

## Teacher Trainees Perceptions: Teacher Education through Distance Mode

**Jatinder Grover,**

Assistant Professor (Education), University School of Open Learning, Panjab University, Chandigarh., India

---

### Abstract

The maintenance of standards and quality in teacher education programmes has become more challenging in view of the demand for training from a large number of teachers. To meet this demand, distance education institutions have come forward. But doubts about the quality of teacher education programmes through distance mode persist. The present study on the distance education programme on teacher education offered by the distance education department of Panjab University, Chandigarh highlights the teacher trainees' perceptions that due consideration should be given to the preparation of quality study material; and its delivery by organizing a conducive personal contact programme. The development and training of teaching skills should be ensured during PCPs'. The effective evaluation system for the theoretical and practical learning have to be offered for quality maintenance.

**KEYWORDS:** Teacher trainees; Teacher Education Programme; Open and distance learning (ODL).

---

### 1.0. Introduction:

Teachers have an important role to play in making education relevant to the needs of the modern society. Only enlightened, competent and emancipated teachers can meet the aspirations of society by providing quality education to learners. It is possible, only if teachers are well trained through effective teacher education programmes. The standard of teacher education programme determines the quality of training provided to the teachers.

The global need for teacher education is greater now in the early 21st century than ever before. According to UNESCO -2004, half of the world's 195 countries will have to expand their stock of teachers significantly – some by tens of thousands – if the goal of universal primary education as articulated in the Dakar Framework for Action in 2000 is to be met by 2015 (Patrick and Abdurrahman, 2010).

Most countries have made solid progress towards the achievement of universal primary schooling by 2015; but the world faces two other major educational challenges. The first, which results partly from the success of the campaign for primary education, is to give older children and young adults opportunities for secondary schooling. This is a massive task. One estimate puts the numbers at 400 million of 12- to 17-year-olds who are not receiving education (Binder 2006).

Secondly, to appoint the trained teachers for secondary education. UNESCO estimates that some 10 million teachers must be recruited and trained in less than a decade. They will be needed to replace the large numbers of teachers who are due to retire in many countries; complete the drive to universal primary schooling, particularly in Africa and South Asia; and address the challenge of secondary schooling (UNESCO, 2008).

It's a herculean task to train such a larger population to be effective teachers in a shorter span. To tackle this problem, many countries have started the open and distance learning system for teacher education. In India, open and distance learning (ODL) system of teacher education is running in various universities to train the untrained teachers working in private and Govt. schools with the Govt. primary teachers for secondary education. The first Open University in India was established in 20th, August, 1982 in Hyderabad on the design of the Open University in United Kingdom, established in 1969. On 19<sup>th</sup> November, 1985 in Delhi; Indira Gandhi National Open University was established. In many states, open universities have been set up and also the regular universities are running the courses of teacher education through ODL. Qadir (2010) concluded that online admission to provide access; e-assessment of the assignments; effective monitoring system for tutorial meeting; increased duration of workshops and use of multimedia and projectors may lead to more effective learning of theory and skills in a distance education teacher training programme.

In Punjab, two universities, i.e. Panjab University, Chandigarh and Punjabi University, Patiala are running the teacher education programme in the open and distance learning system for training the in-service teachers.

## **2.0. Objectives of the Study**

- To discuss the conceptual framework of teacher education in open and distance learning system in Panjab University, Chandigarh;
- To study the perceptions of teacher trainees of B.Ed. distance education programme of Panjab University, Chandigarh with regard to admission procedures; quality of study material; assignments and its evaluation; student support services; organization of personal contact programs; learning experiences during PCP; teaching skill development and practice teaching; and evaluation and examination procedures.

## **3.0. Sample of the Study:**

The sample of study comprises of 418 teacher trainees of B.Ed. – II of 2012-14 session who has completely responded the questionnaire from the 10 study centers of distance teacher education established by the distance education department (University School of Open Learning) of Panjab University in teacher education colleges affiliated to Panjab University, Chandigarh. The data from teacher trainees was collected during the last personal contact programme during the month of March, 2012 with the help of teacher educators at various study centers.

## **4.0. Method and Procedure of Study:**

The descriptive survey method was used to collect the data from the teacher trainees. A three point scale was developed and standardised by the investigator to collect data from the teacher trainees. The scale includes two parts, i.e. one having 53 closed ended items on 8 broader areas related to teacher education programme through ODL on a three point scale, i.e. Agree, Uncertain and Disagree; and the second part has 8 open ended questions, related to eight broader areas of teacher education related to teacher training programme through the ODL system.

