Student's Attitude towards Distance Education with Special reference to Chhattisgarh

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Abstract

Distance education may not have replaced on-campus education, but through its flexibility in teaching and learning it can be seen as an alternative for learners who are not able or wish not to take on-campus education. This alternative constitutes an important element of lifelong learning. It is the continuing emphasis of lifelong learning as a policy objective that sets the background to the present research: The paper wishes to examine the attitude of students towards Distance Education.

KEYWORDS – Distance Education, Higher Education, Attitude

Introduction

According to Kulandai Swami (2002), "Distance Education is a modern tool. The power of a tool is not only in the tool, it is in the hands of the user. A tool is as powerful as the imagination and ingenuity of the craftsman. We have in our hands a very valuable and powerful tool. We must make the best use of it. Ever since the information technology is introduced the world has come closer, it has reduced the distance to zero. The learner anywhere in the world can be taught virtually."

The emergence of Open Learning and Distance Education is probably the most important development in the field of education in recent times. Since learning for all is the ultimate aim of humanity a new paradigm of networking has emerged which recognizes a new way of learning in the era of present globalization. Distance and Open Learning System helps to accelerate the process of transformation from a conservative and informative society to a functional, knowledgeable and well versed society of the twenty first century. Government of India is also encouraging distance learning mode by encouraging open universities across the country with a basic objective to make the masses educated. Open Universities have proven to bear essential and innovative component of higher education and are perceived by educational planners and policy makers as well as the community as a vital instrument of human resource development and educational justice.

The Distance Education (DE) system was introduced in India in the form of correspondence education to cope with the growing demands for higher education in the 1960s,though DE in some form or other is available in the world since 1728(Holmberg,1996) Distance Education came to be recognized as viable alternative to the formal education a decade later than correspondence education. It is based upon learning resources prepared by the teachers for use by students located at a distance. It

purposes to make education more interactive and intimate than does correspondence education. In a way, Distance Education is like formal education except that a physical distance separates the teacher and the taught. In Distance Education, teacher employs all the technique of correspondence education with personalized tutorials to as mass media, i.e. radio, news sheets and television. The purpose of Distance Education center is to generate good atmosphere for good learning to learner.

Objectives of the Study

Following objectives are posed for this research:

1.   To measure the attitude of students towards Distance Education.

2.   To assess the contribution of Distance Education as an alternative education.

Hypotheses

Ho_1: Attitude of students will be significantly positive towards open distance learning.

Ho_2: There will be no significant difference in the attitude of male and female students of open University towards distance education.

Delimitations of the Study

Area

Research was conducted under the regional centers of IGNOU & BHOJ Universities situated all over the state of Chhattisgarh.

Faculty

Under academic, M.A., M.Sc. & M. Com. Courses were studied and under professional courses M.Lib., MBA & MCA faculties were studied to find out the contributions through DE.

Sex

Research was be conducted on both male and female participants of all the courses.

Time

Research analyzed the contribution of IGNOU & MPBOU from 2003 – 2006 i.e. till the opening of state University (PSSOU). Although were many agencies in Chhattisgarh serving as in distance mode but the present research was conducted mainly between IGNOU & MPBOU Universities because the state university of Chhattisgarh i.e. PSSOU have recently commenced its working and it was not be possible to measure its contribution in such a short span of time. Although some of its statistics however were taken into consideration.

Highlights of the Studies

Review of the research studies performed on International & National level highlights the following points-

1. Researches present mixed results
2. They are controversial
3. Most of them are experimental.
4. Most the studies are either descriptive status surveys or   experimental studies with poor methodological footing.

Lessons for the present Study

 (i)   Since most of the results are mixed and cannot be generalized so result of the present study is self-evident.

