

CONTRIBUTION OF DISTANCE EDUCATION FOR TRIBAL STUDENTS OF DISTRICT KARGIL (J&K): AN EVALUATIVE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, an attempt has been made to study the contributions of distance education for tribal people of Kargil district. The sample of this study comprises of 180 distance learners of those Universities whose study centers are functional at Kargil. For the present study, self-designed questionnaire and other suitable tools were employed. The study revealed that only the study centers of Kashmir University, IGNOU and MANUU are operational in this remote tribal area. It is found that at present, (34) programmes of IGNOU, (08) programmes of MANUU and (02) programmes of Kashmir University are available at their Kargil study centers. It is also found that IGNOU is providing better facilities/support services to the learners than the other two. But Kashmir University and MANUU are also trying to do their best to uplift the educational status of this tribal district. Other Universities also need to establish their study centers at Kargil to promote the culture of 'Learning while Earning' among tribal peoples.

Key Word: Distance Education; Distance Learners; Study Centres; Support Services.

INTRODUCTION

Distance education is considered neither as formal education nor as informal education. But it is best known as non-formal education as it offers a midway approach between formal and informal education. It is partly formal and partly informal (Walia, 2011). It is also called Correspondence Education, Non-traditional Education, Open Education, Open Learning, University at Door and Off-campus Study etc. In North America, it is called 'Independent Study', or 'Home Study'. But in Australia, it is named as 'External System of Education'. In Spain, it is described as 'Education a Distancia'. In France, it is known as 'Tele-enseignement' and in Germany, it is called 'Frenstudium'. Distance education is an independent study consists of various forms of teaching-learning arrangements in which teachers and learners carry out their essential tasks and responsibilities apart from one another, communicating in a variety of ways (Wedemeyer, 1977). It is cheaper, effective, democratic and learner paced (Sharma & Saxena, 2013).

The roots of distance education is found in an advertisement in the Boston Gazette (1728) promoted Caleb Phillips, in which the teachers of the new method of shorthand sought students who wanted to learn through weekly mailed lessons. In 1840s, Sir Issac Pitman initiated to teach shorthand in Britain through correspondence. Then in 1858, the University of London dared first to provide corresponding degrees. In the first half of the 20th century, distance education made significant development in countries like United States, Australia, Russia, France & Canada etc.

In 1961, the Indian Central Advisory Board of Education framed a committee under the chairmanship of Dr. D.S Kothari (the then chairman of UGC) to introduce corresponding courses. After the recommendation of the committee, the University of Delhi started the first school of correspondence in 1962. In 1982, Dr. B.R Ambedkar Open University, Hyderabad was established with the aim of providing corresponding courses. But with the establishment of IGNOU (1985) & DEC, distance and open education

is progressing in leaps and bounds. Both at the centre and the state level, a good number of universities are doing their best for the betterment of knowledge explosion to meet up the population explosion.

In the state of Jammu and Kashmir, University of Kashmir and University of Jammu are playing a vital role in the field of distance education. The Directorate of Distance Education (University of Kashmir) was established in the year 1976 with the view to impart education in different disciplines through Open and Distance Learning (ODL) mode. The Directorate of Distance Education (University of Jammu) was also established in the year 1976 with the view to make higher education accessible and flexible through Open and Distance Learning (ODL) mode. Being an Open University of national stature, IGNOU(1985) is providing the facility of different PG/UG and other programmes in distance nature to quench the thirst of knowledge of the learners. MANUU(1998) is also offering PG/UG and other programmes in Urdu medium except the English language and literature courses through distance mode to fulfil the educational and qualification desires of the Urdu community.

NEED AND IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

The present study will be useful because distance education is one of the best modes of education for the learners of Tribal District Kargil as it remains cut off from the rest of the world for about five to six months every year due to its geographical location. It is highly beneficial for the employed people, house wives, financially poor students and for many other sections of the society. It is expected that this study will be very much useful to give a clear picture about the existing distance education facilities in Kargil.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The following objectives were formulated for the present study:-

- To identify the Universities providing the facilities of Distance Education to the tribal learners/students of Kargil District.
- To identify the academic and professional Distance Programmes/courses provided by the Universities.
- To identify the support services and facilities providing by the Universities to the Distance Learners.
- To identify the learners' satisfaction in Distance Education.

METHODOLOGY

Descriptive/survey method was employed for the study as it describes what exists at present.

SAMPLE

The sample of the study consisted of:

- All the study centres of Distance Education established by different Universities in Kargil District.
- Sixty (60) Distance Learners of each University belonging to Tribal District Kargil who have completed their degrees through Kargil Study Centres.

