of students as per their age group.

Table 1

Division of Learners into 6 Groups According to their Age.

AGE GROUP	No. of Students
B/W 21-30	32
B/W 31-40	110
B/W 41-50	36
B/W 51-60	1
B/W 61-70	0
B/W 71-80	1

Table 2

Students Enrolled Programme Wise Under Regional Centre, Khanna.

Name of Programme Centre	PSC Code	No. of Students
D.M. College of Education, Distt. Moga	2231	291
St. Soldier College of Education, Distt. Jalandhar	2237	400
Sai College of Education, Jadla, Distt. Nawanshahr	2258	186
Guru Gobind Singh College of Education, Talwandi Sabo	2259	303
BCM College of Education, Distt. Ludhiana	2260	337
Colleges under Convergence Unit Baba Kundan College of Education, Ludhiana Desh Bhagat College of Education, Mandi Gobindgarh	BKR1401, DBG1407	66

As per Table 2 there were total 1583 learners enrolled for B.Ed. Programme and the SMS were sent to all these learners. Out of these 550 learners were contacted telephonically also. Programme Centre wise break up of learners enrolled in B.Ed. Programme is given in this table.

Table 3

Year-Wise Break-Up of Learners Enrolled in B.Ed. Under Regional Centre, Khanna.

S.No.	Year	Session	No. of Learners Enrolled
1	2010	January 2010	314
2	2011	January 2011	288
3	2012	January 2012	232
4	2013	January 2013	312
5	2014	January 2014	321
6	2015	January 2015	116

Table 3 shows the breakup of the learner given year wise, as there were total 1583 learners enrolled in six consecutive years from 2010 to 2015.

Table 4

The Number and Percentage of Students Who Opted for Two Courses of ES-361 and ES-362.

Course Code	No. of Students Opted	Percentage of Opted Course	No. of Students (Responses Received)	Percentage (Responses Received)
Educational Technology (ES-361)	226	14.27%	14	6.19%
Computer in Education (ES-362)	242	15.28%	24	9.91%

Table 4 shows that out of 1583 learners, there were 468 learners, who had opted for both the courses i.e. Educational Technology-ES-361 and Computer in Education-ES-362. If we bifurcate these learners of two courses, these are 226 learners of ES-361 and 242 learners of ES-362. It also further shows that 29.56% of learners had opted for technical courses. Responses from 180 learners were received out of which 38 learners had opted for both the courses i.e. Educational Technology-ES-361 and Computer in Education-ES-362. From the responses it was analysed that 21.11% had opted for the option of technical courses i.e. Educational Technology and Computer in Education.

Question No 1

While writing the assignment which mode do you think is convenient for searching the material?

Table 5

Convenient Way of Searching the Material for Writing the Assignments.

Choose Options	No. of Responses	Percentage
Explore from Internet	35	19.44%
The study material provided by the university / print material	145	80.55%

Table 5 shows that the maximum students response (80.55%) is for the use of printed study material for writing their assignments as per the requirement of the programme. Only 19.44% use Internet for surfing the material for writing the assignments. It gives the response of our issue no. 3.

Question No. 2

Which Method is More Convenient to Study?

Table 6

Convenient Method of Study by the Learners.

Choose Options	No. of Responses	Percentage
Browsing on Internet	35	19.44%
Print Course Material	145	80.55%

As per the Table 6 shown above the maximum students response (80.55%) is for the use of print course material for the purpose of studying the programme of B.Ed. Only 19.44% are browsing Internet for study purposes.

Question No. 3

While Preparing for Examination Which Mode is More Convenient for

Learning?

Table 7

Convenient Method of Learning by the Learners.

Choose Options	No. of Responses	Percentage
Digital material	20	11.11%
Print Material	160	88.88%

Table 7 shows that the maximum number of students responded (88.88%) towards using print material for the purpose of preparation of Term End Examination. Only 11.11% use digital material for preparing for Term End Examination. As per our issue no. 2 and 7 we can show that the learners are more dependent on print study material for preparation of term-end examination.