On the eight broader areas i.e. admission procedures; quality of study material; assignments and its evaluation; student support services; organization of personal contact programs (PCP); learning experiences during PCP; teaching skill development and practice teaching; and evaluation and examination procedures; the perceptions of teacher trainees towards ODL systems of Panjab university were taken. The data were

analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively. Quantitative analysis was done for the data collected on three point scale statements, the items were coded and analyzed in terms of percentage.

For qualitative analysis, the content analysis of the responses of teacher trainees on the eight broader areas related to open ended questions was done.

## 5.0. Findings and Discussion:

The findings are presented in the following paragraphs, i.e. the conceptual framework of teacher education in open and distance learning system in Panjab University, Chandigarh; the findings of the quantitative data; and the findings of qualitative data are presented as follows:

**5.1. Teacher Training Programme through ODL in Panjab University, Chandigarh:** The distance education department (University School of Open Learning) of university is running the teacher education programme for training the in-service teachers. The course is recognized by the regulatory body, i.e. National Council of Teacher Education since 2002. The course is of two years duration and the total intake per year is of 800 teacher trainees (500 seats reserved for Punjab residents and 300 for whole Nation) and these teacher trainees got admitted on merit in 13 study centers established in the various educational colleges affiliated to Panjab University, Chandigarh including one in the university department of correspondence studies. The reservation policy is strictly followed to allocate the seats in each study center.

To maintain the standards of training, the enrolled teacher trainees are provided with the course books specially prepared by the university on self instructional principles; two personal contact programmes of 15 days each per year are organized at all study centers. To ensure teacher trainees learning, they have to submit assignments for credits as internal assessment and to do practice teaching in the opted teaching subjects under the supervision and guidance of the chosen mentor. Only those teacher trainees who got qualifying credits in assignments and attended personal contact programs for  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the total duration are eligible to sit in the final term examination. The final result of the course reflects the combined performance of the teacher trainees in assignments, personal contact program, final theory and practical exams.

**5.2. Quantitative Analysis of Perceptions of Distance Education Teacher Trainees:** The quantitative analysis of perceptions of distance education teacher trainees is presented in the following paragraphs related to eight broader areas of teacher training programme through the ODL system.

**5.2.1. Admission Procedures:** There are 7 items on the three point scale related to admission procedures and the responses of teacher trainees are presented in percentages in the table 1.

**Table – 1: Summary of Teacher trainees' Responses on Admission Procedures**

S. N.	Item	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree
1	Timely publication of admission notice	72%	4.55%	23.45%
2	No difficulty in applying for admission	45.21%	3.34%	51.45%
3	Timely publication of merit list	72.72%	5.74%	21.54%
4	Timely Counselling process notification	69.85%	4.56%	25.59%
5	Transparent admission process	61.48%	11.01%	27.51%
6	Guidance provided during admission counselling	77.51%	10.04%	12.44%
7	Admission as per reservation policy	56.22%	16.74%	27.03%

From table 1, it is clear that 72% of the respondents agreed that they got admission notice well in time; but 51.45% reported that they faced difficulty in applying for admission. 72.72% stated that publication of admission merit list was timely publicized and 69.85% got the admission process notification on time. Regarding transparency in the admission process and guidance provided during admission counselling, 69.81% and 77.51% respondents respectively reported in a positive way. But only 56.22% considered that admission was done as per the reservation policy of Govt. of India.

**5.2.2. Quality of Study Material:** There are 8 items on the three point scale related to study material delivery and quality; the responses of teacher trainees are presented in percentages in the table 2.

**Table – 2: Summary of Teacher trainees' Responses on Quality of Study Material**

S. N.	Item	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree
1	Study material received well in time	72.24%	5.50%	22.24%
2	Study material for all subjects	60.52%	2.63%	36.84%
3	Easy language of study material	42.10%	4.30%	53.58%
4	Study material provided in opted language	28.70%	0.02%	71.05%
5	Good quality of paper, printing and designing of material	52.87%	3.58%	43.54%
6	Study material as per syllabus	66.02%	5.26%	28.70%
7	Study material as per requirement of distance learners	44.97%	10.76%	44.27%
8	Model questions provided with study material	6.93%	15.31%	77.75%

From table 2, it is evident that 72.24% of the respondents agreed that they got study material well in time; but 36.84% reported that they have not got study material for all subjects; only 42.10% considered the study material language easy to understand; and more than 71% teacher trainees have not got the study material in their opted language. Regarding quality of paper, printing and designing of study material, 52.87% teacher trainees responded positively. 66.02% stated that the study material was as per syllabi; Only 44.97% considered study material as per requirement of distance learners; and merely 6.93% responded that they got model questions with study material.