(ii)   Chhattisgarh being a new state with major composition of backward classes like SC, ST & OBC being the major residents with their economical, social, geographical & cultural bounding and variety ,with 65.18% of literacy percentage with less basic facilities to make most of the population educated i.e. the motto of EFA- Education For All. Such researches in Chhattisgarh state is most essential as it will help the planners, researchers and other officers involved to extend educational facilities.
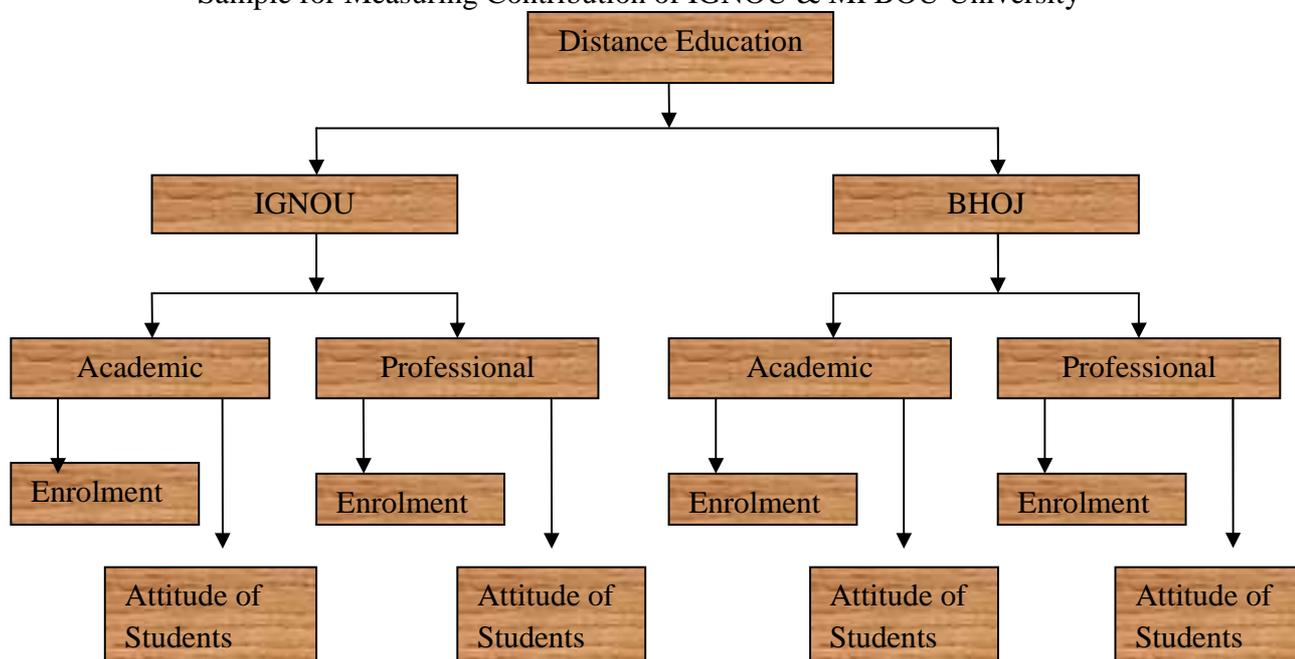
Research Design

This study is a Survey type Descriptive Research.

Universe

All the Students of Distance Education involved in IGNOU & MPBOU   universities will constitute the universe of this study.

Sample for the study

Drawing No. 1
Sample for Measuring Contribution of IGNOU & MPBOU University

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                        Distance Education

            IGNOU                          BHOJ

     Academic    Professional       Academic    Professional

  Enrolment      Enrolment        Enrolment      Enrolment

        Attitude of      Attitude of    Attitude of      Attitude of
        Students         Students       Students         Students
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Drawing No. 2

Sample for Measuring Attitude of Students

COURSES	IGNOU	BHOJ	TOTAL
Academic			
M.A	25	25	50
M.Sc.	25	25	50.
M.Com.	25	25	50.
Professional			
MBA	25	25	50
MCA	25	25	50.
M. Lib.	25	25	50

Variables

Independent Variables

Students of IGNOU and MPBOU University.

Dependent Variables

Enrolment , Attitude of students

Tools Used

1. Attitude Scale for measuring the attitude of students towards Distance Education was developed by the investigator herself.

2. Records of IGNOU, MPBOU & PSSOU Universities were analyzed to have knowledge of enrolment trends.

Statistical Devices

Mean. S.D. & t-test to study the attitude of students and percentage to find out the contribution lay down by the Universities were the statistical devices used to find out the results.

Methodology and its Steps

Step 1-   (A.) Construction of scale
(B.) Performa for Record Analysis
(C.) Maintaining Repo with the colleagues
Step 2-   (A) Administration of the Tools
Step 3-   Analysis and Interpretation of Data

Findings of the Study and its Discussion

Having undergone the process of present study as per the research design the investigator offers the following discussion and conclusion on the basis of related findings;

HO_1 –   *Attitude of students will not be significantly positive towards open distance learning.*

The mean attitude scores obtained by students of various facilities are shown in the following table.

TABLE NO. 1
Mean attitude scores of different faculty students of IGNOU & MPBOU.