COLLECTION OF DATA

Self-designed questionnaire and other suitable tools were employed for conducting the study. For this study, random sampling technique was preferred. The investigator has mainly used simple statistical technique known as, “calculation of percentage”.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

After conducting the study it is found that the following three Universities have been providing the facilities of Distance education in Kargil:

- 1) University of Kashmir, Srinagar (State University)
- 2) Indira Gandhi National Open University, New-Delhi (Central University)
- 3) Maulana Azad National Urdu University, Hyderabad (Central University)

Table 01
Showing the facilities/support services provided to the Distance Learners
at Kargil Study Centres

S. No	Items	University of Kashmir	IGNOU	MANUU
01.	No. of Programmes (Available)	(02)	(34)	(08)
02.	Round the year admission	No	Yes	No
03.	Dual-Session	No	Yes	No
04.	No limitation of seats	No	Yes	Yes
05.	Normal Course fees	No	Yes	Yes
06.	Prospectus & Syllabus	Yes	Yes	Yes
07.	Study materials	Yes	Yes	Yes
08.	Timely distribution of study materials	Yes	Yes	No
09.	I- Cards	Yes	Yes	Yes
10.	Contact classes/POT	Yes	No	No
11.	Assignments	Yes	Yes	No
12.	Library facility	No	No	No
13.	Broadcasts educational programmes on TV	Yes	Yes	Yes
14.	Video-Conferencing	No	No	No
15.	Internet facilities	No	No	No
16.	Tentative/final date-sheets in advance	No	Yes	No
17.	Timely conduct of examinations	No	Yes	No
18.	Well set-up exam halls	Yes	Yes	Yes
19.	Timely declaration of results	No	Yes	No

20.	University completes the course procedures within the stipulated time	No	Yes	No
21.	Scholarships	No	No	No

Table 01 shows that the facilities/support services provided by the Universities are as follows:

- Kashmir University = 40%
- IGNOU = 75%
- MANUU = 35%

Table. 02

Showing Learners' Satisfaction in Distance Education

S. No	Items	University Of Kashmir N = 60	IGNOU N = 60	MANUU N = 60
01.	Admission Procedures	36	57	38
02.	Allotted seats/Quota	12	60	60
03.	Syllabuses	38	38	57
04.	Study Materials	48	42	58
05.	Contact Classes	54	00	00
06.	Assignments	52	58	06
07.	Exam Paper Patterns	50	39	52
08.	Timely conduct of examination	09	60	23
09.	Declaration of Results	19	60	19
10.	Presentation of Marks cards	52	36	47
Mean		Mean = 37	Mean = 45	Mean = 36
Satisfaction level of learners in Percentage		61.66%	75%	60%

Table 02 shows that the satisfaction level of learners in IGNOU is higher than the other two. And this difference is significant.

CONTRIBUTION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF KASHMIR (UOK)

The Directorate of Distance Education, University of Kashmir has established its Information-cum-Study Centre at Govt. Degree College, Kargil for B.Ed and M.Ed courses only. Since the time of its establishment, the centre is functioning properly and till now many batches of B.Ed and only two batches

of M.Ed have completed their courses successfully. Table 01 & 02 show that the directorate provides prospectus, syllabus and study materials to its distance learners. To avail the distance education facilities, the DDE also issues I-Cards to the learners. Facilities relating to admission, contact-cum-counselling classes, practice of teaching and examination are also provided by the centre. Most of the distance learners are satisfied with the facilities as 80% of them are considering the study materials of DDE a standard one and only 20% considers it a normal one. The learners are also satisfied with other facilities providing by the centre except the examination related matters. About 90% of the learners are totally dissatisfied with examination issues as exams are not conducting on time especially in the DDE courses and only 10% of the learners are considering distance education, a time consuming process by nature. 88% of the learners questions over the limited number of seats or fixed quota for admission. They are of the view that the admission through distance education should be open for all. About 60% of the learners demand to increase the number of programmes at Kargil study centre. Some learners consider that they have to pay a big sum of money for the courses and they can't apply for the scholarships due to the unavailability of fee receipts as they pay DDE in the form of demand drafts. One plus point is that almost all the learners appreciates the style of publishing selection list by DDE for the courses under the title "KARGIL CHAPTER" due to which they are getting their due shares. Briefly speaking, the DDE is providing only 40% of facilities/support services to its distance learners, but 61.66% of the learners showed their satisfaction in distance education providing by the University of Kashmir at Kargil.

CONTRIBUTION OF INDIRA GANDHI NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY (IGNOU)

IGNOU Regional Centre Srinagar was established in February 1999 with jurisdiction over Kashmir division including Leh and Kargil. Table 01 & 02 show that its Study Centre (1249) located at Govt. Degree College, Kargil has been providing admission, counselling and examination facilities to the students. At present, the approved programmes available at this study centre are:

- Masters Degree in English, Education, Economics, Hindi, History, Political Science, Public Administration, Sociology, Social Work, Commerce, Rural Development and Tourism Management.
- Bachelor Degrees include B.A, B.SC, B.COM, BTS and BPP,
- Post Graduate Diploma Programmes include PGDRD and PGDDM.
- Diploma Programmes include DECE, DNHE, DWED and DTS.
- Certificate Programmes are CTE, CIG, CFE, CRD, CFN, CTS, CIT, CFS, CNCC, CPFM and CWED.