**5.2.3. Students' Support Services:** There are 5 items on the three point scale related to student support services; the responses of teacher trainees are presented in percentages in the table 3.

**Table – 3: Summary of Teacher trainees' Responses on Students' Support Services**

S. N.	Item	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree
1	Timely intimation of PCP	64.59%	5.26%	30.14%
2	Suitability of Dates of PCP	23.68%	5.50%	70.81%
3	Suitability of timings of PCP	25.11%	8.85%	66.02%
4	Provision of Hostel facilities at study center	43.06%	46.41%	10.53%
5	Allowed to use, study center library	19.85%	2.87%	77.03%

From table 3, it is clear that the 64.59% of teacher trainees got timely information about the personal contact program schedule. But 70.81% and 66.02% of teacher trainees stated negatively for the suitability of the time schedule of PCP and timings of PCP. Regarding the provision of hostel at the study center for outstation teacher trainees only 10.53% responded in disagreement. But only 19.85% stated that they were allowed to use the library at the study center.

**5.2.4. Personal Contact Programme:** There are 7 items on the three point scale related to personal contact programme; the responses of teacher trainees are presented in percentages in the table 4.

**Table – 4: Summary of Teacher trainees’ Responses on Personal Contact Programme**

S. N.	Item	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree
1	Study Centre is easy to access	52.15%	0.07%	47.12%
2	Duration of the PCP is sufficient	86.12%	4.54%	9.33%
3	Study Centre has sufficient infrastructure facilities for PCP	64.59%	8.85%	26.56%
4	Availability of teacher, according to schedule on PCP time table	51.67%	3.34%	44.97%
5	Teachers’ were punctual and regular during the PCP	52.15%	5.02%	42.82%
6	Teachers’ utilize projectors and other Audio- Visual aids	27.75%	3.11%	69.13%
7	Classes organised in a good manner in PCP	53.34%	4.785	41.86%

From table 4, it is clear that only 52.15% of teacher trainees responded that study center was easy to access; 86.12% opined that duration of the PCP is sufficient; and 64.59% viewed infrastructure facilities good at the study center. Regarding availability of teachers, according to PCP schedule, only 51.67%; and punctuality of teachers during PCP only 52.15% responded positively. Merely 27.75% reported the usage of projectors and other audio visual aids by teachers during PCP. Only 53.34% teacher trainees viewed the organization of PCP in a good manner.

**5.2.5. Learning Experiences during PCP:** There are 6 items on the three point scale related to learning experiences during PCP’s; the responses of teacher trainees are presented in percentages in the table 5.

**Table – 5: Summary of Teacher trainees’ Responses on Learning Experiences during PCP**

S. N.	Item	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree
1	Teachers’ provided sufficient guidance during PCP	68.61%	2.15%	29.23%
2	PCP enhanced the knowledge of the course	62.67%	3.11%	34.21%
3	PCP resolved difficulties concerning studies	63.63%	5.50%	30.86%
4	Environment of the classroom in the PCP was supportive of teaching learning	59.80%	6.69%	30.49%
5	Lectures by the teachers were effective for learning	58.85%	8.37%	32.77%

6	PCP covered all the difficult content of the course	28.46%	1.43%	70.09%
---	---	--------	-------	--------

From table 5, it is evident that 68.61% of teacher trainees responded that teachers' provided sufficient guidance during PCP; 62.67% considered that PCP enhanced their knowledge about the course; and 63.63% stated that PCP resolved their difficulties concerning studies. Regarding supportive environment for teaching and learning 59.80% of the teacher trainees opined positively; and 58.85% considered lectures by the teachers effective and useful for learning. But 70.09% of the teacher trainees reported that difficult part of the syllabus not covered during PCP.

**5.2.6. Assignments and its Evaluation:** There are 4 items on the three point scale related to assignments and its evaluation; the responses of teacher trainees are presented in percentages in the table 3.

**Table – 6: Summary of Teacher trainees' Responses on Assignments and its Evaluation**

S. N.	Item	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree
1	Sufficient study material for completion of assignment	44.27%	15.31%	40.42%
2	Sufficient time for preparation of assignments	85.88%	2.63%	11.48%
3	Guidance from tutors for assignment writing	64.59%	5.26%	30.14%
4	Got evaluated assignments with remarks or feedback	7.89%	3.82%	88.27%

From table 6, it can be revealed that 44.27% of the respondents stated that they got sufficient study material for the completion of assignments; and 85.88% reported that they got sufficient time for preparation of assignments. Regarding guidance from tutors for assignment writing, 64.59% responded positively. But only 7.89% reported that they got back evaluated assignments with remarks or feedback.