	M.A.	M.Sc.	M.Com.	MBA	MCA	M.Lib.	Tot. M
MPBOU Attitude	249	253.56	223.48	212.44	197.4	234.16	228.34
	+	+	N	N	N	N	N
IGNOU Attitude	277.36	277.8	278.36	279.84	271.88	258.88	274.02
	+H	+H	+H	+H	+H	+H	+H
Grand Total							251.18 +Alt :

Scale for attitude   -   71-127   Negative   -H
128-185   Negative   -
186-243   Neutral   N
244-300   Positive   +

301-355   Positive High   +H

Data Interpretation

1. When we reveal the table no.1 above we find that MPBOU University students have shown Positive attitude towards MA & M.Sc. and neutral attitude towards M.Com., MBA.MCA & M.Lib open distance learning programme In the year 2005 .

2. Table no.1 also reveal that students of IGNOU have shown Positive High attitude towards MA,M.Sc.,M.Com., MBA,MCA & M.Lib open distance learning programme.

3. The data of table no.1above reveals that Students have positive attitude towards open distance learning. This trend of attitude towards distance learning programme indicates that hypothesis of positive contribution seems fulfills.

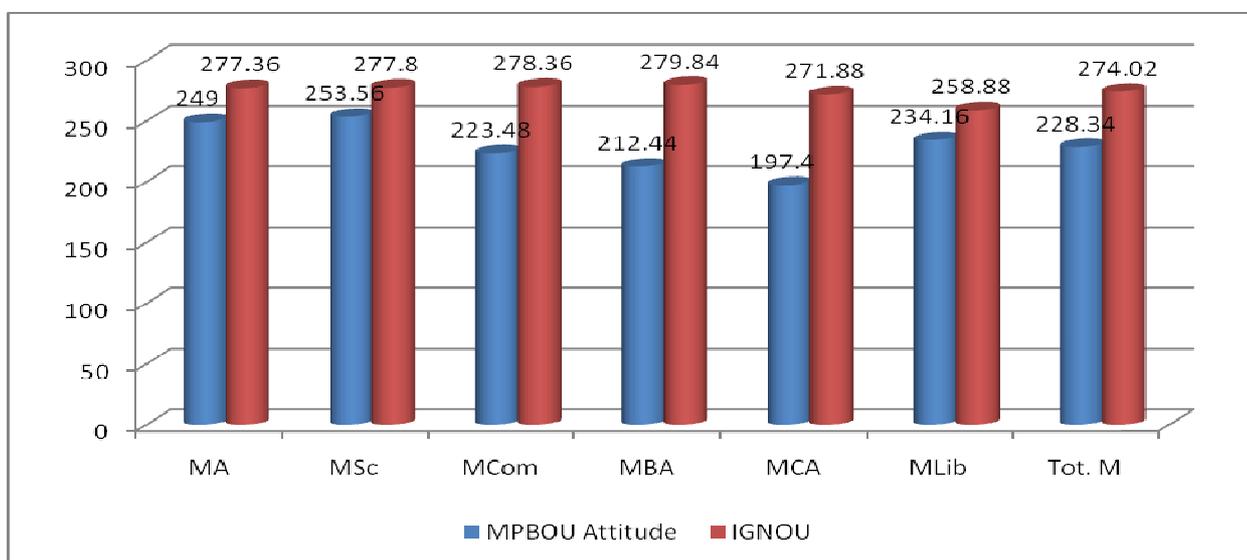The same result is indicated by the bar diagram given below

Figure 1   Diagram Showing Attitude of Student's towards Distance Education.

Thus, this trend of attitude towards distance learning programme shown by statistical data and graphical representation indicates positive attitude.

Discussion

Attitude of students was measured by administrating a self made questionnaire, consisting of 70 questions of 1 mark each containing four options, on the student's of MA, M.Sc. M.Com., MBA, MCA & M.Lib, of IGNOU & MPBOU and the mean scores obtained were analyzed by scale of attitude viz.71-127 scores will reveal Highly Negative, 128-185 Negative, 186-243 Neutral, 244-300 Positive & 301-355 Positively high attitude of student's towards open distance learning. It indicates that the technique applied, services provided, strategies formulated & implemented and the policies made and followed by Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), New Delhi & Madhya Pradesh Bhoj Open University (MPBOU), Bhopal have been appreciated and

liked by the student's of these both Universities. That's why students have shown positive attitude towards open and distance learning

Conclusion

MPBOU University students have shown neutral attitude towards open distance learning programme whereas students of IGNOU have shown + attitude towards open distance learning programme. The average attitude is positive.

HO$_2$ – There will be no difference in the attitude of male and female students of open University towards distance education.

