



Attitude and Perception of Post Graduate Students towards Distance Learning.

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ABSTRACT: The research has been carried on the above topic is the need of the hour. Emerging technologies and extremely busyness of the people are the major reasons for the phenomenal changes happening in the education sector especially in the distance education mode. The study keenly measures the result at the end but it has to pass through the gates of attitude of the learner and the perception of the learner and the society as well in the longer context. The application is done on the Postgraduate students is the key. The study considers in the DE mode that the geographical boundary is just a line in the map not in the mind as it is open across the globe with the help of the ever changing technology. It also covers the practicability of the same without diluting its essence as it is required to build the nation as a whole. The seasons of the western education both entry and exit challenges, success rate of the application is another milestone of the research. Altogether, the reader will feel that crux of the education to both for the self and the society.

KEYWORDS: Attitude, Distance, Education, Perception, Positive, Society, Technology.

I. INTRODUCTION:

“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world” – Nelson Mandela.

Education is a weapon, Education is a discipline, and converts a county into civilized, quotes and explanation are many. Former President of South Africa Mr. Nelson Mandela, has quoted that Education is a weapon, ignorance is the price we pay when everyone ending up paying more. Construct or destruct has become a single word from the central framework of education, sustain or remove education is the key to build the nation or vice versa. The world has witnessed the realm of education the way it changes the function of the

world, days are gone stating that I have studied ICS from England, A barrister earned from London and practiced in South Africa, Product of Cambridge or Oxford. The world tour on education has taught us a new meaning of gaining knowledge. In comparison with eastern Universities western Universities have made the education more flexible rather more student front which is viable for anyone to take it, irrespective of your current stature. Earn to learn is the new mantra. You may study any course and can complete only when you are found complete, not taking time into consideration, for the past two decades people have become literally running short of time for any, take family, business, profession, entertainment. They are speechless, the Twenty First teacher’s face a immense challenge in locating the education in its midst. Therefore western educators have become the pioneer in delivering the same with more convenient to the budding grads incorporating technology, student centric timing, examination pattern with more applicable, etc.

Distance Education, *Merriam Webster* defines distance learning as, “a method of study where teachers and students do not meet in a classroom but use the Internet, e-mail, mail, etc., to have classes.” In simple words distance learning is when students are separated from teachers and peers. This means that students learn remotely and do not have face-to-face learning with instructors or fellow students on a regular basis but still the knowledge is transferred through other modes like, by self reading, doubt clearing an effective mediation, but the testing is being done on a regular basis to assess the knowledge gained by the learner though the mode is different from that of the distance in selective cases.

The study has taken such a challenge focusing on the status quo of Post Graduate if it is earned in a new environment. How will it change the thinking construct of stake holders in total? The



gainer, the society as a beneficiary, the intermediary the University or Higher Board of education etc., in the process of making. To our understanding the degree earned away from the university campus but abide by the Varsity framework, is it worth in taking and paying back is being analyzed in this study. The picture is so natural taking every corners of the world as a glimpse to the study, meaning How ASEAN countries is delivering the same and brings down the difference in comparison with countries of Europe and America is discussed in the course of study. The complete research will take us in the context of learners and societies' perspectives about the distance education. It also does not leave the attitude among the stakeholders of the distance education as well. The research has been made to understand the relationship among these terms and drafted its best and the worst in this complete paper. The views from different verticals have been taken into consideration to derive the conclusion.

II. MAJOR FEATURES

2.1 Attitude based on Perception is really Matters

Everyone would want to understand why people behave in such a way? The question is generally answered that they were brought up in such a situation, otherwise their surroundings were like that, and even more their friends are so and so. All these statements denote a person's perception on others based on the person's whom they were observing so far. Therefore, attitude decodes the person's behavior and it is perceived by the surroundings and they will reap the fruit of it.

