



## A Creative Use of Distance Education to Meet Contemporary Problems of Students Career Aspiration: Implications for Strategic Planning

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### ABSTRACT

Effective learning is directly related and dependent on the social and emotional well being of the learner. It is important to recognize that particular conditions which may arise within the social, economic and political environment in which the learner lives, and which impact negatively on the learner's social and emotional well-being, thus placing the learner at risk of learning breakdown. Such factors influence learners either positively or negatively. Distance education has failed to become integrated into the academic culture,

not as a result of the commonly factors of cost and faculty resistance, but rather due to the insistence of distance educators on perpetuating a culture that is out of touch with the driving force of higher education. Effective distance education program demands the strategic planning should be made at all times. Such planning could be done well if challenges confronting learners on the program are identified and addressed. There is need for conducting research on distance education since it provides the empirical data which can be used for the development of the education and career aspiration of distance students. The study recommends that, in order to help boost students' academic performance, Distance Education of the students should organize periodic career guidance seminars for students, to stimulate their career awareness, career aspiration and nurture their enthusiasm. This paper sets out to explore and provide an up-to-date picture of the challenges faced by distance education students in their quest to study. Among the challenges identified were - institutional, instructional, social, psychological, financial, Lack of Support, Feelings of Isolation, Technology, Interactivity and Commitment. In this paper the investigator also discuss the different challenges which were faced by distance learners. The paper also provides some valuable suggestions to overcome these challenges and provides some implications for future strategic planning for career aspiration.

**Keywords:** Barriers to Distance education students/learners, Career Aspiration, challenges, Distance Education, Institutional and psychological barriers, etc.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Career goals play a significant role in shaping an individual's study behavior in any higher education setting because it serves as motivation for the individual to achieve academic excellence. Students' attitude towards achievement situations therefore explains the type of goal they set for themselves at the onset. The distance education has hit the developing nations with a vengeance. The advent of political independence in India has been associated with greater educational opportunities for the majority of the people: people who were denied these opportunities before. There is tremendous pressure on governments to provide education to all who want it. However, there is not enough room in educational institutions to accommodate all who clamor for educational opportunities. Distance education is seen as the means to accommodate the ever-increasing demand for education. The last ten years has witnessed a rush for distance education by most Indian societies. However, in most cases the rush for distance education has been headlong. Large numbers of students have been enrolled before the procurement of the necessary resources. Studies are the important part of life, but what happen when a student is not getting sufficient study material as per his requirement, or if the student is not allowed by the society to go to institution to carry on his studies. Also what

would happen when one is not having enough money to pursue his studies in the college, or there is no teaching institution in one's area provided that one is not having enough money to move to other place and study there. It led to the need of education in which there may be no require going anywhere and it led to the development of distance education. Started in 18th century, distance education is made with the motto of "education to all" at whatever distance is he/she is present.

## **2. RATIONALE OF THE STUDY**

Despite the high demand for formal education, Indian societies cannot afford it. Apart from the fact that formal education is, to a very large extent, a misfit to the needs of the continent, with thousands remaining unemployed after "completing" it, it is very expensive per person. It has slowly dawned on most Indian governments that there is a need for an affordable alternative. Distance education offers Indian societies an opportunity to bring education to all at an affordable price. Education has become the buzzword in educational circles in India. However, the rhetoric has not been accompanied by the allocation of the necessary resources. Distance education has become a way of increasing enrollment at conventional institutions that simply do not have space to accommodate everyone who would like or need a university education. The results of this study may contribute to the existing related literature on distance learners' career aspirations and study behaviours. An important aspect of this investigation is that the findings may be used by distance education students in their decision-making policy to improve upon students' academic performance. Further, counselors at distance education will benefit from the study when dealing with issues relating to poor student performance. Finally, the results will also help students understand the need to have a positive study motivator, such as career aspiration, in order to enhance their academic achievements.

In a number of instances distance education came into being due to the need to increase enrollment in higher education. Most universities, for example, need to enroll a certain number of students per year to qualify for government grants. Without the distance education units, most universities would simply not be able to qualify for the grants. Distance education has become a way of meeting that requirement. However, there has been very little preparation for distance education. Distance education continues to be appendage at most conventional universities.

## **3. PROBLEMS AND ISSUES OF DISTANCE EDUCATION**

### **3.1 Instructional Challenge to Distance Education Students**

Instructional materials come to students late; in some cases students do not get the books at all. Due to this students have to make photocopies. Students complain are those when modules or books are in the manuscript form they look voluminous and difficult to photocopy the document? These concerns are genuine since under the normal circumstance, all course books for a particular level are supposed to be given out to students at the beginning of the semester. Any delay therefore poses inconvenience. Lack of feedback on performance from teachers constitutes a barrier to distance students.

### **3.2 Psychological challenge to distance education students**

On the issue of psychological barriers that distance education students face, factors that Respondents commented are included, the conducive academic atmosphere for learning, Academic counseling unit, available avenues for students to report and effective non-academic counseling unit. This indicates that most students' psychological needs are not being addressed. More importantly, learners' assignment feedback, other learning needs and motivation, all have to be addressed.