**5.2.7. Teaching Skill Development during PCP:** There are 7 items on the three point scale related to teaching skill development during PCP, the responses of teacher trainees are presented in percentages in the table 7.

**Table – 7: Summary of Teacher trainees' Responses on Teaching Skill Development and Practice Teaching**

S. N.	Item	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree
1	Training of teaching skills done in PCP	26.07%	4.54%	67.70%
2	Model lessons for different teaching skills demonstrated by teachers	14.83%	3.34%	81.81%
3	Teaching practice skill development files evaluated	35.88%	4.30%	59.80%
4	Discussion lessons were taken from teacher trainees	37.55%	0.09%	61.48%
5	Remarks for improvement given by the teachers for teaching skills	30.38%	2.15%	67.46%
6	Learned two new teaching skills in PCP	32.48%	5.26%	62.24%
7	Environment of the classroom during	36.36%	9.09%	54.44%

	PCP supportive for teaching skill development			
--	---	--	--	--

From table 7, it is clear that 67.70% of teacher trainees responded that no training of teaching skills done during PCP; 81.81% reported that no model lessons for different teaching skills were demonstrated by teachers; and only 35.88% reported that their teaching practice skill development files were evaluated by the teachers in PCP. Only 37.55% teacher trainees stated that discussion lessons on teaching skills were taken from teacher trainees; and 67.46% reported that no remarks for improvement were given by the teachers for teaching skills. Regarding the learning of two new teaching skills in PCP, only 32.48% reported positive and only 36.36% considered the environment of the classroom during PCP supportive for teaching skill development.

**5.2.8. Evaluation and Examination Procedures:** There are 9 items on the three point scale related to the evaluation and examination procedures, the responses of teacher trainees are presented in percentages in the table 8.

**Table – 8: Summary of Teacher trainees’ Responses on Evaluation and Examination Procedures**

S. N.	Item	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree
1	Received roll number slip and date sheet in time	74.40%	5.26%	20.73%
2	Sufficient infrastructure facilities at the examination center	81.33%	3.34%	15.35%
3	Question papers covered all the content of the course	65.55%	3.58%	30.87%
4	Assigning of the marks for assignments is judicious	54.06%	8.37%	37.55%
5	Evaluation of the final written examination is good	59.09%	6.22%	34.68%
6	Evaluation of teaching skills in discussion/ demonstration lessons is good	34.92%	4.06%	61.01%
7	The examination system of distance institution is good	63.87%	6.93%	29.18%
8	Timely declaration of results	70.81%	1.91%	27.27%
9	Timely receiving of result card	65.55%	2.63%	31.81%

From table 8, it is clear that 74.40% of teacher trainees responded that they received roll number slip and date sheet in time; 81.33% reported availability of sufficient infrastructure facilities at the examination center. 65.55% stated that the question papers covered all the content of the course. But only 54.06% considered assigning of the marks for assignments judicious one; 59.09% viewed evaluation of the final written examination good; and 61.01% reported evaluation of teaching skills in discussion/ demonstration lessons faulty one. In overall scenario, 63.87% of teacher trainees considered examination system of distance institution as good one. Regarding the declaration of results, 70.81% and receiving of result card 65.55% of teacher trainees reported in positive. .

**5.3. Qualitative Analysis of Perceptions of Distance Education Teacher Trainees:** The qualitative responses were analysed by means of content analysis. Data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing phases were employed in this

process. The open ended responses were coded and organised according to the identified themes and categories; and it was later labelled into structured summaries. The conclusions were drawn by comparing, contrasting and clustering the displayed data. There was a strong agreement between the closed ended and open ended responses of teacher trainees.

The majority of the respondents highlighted the major issues related to the teacher training program are as follows:

- Teacher trainees be given study center of their choice and not on merit only as all of them are working with teachers;
- Quality of study material need to be improved as study material is provided only in English medium teacher trainees. Study material in Hindi and Punjabi medium be provided for all subjects.
- The personal contact program schedule need to be conducted in summer or winter holidays only, as for working teachers, it's not viable to take so many holidays.
- Provision of use of library of study center to be made for the teacher trainees.
- During PCP's training to use multimedia to be given to the teacher trainees.
- Evaluated assignments to be provided to the teacher trainees.
- Stress on teaching skill development and training to be given in PCP's.
- Model lessons for different teaching skills should be demonstrated by teachers.
- Evaluation of discussion lessons from teacher trainees to be done seriously and proper feedback to be given for improvement.