TABLE NO. 2

Mean Attitude Scores of Male & Female Students of IGNOU & MPBOU

	N	M	S.D.	T	Significance
Male	150	249.18	18.6	1.06	Not Significant
Female	150	253.3	20.55		

Expected values   .01 = 2.58

                           .05 = 1.96

The calculated t value is insignificant.

Data Interpretation

1. When we reveal the table no.2 above we find that the attitude of Male and Female student's towards distance education does not seems to be significantly different.
2. The above data related to attitude of Male and Female student's towards distance education indicates that hypothesis of no significance seems fulfill.

The same result is indicated by the bar diagram given below:
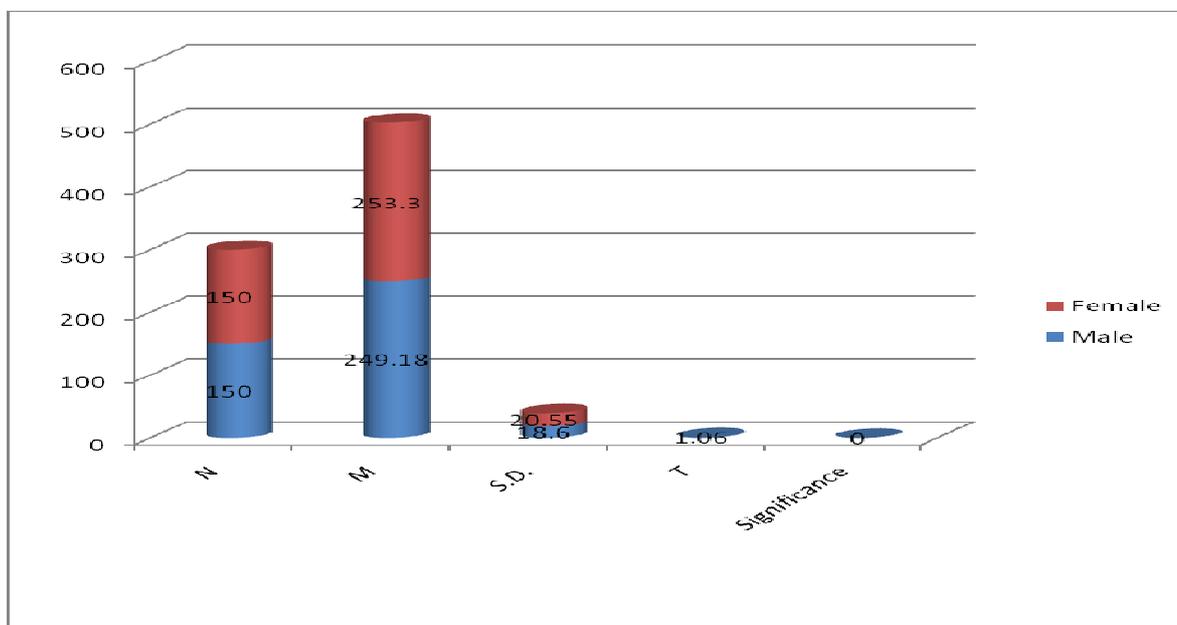

Figure 2 Bar Diagram Showing the attitude of Male and Female students of open University towards distance education.

Thus, the figure of attitude shown by statistical data and graphical representation indicates that hypothesis chosen is fulfilled and no difference in the attitude of Male and Female students of open University towards distance education has been proved .

Discussion

For Distance Education it is generally assumed that as in this mode of learning physical presence can be supplemented by self learning material, e-learning, e-lecture, video- conferencing, audio-video materials, counseling etc. so it must be most preferably liked by Female students being more convenient for them but result clearly indicates that distance mode of learning is equally liked, preferred and practiced by both Male and Female student's. Reason behind this fact is it is liked both by working Male and Female and housewives either for upgrading educational qualifications

Conclusion

The Male and Female student's of both Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), New Delhi & Madhya Pradesh Bhoj Open University (MPBOU),Bhopal have shown no significant difference towards distance education.

