

Open and Distance Learning in KKHSOU Study Centers: Management and Effectiveness

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Abstract

The present study envisages exploring the determinants of effective learning in Open and Distance Learning (ODL) mode based on learner's opinion. The study is empirical in nature and based on primary data collected from the learners of KKHSOU from two districts of Assam namely Barpeta and Dhubri. The study reveals that although the distance education has been gaining popularity for its diverse mode of teaching learning interventions, yet the experience of the learners about the effectiveness of the ODL course in KKHSOU study centers is not up to the mark. The scale statistics, calculated to arrive at the overall remarks of the learners about the distance education course they are pursuing, found to be 63.627, which fall under moderate experience. Thus, interpretation goes on the line that the distance education provided by the KKHSOU study centers is moderately effective.

Keywords: ODL, Effectiveness, KKHSOU, Learners

1. INTRODUCTION AND OBJECTIVES

Many a time, reactions to Open and Distance Learning (ODL) and its programs have been found positive. However this area needs more research. In a study, Robert reported that that both trainees and trainers were satisfied with the methods used (Roberts, 1996) . In addition, Foell and Fritz(1995) found that students taking a distance education course were satisfied with the instructor, teaching methods, and course content (Foell, 1995).Students also perceived telecommunications as an acceptable method for delivering course content(Gallagher, 1999). Similarly, maintain a control group and an experimental group, the differences in overall perceptions of a

course taught by distance learning methods and in on-campus found to be minimum (Spooner, F., Jordan, L., Algozzine, B., & Spooner, M., 1999). Thus overall the instructors felt as though distance education courses were equal or lower quality than on-campus courses, but students rated them favourably (Inman, E., Kerwin, M., & Mayes, L., 1999).

Not all results are positive, however with Open and Distance Learning. The researchers reported that trainees prefer traditional classroom instruction to e-learning methods. The traditional trainees reported greater communication with other participants, more shared learning experiences with their peers, a greater sense of team atmosphere, and higher instructor support (Phillips, 2000).

Under the circumstances, present study envisages to understand the functioning of the ODL centers with regard to its effectiveness from the viewpoint of the learners. The Specific objective of the study is to explore the determinants of effective learning in open and distance mode based on learner's opinion.

2. METHOD AND MATERIALS

The present study is empirical in nature and based on primary data collected from the learners of KKHSOU from two districts of Assam namely Barpeta and Dhubri. Tounderst and the effectiveness of learning environment in KKHSOU ODL system 7 ODL institutions under KKHSOU were seceded randomly for detail survey from the selected districts.

- *Population*
All the ODL institutions in Assam, providing distance education under KKHSOU constitute the population of the study.
- *Sample Size*
145 distance learners from seven ODL institutions were selected randomly for detail interview.
- *Sampling Method*
Multi stage random sampling.
- *Interview Method*
Semi-structured schedule and Focus Group Discussion.
- *Statistical Tools*
Basic statistics, Likert scale.
- *Measurement aspect*

Five point likerttest was used to collect information about different aspects of learning environment. The responses were from strongly not effective to strongly effective. The sample learners were asked to assign rank to each variable within a scale of 1-5 as follows:

Response	Score
Strongly Not Effective (SNE)	1
Not Effective (NE)	2
Neutral (N)	3
Effective	4
Strongly Effective	5

3. DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF THE VARIABLES

All together 21 variables were identified as determinants of effectiveness of ODL education. The descriptive statistics of these variables is presented in the table-1 and the variable list is given in appendix-1.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

Variables	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
informative	145	4.00	5.00	4.7448	.43747
reliable	145	3.00	5.00	4.0621	.35786
access	145	3.00	5.00	4.0759	.62453
stdguidlin	145	2.00	5.00	3.4690	.64609
matreview	145	2.00	4.00	3.1310	.81866
engage	145	2.00	5.00	3.9448	.57469
organised	145	2.00	5.00	4.8828	.90909
progress	145	2.00	5.00	3.5500	1.06328
sim	145	2.00	4.00	3.0069	.81220
counseling	145	2.00	4.00	3.3586	.72338
project	145	2.00	4.00	3.2207	.84549
video	145	1.00	4.00	2.9793	.92398
audio	145	1.00	4.00	2.1655	.75474
inradio	145	1.00	3.00	1.8759	.40625
inf_admn	145	1.00	4.00	3.6069	1.08843
handson	145	2.00	4.00	2.8897	.66789
tehasstis	145	1.00	3.00	2.0759	.74613
evalun	145	1.00	4.00	2.1655	.76389
outcomes	145	1.00	3.00	2.1310	.55597
library	145	1.00	4.00	2.6690	.79978
exam	145	2.00	4.00	2.7724	.68460

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Valid N (listwise)	145				

Source: Compiled from primary data.