Majority of teacher trainees acknowledged the admission process as good and well organized; good organization of PCP's and guidance provided to teacher trainees at study centers.

#### **6.0. Conclusions and Suggestions:**

The major objective of the study was to determine the perceptions of teacher trainees towards teacher education programme through distance mode. The results of the eight parameters highlighted the strengths and weaknesses of the program.

The admission process is considered good and well organized as university has opted for online admission application procedures, but due to the norms of seat allocation on each study center, sometimes teacher trainees don't get the study center of their choice. So, more study centers to be made in those areas from where a large number of teacher trainees are applying for the course.

The study material is provided to the teacher trainees, but there is need to translate the study material Hindi and the Punjabi language as the majority of the teacher trainees opt for the Hindi/ Punjabi medium. Updated material having the latest knowledge of the subject to the effective learning of the teacher trainees to be provided. Provisions for availability of e-learning material may also be explored.

Infrastructural facilities are good at all study centers, but teacher trainees of distance education programme should be allowed to avail the facilities like library, laboratories and multimedia rooms. Multimedia and projectors may be used PCP workshop for effective learning and training.

Personal contact are organized in a good manner, but time schedule need to change as it is really difficult for the working teachers to avail so many holidays in working days. Provisions may be made for evening classes, virtual classrooms or classes during summer or winter break.

Personal contact program, however, lead to clear the doubts of the teacher trainees. But The teaching learning process need to be strengthened at the study center

level to provide good guidance and knowledge to the learners about the teaching skills; usage of multimedia and technological devices related to teaching. There may be an effective monitoring system from the nodal center for all the study centers.

As teaching is a skill, so more efforts to be done to strengthen the teaching skill development and skill evaluation procedures during the PCP. Overall evaluation procedures are acknowledged by the majority of the teacher trainees, but a system need to be developed to provide feedback on assignments and lesson planning and delivery to the teacher trainees. There may be e-submission of the assignments and e-assessments by the teachers to provide the timely feedback to the teacher trainees.

Distance education is now internationally recognized and accepted as an alternative channel for providing broader access to education in a cost effective manner; wider and diversified curricula and a means for continuing life long education (Rai, Bajpai and Singh, 2007). India has a large number of teachers and needs many more. For that teacher education programme through distance mode have to be planned very cautiously and systematically to improve the drawbacks of the system. The ultimate goal of teacher training should be to ensure that optimal learning and skill development takes place in the teacher training programme through distance mode as like that of face to face programme.

#### 7.0. References:

- **Binder, M. (2006).** “The Cost of Providing Universal Secondary Education in Developing Countries.” In *Educating All Children: A Global Agenda*. Cohen, J.E., Bloom, D.E. and Malin, B. (eds.). American Academy of Arts & Sciences: Cambridge, MA, pp. 455–491.  
<http://www.icde.org/filestore/Resources/Reports/PERSPECTIVESONDISTANCEEDUCATION-TeacherEducationthrough.pdf>. Retrieved on February 10, 2012.
- **Rai, Bajpai and Singh (2007).** *Growth and Development of Distance Education*, APH Publishing Corporation, Ansari Road, Darya Ganj, India:New Delhi.
- **Patrick, A. D. and Abdurrahman, U. (Eds.) (2010).** *Perspectives on Distance Education: Teacher Education through Open and Distance Learning*. Commonwealth of Learning Publishers.  
[http://www.col.org/PublicationDocuments/pub\\_PS\\_TeacherEd\\_web.pdf](http://www.col.org/PublicationDocuments/pub_PS_TeacherEd_web.pdf) .  
Retreived on July 15, 2012
- **Qadir, B. (2010).** A Study of Teacher trainees Perception Regarding Teacher Education through Distance Learning in Pakistan. *International Journal of Digital Society (IJDS)*, Volume 1, Issue 1, March 2010.  
<http://www.infonomicsociety.org/IJDS/A%20Study%20of%20Teacher%20trainees%20Perception%20Regarding%20Teacher%20Education%20through%20Distance%20Learning%20in%20Pakistan.pdf>. Retrieved on January 5, 2012.
- **UNESCO (2004).** *Education for All: The Quality Imperative. EFA Global Monitoring Report*. UNESCO: Paris.  
<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0013/001373/137333e.pdf>. Retrieved on January 7, 2012.
- **UNESCO (2008).** *Overcoming Inequality: Why Governance Matters. Education for All Global Monitoring Summary*. UNESCO: Paris.  
[http://www.unesco.org/education/wtd2009/infosheet\\_No3.pdf](http://www.unesco.org/education/wtd2009/infosheet_No3.pdf). Retrieved on January 7, 2012.