Some positive points of the University which were appreciated by 98% of the learners are:

- Availability of thirty four (34) programmes.
- Round the year admission.
- No limitation of seats for any Course.
- Dual session (July & December Sessions).
- Availability of tentative/final datasheets in advance.

- Availability of educational programmes on “Gyan-Vani” & “Gyan-Darshan”.
- Assignment and term-end examination system.
- Result Declaration in time.

Some of the issues relating to the University about which 80% of the learners showed their dissatisfaction are:

- Non-mentioning of the title of the courses with course codes on the marks sheets.
- Mostly subjective type of question papers.
- Learners are not securing a good percentage of marks due to lengthy syllabus and subjective type papers.
- No library services are available for distance learners at Kargil.

Some other issues about which the investigator identified mixed responses are:

- 70% of IGNOU learners are satisfied with the quality of the study material and the rest 30% are considering it an irritating one as they are not ready to study in detail. Their aim is to only crack the examinations by taking notes from internet etc.
- 55% of the learners arises questions why distance mode degrees in J&K are considering inferior by some organizations etc.

In a nutshell, it can be stated that IGNOU is providing 75% of facilities/support services to its distance learners and 75% of learners has shown their satisfaction in distance education facilitating by the University at Kargil.

CONTRIBUTION OF MAULANA AZAD NATIONAL URDU UNIVERSITY (MANUU)

The Directorate of Distance Education Maulana Azad National Urdu University, Hyderabad established its exam/study centre Code No.(151) at Govt. Degree College Kargil in 2009 with a view to provide higher education in distance mode through Urdu medium. Table 01 & 02 show that the centre provides admission and examination facilities to the distance learners. At present, the approved programmes available at this study centre are:

- Masters Degree in English, Urdu and History.
- Bachelor Degree in Arts (B.A).
- Diploma Programmes in Teaching of English and Journalism & Mass Communication.
- Certificate Programmes in Functional English and Proficiency in Urdu through English.

Some of the good aspects of the University about which 76% of the learners showed their

Satisfactions are:

- Availability of programmes in Urdu medium.
- No limitation of seats for any course.
- The study materials are clear, lucid and easy to understand.

- Broadcasting of Distance Education Programmes/classes on DD-Urdu.
- The pattern of examination papers comprising very short, short and long questions.
- Highly beneficial for those learners whose back grounds were Urdu medium.

Some other issues relating to the University about which 92% of learners showed their dissatisfaction are:

- Too much delay in the sending of study materials.
- Examinations are not conducting punctually in any specific month.
- Too much delay in the declaration of results.
- No weight-age is given for assignments.
- For the purpose of personal result checking, the whole result-sheet of all the students needs to be downloaded.
- No library services are available for distance learners at Kargil.

In brief, it is noted that the University is providing only 35% of facilities/support services to its distance learners, but 60% of learners are satisfied in distance education laid down by MANUU at Kargil.

CONCLUSION

It is clear that we are living in the twenty first century and it is the age of Science and Technology. In this age, the concept of “Learning while earning” becomes a popular one. But the roots of this concept depend on “Distance Education”. The Indian Education Commission, (1964-66) has pointed out; “There must be a method of taking education to the millions who depend upon their own effort to study, whenever they can find time to do so. We consider that correspondence or home-study courses provide the right answer for these situations”. The National Policy on Education (1986) says, “Life-long education is a cherished goal of the educational process. This pre-supposes universal literacy. Opportunities will be provided to the youth, housewives, agricultural and industrial workers and professionals to continue the education of their choice, at the pace suited to them. The future thrust will be in the direction of open and distance learning”. Distance Education has been contributing human societies a lot, all the times. It brings education on door steps of all those learners who could not join a formal institution for traditional higher education due to one or other reasons. It helps in bringing equalisation of educational opportunities. India’s Constitution has promised to provide equal opportunities to every individual. But in class-room situation only a few students can be benefitted. The students who for one or other reasons cannot attend the school remain neglected. India is a developing country. A large number of population is living in remote areas and the promise of equalization of education is meaningless to them (Sharma & Saxena, 2013). One such area is the tribal District Kargil upon which the investigator conducted a study to find out the contribution of distance education. It is found that the study centres of only three Universities to provide education through distance mode are functional in this district. These are the IGNOU, MANUU and University of Kashmir. It is also found that a total number of thirty four (34) programmes of IGNOU, eight (08) programmes of MANUU and only two (02) programmes of Kashmir University are operational. It is further found that IGNOU is providing 75% of learners’ support services or facilities and the

satisfaction level of its learners are also 75%. In comparison to this, MANUU is fulfilling only 35% of students' requirements but the satisfaction level of its students are 60%. On the other hand, The University of Kashmir fulfils 40% of distance learners' requirements and 61.66% of its learners are satisfied with the facilities of distance education laid down by KU. The investigator further ascertained that all the three Universities are providing the facilities regarding admission and examination with some short comings.

In short, the investigator feels that the existing Study Centres of the identified Universities need to be made more functional and the other Universities also need to establish their study centres at Kargil to promote higher education among tribal peoples as it is a fertile and suitable land for distance education.

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