4. RELIABILITY OF THE TOOLS

The reliability of the scale is tested using coefficient value of Cronbach's Alpha. The value of Cronbach's Alpha was found to be 0.79 (table-2) and it indicates reliability of the scale. Cronbach's Alpha of 0.70 or better is considered to be good measures of reliability of scale (Nunnally, 1978)

Table-2: Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha based on standardised items	Number of items
0.799	0.792	21

5. TEST FOR NORMALITY OF DATA

Any statistical analysis requires that independent variable should distribute normally. to consider normality of data following numerical and visual output must be investigated.

- Skewedness and Kurtosis Z values should be somewhere in the span of -1.96 to +1.96.
- The Shapiro-Wilkstast p value should be above 0.05.

Though our data set satisfy Shapiro-Wilk test for normalityyet based on the value of Kurtosis we could identify two doubtful variables about their normality. These are ‘use of interactive radio programme’ and ‘engagement of students in continuous evaluation processes. Hence, these two variables were dropped from further analysis.

6. DATA INTERPRETATION

The result of the table-1 can be interpreted following the interpretation table-3

Table-3: Interpretation table (A)

Mean Value	Interpretation
More than 4	Favorable Experience
Between 3.5 to 4	Moderate Experience
Less than 3.5	Unfavorable Experience

It was observed (table-4) that learners were having relatively favourable experience with respect to the factors like information provided by the officials, reliability of the course delivery system, access to institutional information, guideline followed in course development, and organisation of the course.

Learners have moderate experience with respect to the factor like information about learners’ progress, counseling method, information about LSS (Learners Support Services). on the other hand, learners have unfavourable experience with respect to all remaining aspects of learning.

Table-4: Learners Experiences

Particulars	N	Mean	Std. Devn.	Experience
informative	145	4.7448	.43747	Favourable
reliable	145	4.0621	.35786	Favourable
access	145	4.0759	.62453	Favourable
stdguidlin	145	3.4690	.64609	Unfavourable
matreview	145	3.1310	.81866	Unfavourable
engage	145	3.9448	.57469	Unfavourable
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Valid N (listwise)	145			

Source: Field Survey, 2015

7. SCALE STATISTICS

There are total 19 valid items in the consideration scale. For a scale consisting of 19 variables the maximum score possible is 95 (19×5) and minimum score possible is 19 (19×1). It is divided by 5 (five) to demonstrate five different layers of experiences. Accordingly, following interpretation table is framed.

Table-4: Interpretation Table (B)

19-34.2	Very Unfavourable Experience
34.2-49.4	Unfavourable Experience
49.4-64.6	Moderate Experience
64.6-79.8	Favourable Experience
79.8-95	Very Favourable Experience

Table-5: Scale Statistics

	Std. Devn.	Variance	No of Items
Mean			
63.8276	7.0197	49.277	145

To arrive at the overall remarks of the learners about the distance education course they are pursuing, the scale statistics is calculated based on the 19th items. it is calculated at 63.627 (table-5) which fall under moderate experience. Thus, interpretation goes on the line that the distance education provided by the KKHSOU study centers is moderately effective.

8. CONCLUSION

Although the distance education has been gaining popularity for its diverse mode of teaching learning yet the experience of the learners about the effectiveness of the ODL course in KKHSOU study centers is not up to the mark. As such the study advocates that the KKHSOU should make its monitoring system of the study centers stronger in order to ensure proper service delivery. The monitoring system should be entrusted to look after the matter of timely evaluation, declaration of result, collection of feedback, etc. Use of innovative media in the process of teaching and learning is an important component of ODL education. In KKHSOU study centers use of such media is very poor. Therefore, institutional strategy should develop to entertain the counselors and learners to use technology in ODL. Every ODL institution must have access to internet to deliver its services. Besides, the ODL institutions should have clear institutional strategy, provision of budget and planning to make distance learning effective.

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