To be more formal let's understand the word Perception, **According to Stephen P Robbins, "Perception is a process by which individuals organize and interpret their sensory impressions in order to give meaning to their environment. It's important because people's behavior is based on their perception of what reality is, not on reality itself."**

The above definition has given a clear understanding about how an individual's response gives meaning to their environment about him/her, and it is certain that it cannot be overwritten of enacted.

The second major area of our topic is Attitude. Let's understand the same in a better way, **Attitude:** The following figure has explained clearly what an attitude and its dimensions are all about.

Attitudes

Evaluative statements or judgments concerning objects, people, or events

Cognitive Component

The opinion or belief segment of an attitude

Affective Component

The emotional or feeling segment of an attitude

Behavioral Component

An intention to behave in a certain way toward someone or something

Figure 1: Definition of Attitude

The above figure has given the definition of word "Attitude", it denotes the connection between the source and the delivery aspect depends on the situation. It also has various components as mentioned above which support the study would as well like, cognitive, affective and behavioral.

2.2 Postgraduate Students:

In the context of education the number of enrollment from the primary education to the higher studies, the data would be shocking, that all over the world higher education is not an obligation. It is the individual's willingness or an cognitive urgency and many other reasons such as, family, demography, finance, ability, utility and many more which determines a person to choose the postgraduate course and succeed as well.

2.2.1. Modes of Education:

There are various modes of education available with the intervention of the technology and its enormous utilization to name a few; Regular classes, Evening classes, Part-time classes, completely online, blended and Distance classes were the various modes of study and it was given in various languages as the learners' and world's competitiveness is taken into consideration. There are many opinions about the mode of learning in comparison with where it has been obtained, i.e., from which board or University. The mediator which facilitates these sort of education are plenty like, MOOC, Artificial Intelligence, Use of Robots, Web based tools, Web and Mobile Application and many more. Ultimately what is the takeaway through the mode of study by the learner are matters. What is the acceptance of the society as a whole plays a vital role.

2.2.3. Merits and Demerits of Distance Education in a glimpse:

Merits: 1. You can pursue a job along with studies; 2. You can save money; 3. You save time; 4. You



can learn at your own pace; 5. You can study whenever,

Demerits: 1. Chances of distraction are high; 2. Hidden costs; 3. Cost of complicated technology; 4. Quality of faculty compromised; 5. Questionable credibility of degrees; 6. Lose out on networking.

III. REVIEWS FROM VARIOUS STUDIES

3.1. Most of the literature concerning student perception of (DE) Distance Education courses, both blended and entirely online, involves students who have enrolled in online courses. Some articles address comparisons of perceptions between face-to-face and online students regarding DE (Daniels & Feather, 2002; Dobbs, del Carmen, & Waid-Lindberg, 2017; Hannay & Newvine, 2006; Lanier, 2006).

3.2. Additional studies address adult and undergraduate students and cover many aspects of the online experience (Dobbs et al., 2017; Horspool & Lange, 2012; Seok, DaCosta, Kinsell, & Tung, 2010b, a). However, little, if any research has been conducted that only addresses perceptions of students who live in countries in which few IHEs offer online courses.

3.3. In higher education, data mining techniques have spurred on powerful movements, among which it is particularly important to highlight learning analytics (Buckingham & Deakin, 2016; Daniel, 2015; Ferguson et al., 2016).

3.4. Learning analytics is a tool that can offer us information about interaction processes between students (Caballé & Clarisó, 2016; Gañán, Caballé, Clarisó, Conesa, & Bañeres, 2017).

3.5. As defined by Siemens and Gasevic (2011): "Learning analytics are the measurement, collection, analysis and reporting of data about students and their contexts, in order to understand and optimize learning and environments in which they occur" (p. 8).

3.6. In the United States a widening educational gap between underserved student population and those communities with greater financial and technological resources (Williams 2016). Equal access to education is a critical need, one that is particularly important for those in our underserved communities. Can blended learning help increase access thereby alleviating some of the issues faced by our lower income students while resulting in improved educational equality? Although most indicators suggest "yes" (Dziuban et al. 2004), it seems that, at the moment, the answer is still "to be determined." Quality education presents a challenge, evidenced by many definitions of what constitutes its fundamental components (Pirsig 1974; Arum et al. 2016).