Question No. 4

While Going Through the Content of Study Material, Do You Think Innovative Pedagogy is Employed in it?

Table 8

Innovative Methodology is Applied in Content of Study Material of B.Ed. Programme.

Choose Options	No. of Responses	Percentage
YES	166	92.22%
NO	14	7.77%

As per the Table No. 8 data shows that the maximum number of the student i.e. 92.22% say that innovative pedagogy is employed in the programme of B.Ed. and only 7.77% think that innovative pedagogy is not being used in the programme of education.

Question No. 5

While Going Through the Course Material Whether You Learn about Cultural Background, Traditions etc?

Table 9

Transmission of Knowledge of Cultural Background and Traditions etc.

Choose Options	No. of Responses	Percentage
YES	109	60.55%
NO	71	39.44%

As per the responses shown in Table 9 it can be seen that 60.55% of the student have given their response as affirmative that the knowledge of cultural background and traditions were given while pursuing the programme of B.Ed. whereas, 39.44% responses are not in favour of the question raised.

Question No. 6

Do You Think That the Moral Values are Inculcated Among the Learners While Going Through the Study Material?

Table 10

Inculcation of Moral Values.

Choose Options	No. of Responses	Percentage
YES	109	60.55%
NO	71	39.44%

As per Table 10 we can see that 60.55% of the student have given their response that moral values are inculcated while pursuing the programme of B.Ed. whereas 39.44% responses are not in favour of the question.

Table 11

Percentage of Options Chosen by the Learners.

Choose Options	No. of Responses	Percentage
Moral	46	25.55%
Social	38	21.11%
Cultural	27	15.00%
Economic	16	8.88%
Political	12	6.66%
Spiritual	13	7.22%
Aesthetic	18	10.00%
All of the above	107	59.44%

As per Table 11 we can see that that 59.44% learners have responded that all types of values like (moral, social, cultural, economic, political spiritual and aesthetic) are inculcated while pursuing the B.Ed. programme. The highest inculcated value is moral value i.e. 25.55%. The least inculcated value is political value i.e. 6.66%.

Question No. 7

Have You Faced any Problem in Getting Promotion After Obtaining the

Degree (B.Ed.) Via Distance Mode?

Table 12

Responses Given by the Learners on Promotion.

Choose Options	No. of Responses	Percentage
YES	19	10.55%
NO	161	89.44%

As per the data shown in Table 12, 89.44% learners responded that they had not faced any difficulty in getting promotion while/after pursuing the programme of education whereas 10.55% have responded that they faced problems after pursuing the programme of education under ODL system.

Question No. 8:

Whether You Faced any Difficulty in Comprehension of the Course Material in English Medium?

Table 13

Responses Given for Comprehension of the Material in English Medium.

Choose Options	No. of Responses	Percentage
YES	28	15.55%
NO	152	84.44%

As per the responses shown in Table 13 it can be seen that 84.44% students had not faced any difficulty in comprehension of the material in English Medium. However, 15.55% faced difficulty for the comprehension of the print material provided by the university.

Question No. 9:

Whether You Faced any Difficulty in Comprehension of the Course Material in Hindi Medium?

Table 14

Comprehension of the Material in Hindi Medium.

Choose Options	No. of Responses	Percentage
YES	26	14.44
NO	154	85.55%

As per the data shown in Table 14 it can be seen that 85.55% of learners had not faced any difficulty in comprehension of study material in Hindi Medium.

However, 14.44% faced difficulty in comprehension of the study material in Hindi Medium.

Survey from Counsellors on 'Challenges in Distance Teacher Education'

There were total 74 Approved Academic Counsellors for the Education Programmes and SMS were sent along with telephone calls to all these counsellors. Responses were received from 32 counsellors of different LSCs as per data shown below in Table 15. Out of 32 counsellors 28 were female and 4 males.