Suggestions for Distance Education

- ✓ Open University should have no boundary viz physical & social.
- ✓ Open Universities need to change & to adapt as per demands of society.
- ✓ Learner Support Services (LSS) should be treated as the backbone of ODL.
- ✓ The major objectives of Higher Education should be Expansion (access), Inclusion & Excellence (Quality).
- ✓ In Srilanka National Online Distance Education Services has been launched. In India also we need to use public as well private agencies to provide DE because collective effort & contribution at each level will lead to the desired goal.
- ✓ Regular Updating of the Correspondence Course Materials should be done.
- ✓ Provision of a Wider Range of Options. A number of options, comprising interdisciplinary subject areas, should be offered to the participants.
- ✓ Development of a More Practical Orientation toward 'learning by doing' involving direct application of the knowledge and skills through the inputs received in their lessons and through face-to-face contact.
- ✓ Courses could be made more relevant by bringing in elements of 'project work' into their lessons and through inquiry-oriented field assignments which require the participants to use the community as a resource.
- ✓ In place of an exclusively one-way flow of information two-way dialogue between the tutor and the participants could be used. One way of making the lessons more interactive could be by introducing in-text tasks requiring practical application of the ideas and principles presented in them.
- ✓ Increased Use of Educational technology and More Modern Methods of working is required.
- ✓ Computer technology needs to be increasingly harnessed not only for streamlining administration and dispatching lessons and assignments, but for course development, the design and preparation of lessons, handouts, worksheets and assignments, and also for monitoring, revising, evaluation and updating – all of this is lacking at present. The Department can also

develop a valuable "Data Bank" and other kind of useful access material for extensive use.

✓ Improved Structure and Format in the Design of Lessons. They should contain clear sub-headings and other focusing devices. There should also be use of more graphics.

✓ Assignments should not be left unassigned till the very end. The submission density of the assignments may be reviewed. There is also need of work in greater flexibility – all the courses may not need to have the same number of assignments; certain demanding tasks may be given greater weight while other could be made more challenging.

✓ More open procedures of evaluation should be used.

✓ There is also a need to move away from 'product' type evaluation to 'process' evaluation, both with regard to participant assessment as well as program evaluation.

✓ Making evaluation more formative and offering the participants greater initiative in the evaluation process would mean building development, especially in the area of empathy for the course participants elements of evaluation into the lessons themselves. Suitable procedures for this need to be developed.

✓ Tutors could carry out self-evaluation of their own performance through various procedures such as maintaining a diary or using questionnaires or checklists.

Educational Implications of the Present Study-

Keeping in view the findings of the above research, following facts are relevant for the educational implications of the present study-

❖ Higher education perspective has gradually increased during the last few years. Contribution lay down by IGNOU and BHOJ Universities in the development of higher education is significant. The role of Open Universities and Distance Education Institutions is justified.

❖ Distance Education can be perceived by educational planners and policy makers as well as the community as a vital instrument of human resource development and providing educational justice.

❖ Distance Education system can be used as an important and efficient medium to cut short the difference of literacy percentage.

❖ In a new state like Chhattisgarh Distance Education can be adapted and advertised as an efficient, flexible and cost-effective medium of providing education to population of remote areas.

❖ Help to study and analyze student profiles in order to examine the coverage of target groups like women, rural people, in-service persons, over flow from the formal system, etc.

❖ Distance Education can be used as medium of providing social & educational justice to the deprived ones including access to higher education to larger segments of the population.

❖ Open universities need to take the issue of research very seriously if they wish to be at the forefront of higher education nationally or internationally and if they wish to be seen as universities.
❖ Most of the researchers in distance education have modest knowledge of pedagogical hypothesis and have had limited training.
❖ The majority of the research published is descriptive and cannot be generalized.
❖ Experimental research under controlled conditions is practically missing.

Scope for further Research

— Kinds of distance learning formats suitable for Chhattisgarh region.

— Telecommunications infrastructure available and accessible to distance learners.

— Kinds of instructional design used by distance learning institutions in developing their courses.

— To study and analyze the teaching learning methodologies adapted by the correspondence/ distance education institutions.

— To evaluate the quality of the instructional materials and other student support services.

— To study and analyze student profiles in order to examine the coverage of target groups like women, rural people, in-service persons, over flow from the formal system, etc.

— To study the economic viability of correspondence education in Chhattisgarh.

— To work out a reliable average unit cost of educating a correspondence course student in comparison with the cost per student of the formal system.

— To study various possibilities of collaboration and networking among the CCIs and to give wider choice of courses to the students.

Some Additional Observations

Having undergone the process of present study as per the researcher offers the following additional observations-

• There are wide opportunities for Higher Education in Chhattisgarh due to Open Learning System.
• Distance Education has emerged as a most preferred alternative of Higher Education in Chhattisgarh.
• Distance Education is the best mode of providing social & educational justice to the deprived ones.
• Distance Education mode of learning generates awareness & friendliness to the Technology.
• In present context, there is need to change the name of Open University to Flexible University
• In the world of Distance Learning W.W.W stands for Who, When & What.

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