IV. ANALYZING THE TOPIC ON THE FOLLOWING GROUNDS:

The study has been established over and above the studies made on the similar modules of the topic irrespective of the geographical boundary. The topic is made into many modules to arrive at a conclusion that the Post Graduate students studying through Distance mode are perceived better and also they are better understood by their own attitude. Anyhow it needs a start, so let's ask questions where its solution will give us the required conclusion.

4.1. The questions

1. Why should someone choose Distance mode?
2. What are the attitudes toward the distance mode?
3. How about the success rate on the distance education?
4. How about the failure rate on the distance education?
5. Measuring their Perception and Attitude.

The heading takes us through the areas of finding reasons why someone choose to study online? Various statistics done across the globe has been taken to understand taking the perspectives from the students, society, educational institution / Universities, the give and take-away in the distance mode, the success rate of both the educational institution and the students, and conclusion thereof.



Table 1: Reasons to enroll in distance education courses

Country	It is less expensive	I can enroll in the programs that I really want	I have more options when selecting courses and/or a college	I don't have to travel to college	Other
	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent
Portugal	5.45	9.09	12.73	20.00	1.82
Ukraine	20.00	32.86	51.43	51.43	0.00
UAE	21.05	27.37	29.47	45.26	2.11
<i>Average</i>	15.5	23.11	31.21	38.9	1.31

The data collected from the research carried in the three countries have stated clearly that, there are many positive reasons towards the Distance Education mode of learning. On an average there are considerable numbers who positively opt for DE

mode; among the reasons avoiding the risk of travelling to the institutions is the main which is also accompanied by savings of time and money, the second reason is freedom of choosing the courses, colleges, universities or institutes.

Table 2: Attitudes toward distance education

Country	Very unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral/ Unable to judge	Favorable	Very favorable
	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent
Portugal	0.00	7.27	34.55	52.73	5.45
Ukraine	0.00	0.00	31.43	42.86	25.71
UAE	8.42	12.63	42.11	21.05	15.79
<i>Average</i>	2.81	6.63	36.03	38.88	16.65

The above table which denotes the same samples attitudes is also shows positive. Most of them are favorable attitude towards DE mode and followed by neutral the reasons are to be tested after the education.

Table 3: Success rates by minority/non-minority and course modality: fall 2014 – fall 2015

Term	Blended		Online		Face to Face	
	%	Numbers	%	Numbers	%	Numbers
Fall 2014	91%	17,954	89%	37,446	87%	143,250
Non-Minority	92%	10,593	90%	21,653	89%	83,599
Minority	90%	7,361	88%	15,793	85%	59,651
Spring 2015	91%	16,705	90%	40,690	88%	133,644
Non-Minority	92%	9,736	90%	53,287	89%	77,181
Minority	90%	6,969	89%	17,403	86%	56,463



Term	Blended		Online		Face to Face	
	%	Numbers	%	Numbers	%	Numbers
Summer 2015	95%	6,492	92%	28,940	91%	37,992
Non-Minority	96%	3,851	93%	16,258	93%	21,195
Minority	94%	2,641	90%	12,682	89%	16,797
Fall 2015	91%	19,368	90%	40,421	87%	144,429
Non-Minority	92%	11,219	91%	22,400	88%	82,202
Minority	90%	7,363	89%	16,097	85%	53,010
Average	92%	10021	90.08%	26923	88.08%	75784

1. Undergraduate and graduate combined courses
2. Minority = American Indian/Alaskan Native, Asian, Black/African American, Hispanic, Latino, Multi-racial, Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander

The above table gives a further clarity when it is being tested among the students of the same country as majority of them and the students who possess the nationality as a minority states in United States of America, The country has been chosen since it is the leading in the education sector

across the globe, therefore positive or negative will start from there.