### **3.3 Lack of support a challenge to distance education students**

The physical absence of the instructor means that they may not be available to guide or support the student when they need it most. The availability of counselors depends entirely on the program student is enrolled in. Even the support that does exist relies on the student formulating questions and asking for help; something some students may find difficult.

### **3.4 Interactivity and feelings of isolation**

Another problem facing distance-learning students is the level and type of interactivity. Similar to the issue surrounding support, the lack of face-to-face interactions between student, teacher and other classmates can be problematic for those new to the distance-learning environment. An effective distance-learning class will incorporate interactive tools, such discussion boards, wikis and blogs, and synchronous audio or video components. A lack of meaningful interactivity may cause students to feel isolated and become discouraged.

### **3.5 Commitment**

In a distance-learning class, students must be committed to their own success. A traditional classroom environment carries with it a certain level of social pressure: the teacher and other classmates expect each student to come to class every week, complete the assignments answer the teacher's questions and actively participate in group projects. Students must possess or learn to develop the self-discipline required to organize their time effectively and participate fully in the learning process.

### **3.6 Technology**

The technology required to participate in a distance-learning class must be readily available and fully functional. Furthermore, students must have or acquire a certain level of competency with the technology, including hardware, software and all related accessories, in order to be successful in the course. Technology that is unavailable or unstable quickly becomes a barrier for distance-learning students.

### **3.7 Strategic Planning For Career Aspiration**

- a) **A systems approach to open and distance learning:** A systems approach sets the conditions for proceeding in an orderly way. A systems approach also recognizes that all the components of the system are interrelated. A change in one component will bring about changes in the others. Open and distance learning programmes, units, and institutions use a phased model for problem solving and it will help students to lead their career.
- b) **Educational objectives:** Countries, both developing and industrialized, invest in education to achieve a myriad of economic, political, and cultural objectives. These objectives should utilize to aspire the choices of students in educational system.
- c) **Politics and management decisions:** Political discussion about the purposes of education, educational effects, access, and control may seem far removed from the day to day problems faced by those who manage open and distance learning. Decisions should be always in power of development of education so students should have enough fields to lead their career aspiration.
- d) **Planning and development:** Two steps must be taken at the planning and development stage. The first step is a detailed preparation of the curriculum and strategy for the programmed, which involves a good deal of consultation, between the academic unit and the service departments such as media, printing, and learner support, to explore the technical possibilities and the implications of the curriculum intentions. So that students of distance education can explore their path of career choices.

### **3.8 Methodology**

Keeping in view the availability of the resources and feasibility of the present research paper, the author conducted his research studies on the basis of secondary sources of data. Secondary data has been collected from the various journals, research articles, books thesis, different psychological, sociological theories and dissertation etc. The methodology of the study also includes the thoughts and writings of various authors in the stream of academic and research field's. Thus the author utilized all resources available and carried out exhaustive studies for the present research paper.

## **4. CONCLUSION**

Distance Education is now gaining popularity in the country, however due to its numerous challenges it has not achieved the standard expected. The increasing demand for further studies as well as the high cost of regular education has made distance learning a popular choice for many especially the working population. Considering the demand for the Distance program, it is believed that this study has confirmed most of the challenges listed in the literature as faced by Distance Students as well as uncovered a few that are peculiar to Distance Students. The study examined how students' career aspirations related to study behaviours in distance learning and found out that there existed a statistical relationship between the two variables but the degree of the relationship was weak. The findings showed that the majority of the participants had positive career aspirations as well as good study behaviours but may have lacked career guidance which might have contributed to their poor performance. This lack of career guidance might have created a lack of ambition needed to excel, on the part of participants. The study recommends to counselors of the Counseling Unit of distance education to assess fresh students career aspirations when given admission at the college using any career readiness scale. Further, the study recommends to the management of distance education to institute periodic career guidance seminars to students who enroll in distance education programmes, especially distance education students, throughout their studies to stimulate career aspiration and also nurture their enthusiasm to study for positive results.

#### 5. RECOMMENDATIONS

- a) There should be more flexibility in the payment of fees by DE students since they are adults and as such have to take care of their children and family members.
- b) The Government should provide DE students with the needed support as part of an effort geared towards the human capital development of the country
- c) There is the need to establish counseling centers in all the study centers and also employ professional counselors to attend to the needs of the students.
- d) Counseling consists of one of the major non- academic support for Distance Education students where advising, exploring problems and offering directions take place.
- e) Instead of providing the paper material the material must be in digitalized form, which led student to learn easily.
- f) There should be proper detailed preparation of the curriculum and strategy for the programmed, which involves a good deal of consultation, between the academic unit and the service departments such as media, printing, and learner support, to explore the technical possibilities and the implications of the curriculum intentions. So that students of distance education can explore their path of career choices.
- g) Political and management decisions should be always in power of development of education so that students should have enough fields to lead their career aspiration.
- h) A systems approach to open and distance learning programmed should be units, and institutions as a phased model for problem solving and it will help students to lead their career.

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