

PROBLEMS OF DISTANCE EDUCATION IN EFL TEACHING AND LEARNING PROCESS

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All over the world, distance mode of education is gaining a momentum and becoming more popular than conventional education. Distance learning is an excellent method of reaching the adult learner. Because of the competing priorities of work, home, and school, adult learners desire a high degree of flexibility. The structure of distance learning gives adults the greatest possible control over the time, place and pace of education; however, it is not without problems. Loss of student motivation due to the lack of face-to-face contact with teachers and peers, potentially prohibitive startup costs, and lack of faculty support are all hurdles to successful distance learning. Distance education is much more flexible and student centered in

approach. By allowing students to learn in more convenient locations, and often at more convenient times, distance education opens educational opportunity to previously un-reached learners. It also enables students to extend the period of their education from a limited number of schooling years to a lifelong learning process. It changes power and authority relationships between teachers and students and often encourages more equal and open communication than occurs in traditional educational settings.

The distance mode of education plays an important role in meeting the need of such persons who are in great demand of education but can't complete their education from the formal or regular system of education. They may be- In service persons due to certain reasons could not complete their educational qualifications without disturbing their jobs, inferior from of socio-economic conditions but wants to enhance their education status, such persons who want to learn and earn simultaneously, such persons who are residing far away from the big cities or in remote areas and do not have colleges and universities for higher education, overflow from colleges/universities due to fix number of seats or merit, dropouts due to some personal reasons, now again motivated to study, such persons who always want to add something new in their knowledge or update their knowledge or something training, such women who are housewife but do have their for knowledge, some very active retired persons who still want to know about their changing environment and such students who cannot fulfill the basic qualification for entrance of the university.

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[6] stress the institution's continuity of concern for the quality of support of the student as the basis of the Open University's claimed success of high completion rates. Here, emphasis has been given to the role of the institution and its concern for the learners. Most of the educationists like, who are concerned with open and distance learning, talk of student support and counseling. Careful systems for student support and counseling have been seen, as perhaps, one of the most important elements in the distance education system. Knowles [3]believed that learner behaviouris influenced by a combination of the learner's needs plus the learner's situation and personal characteristics. Rekkedal

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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

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pointed out that with new communication technologies the boundaries between distance education and traditional education will become increasingly 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. 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. Here, 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

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. 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. Various educationists are concerned about the system of open and distance learning. Despite improvements in educational indicators, such as enrolment, significant challenges remain with regard to the delivery of quality education in developing countries, particularly in rural and remote regions. In the attempt 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.

These are the problems faced by distant learners, while undergoing open and distance learning.

- **Nature of Study Material:** This problem is common with newer distance students. Study materials must take into account the significant proportion of students who enroll with little or no experience of distance study. These students are at risk of dropping out unless they develop study survival skills as rapidly as possible. The background of the learner is important in the preparation of the learning materials. It is difficult to prepare lessons according to the individual differences of the learners.
- **Lack of Multi-Media Instruction:** There is more stress on sending of printed materials. But there is a dearth of facilities of multi-media instruction. The variety in the learning materials also improves the quality of learning. The lessons written for the students usually are written by the teachers belonging to the traditional system and therefore these materials normally lack in itself instructions methodology.
- **Insecurities about learning:** More so than traditional students, distance learners are more likely to have insecurities about learning. These insecurities are found in personal and school related issues such as financial costs of study, disruption of family life, perceived irrelevance of their studies and lack of support from employers. These pressures often result in higher dropout rates than among traditional students.
- **Lack of feedback or contact with the teacher:** Because there is no daily or weekly face to face contact with teachers, students may have trouble in self-evaluation. The separation of student and teacher imposed by distance removes a vital link of communication between these two parties. The link must be restored through overt institutional efforts so that the

teaching-learning transaction may be reintegrated.

- Lack of support and services: Provision of student services such as advisement, library services, admissions and financial aid is a critical aspect of any distance-learning program. The isolation that results from the distance learning process can complicate the learning process for adult students.

- Lack of Social Interaction: Students of all kinds want to be part of a larger school community and simply a member of a correspondence course. For many traditional students, this is the part of their social lives. The "distance" aspect of distance learning takes away much of the social interactions that would be present in traditional learning environments. Geographical isolation has been identified as one of the major problems for distance students. In addition to the practical problems of contacting academic and administrative staff, obtaining study materials and borrowing library books, distance students suffer from the disadvantage of being unable to interact with other students and are often denied the perception that they belong to a scholarly community. This may lead to feelings of inadequacy and insecurity, and a lack of confidence in their own abilities.

- Lack of student training:

Many adult students are not well versed in the uses of technology such as computers and the Internet. Using electronic medium in distance learning can inadvertently exclude students who lack computer or writing skills. These skills are required if computer technology is used.

Students will typically be offered volumes of electronic-based information. Using this information will be a problem for some non-technical students. They must be taught how to manage, not only their study time, but the materials presented as well.

With these problems, there is a danger of the system becoming stereotyped leading to inertia. Until and unless, this inertia is removed, the system of distance education may deteriorate. Thus, distance education requires better planning and implementation as this system has to operate in a challenging and difficult environment of openness. There is need to devise ways and means to improve upon the external and internal environment of distance education system to avoid stagnation and generate dynamism and development to reap the potential of this system. We may say in the words of Fred Jevons, 'distance Education should no longer be written off as second best. It has a different pattern of advantages and disadvantages from campus-based education but it is not intrinsically inferior. Distance education has some advantages which should be recognized more widely. Easier access, independent learning opportunities, a more intimate interface with employment, better quality controls over course materials, the possibilities of cumulative improvement over course materials, the possibilities of cumulative improvement in pedagogic quality, the staff development effect and under certain circumstances, lower cost.' Distance education has the potential to make equity and access to education a reality and, thus, increase opportunities for a population in a vast democracy like ours. It has great potential for meeting the requirements of the varied demands for human resources. In doing so, our programsshould not be so stereotyped in their urban context, that students in rural areas get no benefits from them.

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