Table 15

Number of Academic Counsellors Responded Centre-Wise.

Name of Programme Centre	PSC Code	No. of Academic Counsellors (Responses Received)
D.M. College of Education, Moga	2231	05
St. Soldier College of Education, Jalandhar	2237	07
Khalsa College of Education, Amritsar	2244	02
BCM College of Education, Ludhiana	2260	18

Question No. 1

During Counselling Sessions Which Methodology You Use for Providing Information?

Table 16

Methodology Used by the Academic Counsellors During Counselling Sessions.

Choose Options	No. of Responses	Percentage
Clarify the problems/ issues raised by learners	18	56.25%
Deliver Lecture	5	15.62%
Explain from study material	8	25.00%
Giving the notes	1	03.12%

Results in Table 16 show that 56.25% of counsellors responded that they clarify the problems and issues raised by the learners during the counselling sessions. 25% of learners have responded that they explained the content while

going through the print material provided by the University and 15.62% delivered the lectures during the counselling sessions which is against the philosophy of distance education.

Question No. 2

Do You Think That the Knowledge of Culture and Traditions are Provided Through the Study Material to the Learners?

Table 17

Knowledge of Culture and Tradition Transmitted by the Programme of Education.

Choose Options	No. of Responses	Percentage
YES	29	90.62%
NO	3	09.37%

Table 17 shows that 90.62% of learners had responded that knowledge of culture and traditions are transmitted to the learners by the programme of B.Ed.

Question No. 3

Are You Encouraging the Students to Participate in the Community Activities and Functions?

Table 18

Encouragement of the Students for Participation in Community Activities Etc.

Choose Options	No. of Responses	Percentage
YES	32	100%
NO	0	---

Table 18 shows that 100% of counsellors are in favour of this activity that the students are encouraged to participate in the activities and functions being organised by the community.

Question No. 4

Do You Feel That Moral Values of the Learners are Deteriorating?

Table 19

Status of Values Among the Learners.

Choose Options	No. of Responses	Percentage
YES	25	78.12%
NO	7	21.87%

As per the Table 19 it can be seen that 78.12% of counsellors are of the view that nowadays the moral values are deteriorating among the learners due to their craze towards materialistic world. Whereas, 21.87% of counsellors do not favour the statement.

Question No. 5

Do You Think That the Learners are Fascinated More Towards Materialistic Values Rather Than Moral Values?

Table 20

Fascination of the Learners Towards Materialistic Values.

Choose Options	No. of Responses	Percentage
YES	26	81.25%
NO	6	18.75%

Table 20 shows that 81.25% of the counsellors are accepting that the learners are fascinated more towards the materialistic values and 18.75% are not in favour of this ststement.

Question No. 6

Do You Think That Moral Values are Inculcated Among the Learners While Going Through the Study Material?

Table 21

Inculcation of Moral Values Among the Learners.

Choose Options	No. of Responses	Percentage
YES	29	90.62%
NO	3	9.37%

Table 21 shows that 90.62% of the academic counsellors are accepting that the moral values are inculcated among the learners while providing the knowledge through the programme of education. The responses given in

table no. 19, 20 and 21 are the answers of issue no. 5.

Question No. 7

Do You Think That the Study Material Needs Revision as no Knowledge of Values is Provided?

Table 22

Programme of B.Ed. Needs Revision.

Choose Options	No. of Responses	Percentage
YES	19	59.37%
NO	13	40.62%

Table 22 shows that 59.37% of counsellors are in favour of revision of the programme of B.Ed. whereas 40.62% of counsellors are not in favour of this change.

Question No. 8

How Many Sessions You Attended via Teleconferencing Mode?

Table 23

Percentage of Students Attended the Teleconferencing Sessions.

Choose Options	No. of Response	Percentage
ZERO	87	48.33%
ONE	18	10.00%
TWO	43	23.88%
THREE	07	3.88%
FOUR	02	1.11%
FIVE	01	0.55%
TEN	18	10.00%
FIFTEEN	04	2.22%

As per Table 23 it can be seen that 48.33% students have not attended any teleconferencing sessions. Others like 23.88% had attended only two sessions, 10% had attended 10 sessions and another 10% had attended only one session. It is pertinent to mention here that the teleconferencing has been discontinued since two or three years.

Question No. 9:

How These Sessions Were Helpful?

Table 24

Responses Given by the Learners about the Nature of Sessions.

Choose Options	No. of Responses	Percentage
These were very interesting	70	38.88%
These were very interactive	07	3.88%
The content was presented in a very systematic way	26	14.44%

As per Table 24 it can be seen that 38.88% of responses say that the sessions were very interesting and 14.44 % found that the content of teleconferencing sessions was presented in a very systematic way.

Question No. 10

For What Purpose You Use Social Media/ Face book?

Table 25

Purpose of Use of Social Media/ Face book by the Counsellors.

Choose Options	No. of Responses	Percentage
For sharing information with the students	15	46.87%
For sharing information with the friends/relatives/colleagues	17	53.17%

Table 25 shows that 53.17% of counsellors are using social media/Facebook for sharing information with the friends/relatives /colleagues. Whereas, 46.87% are using this media for the purpose of sharing information with the students.

Question No. 11

For What Purpose You Use Smart Phone?

Table 26

Use of Smart Phones by the Academic Counsellors.

Choose Options	No. of Responses	Percentage
For Calling	29	90.62%
For Sending Messages to the students	4	12.5%
For Watching videos	24	75%

Table 26 shows that 90.62% of the teachers responded that they use their smart phones for calling purposes only. Whereas, 12.5% of counsellors responded that they use their mart phones for sending messages to the students and 75% are responding that the use it for watching videos.

Question No. 12

For What Purpose You Use Whatsapp?

Table 27

Use of Whatsapp by the Counsellors.

Choose Options	No. of Responses	Percentage
For Sharing information with students	21	65.62%
For Sharing information with friends/ relatives/ colleagues	30	93.75%

Table 27 shows that the 93.75% are in favour of the view that they are using Whatsapp for sharing the information with friends/relatives/colleagues and 65.62% are using their Whatsapp for sharing the information with their students.

Question No. 13

For What Purpose You Use Internet?

Table 28

Purpose for Use of Internet.

Choose Options	No. of Responses	Percentage
Visiting websites of IGNOU/ Other Educational Institutions	27	84.37%
Providing Information to Students/ Giving links to the learners for surfacing the study material	23	71.87%
For writing Research Papers/Articles	28	87.50%
For sending emails to Friends/Colleagues	24	75.00%

Table 28 shows that 87.50% of counsellors use the Internet for the purpose of writing Research Papers/Articles and 84.37% use it for the purpose of visiting websites of IGNOU/ Other Educational Institutions. However, 75.00% use Internet for sending emails to Friends/Colleagues and 71.87% use the Internet for providing Information to Students/ Giving links to the learners for surfacing the study material. As per the analysis for the use of technology shows that the maximum number of counsellors use technology for their personal use like for calling, viewing websites, writing papers, interaction with their friends, relatives and colleagues.

Conclusions

It can be concluded that there are so many challenges before the successful completion of the distance teacher education programme. These challenges of 21st century are innovative methodology of teaching of distance teacher

educators, use of latest educational technology for imparting the knowledge of tradition and cultural background by the mode of distance teacher education, deteriorating moral values among the young generation, fascination of the students towards materialistic values, less use of educational technology by the academic counsellors for imparting educational information to the learners, and non-provision of the latest technology to the programme centres etc. It is further concluded that medium of instruction is still a barrier in comprehension of the study material. To some extent it has been analysed that those students who face difficulty in the content material is mainly due to tough language used in printed material. As per the programme curriculum of B.Ed. technical subjects are given as optional only, however it may become more effective if these may be included in the core courses as per the requirement of the 21st century.

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