The data shows a positive response towards the DE mode of learning among them.

Table 4: Withdrawal rates by minority/non-minority and course modality: fall 2014 – fall 2015

Term	Blended		Online		Face to Face	
	%	Numbers	%	Numbers	%	Numbers
Fall 2014	3%	19,831	4%	37,449	4%	161,285
Non-Minority	3%	11,545	5%	21,655	4%	93,768
Minority	3%	8,286	5%	15,794	5%	67,517
Spring 2015	3%	18,311	4%	40,803	4%	151,041
Non-Minority	2%	10,501	4%	23,363	4%	86,668
Minority	3%	7,810	4%	17,440	4%	64,373
Summer 2015	2%	6,710	3%	28,940	3%	42,661
Non-Minority	1%	3,942	3%	16,258	2%	23,626
Minority	2%	2,768	3%	12,682	3%	19,035
Fall 2015	3%	21,482	4%	40,558	4%	163,571
Non-Minority	3%	12,278	4%	22,461	4%	92,532
Minority	3%	9,204	4%	18,097	5%	71,039
Average	3%	11056	4%	24625	4%	86426



1. Withdrawal = W, WF, WP grades; X, WM, I excluded

2. Minority = American Indian/Alaskan Native, Asian, Black/African American, Hispanic, Latino, Multi-racial, Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander

The above table witness that the withdrawal rate is very minimal in the DE mode. Normally this is a major problem which also considered as an indicator of Attitude and Perception of the students while choosing DE mode for the higher education. Since the result has come as minimal, we will still accept the positivity of the topic.

4.2. The students' perceptions of their learning environments

Other potentially high-stakes indicators can be measured to determine the impact of an innovation such as blended learning on the academy. For instance, student satisfaction and

attitudes can be measured through data collection protocols, including common student ratings, or student perception of instruction instruments. Given that those ratings often impact faculty evaluation, any negative reflection can derail the successful implementation and scaling of an innovation by disenfranchised instructors. In fact, early online and blended courses created a request by the UCF faculty senate to investigate their impact on faculty ratings as compared to face-to-face sections. The UCF Student Perception of Instruction form is released automatically online through the campus web portal near the end of each semester. Students receive a splash page with a link to each course's form. Faculty receives a scripted email that they can send to students indicating the time period that the ratings form will be available. The forms close at the beginning of finals week. Faculty receives a summary of their results following the semester end.

Table 5: Student perceptions of teaching by distance mode

Statements	SA	A	U	D	SD
The facilitator provided prompt feedback on my assignments.	14 (13.5%)	58 (56%)	15 (14.42%)	15 (14.42%)	2 (1.92%)
The facilitator used the relevant instructional medium.	19 (18.27%)	52 (50%)	29 (27.88%)	3 (2.88%)	1 (0.96%)
The face-to-face sessions were effective for me.	30 (28.85%)	55 (52.88%)	13 (12.5%)	5 (4.81%)	1 (0.96%)
The content of the sessions met my expectations	21 (20.19%)	53 (50.96%)	19 (18.27%)	8 (7.69%)	3 (2.88%)
<i>Average</i>	20.20	52.46	18.27	7.45	1.68

(Note: SA= Strongly Agree, A=Agree, U= Neutral, D=Disagree, SD= Strongly Disagree)

The above table shows that the perception of the students of teaching on the DE mode as highly positive.

Table-6: Means and Standard Deviations of Employed and Unemployed Distance Learners' Attitude towards Distance Education and the Results of 't' Test

Categories	N	M	ó	t	Level of significance
Employed	84	211.86	9.60	1.56	Not significant
Unemployed	126	209.74	9.78		

The present study revealed that the groups of male and female, urban and rural, married and unmarried, and employed and unemployed Distance Learners

bear no difference in their attitude towards Distance Education Programme.

Table 7: Distance Education students' awareness and their attitude towards their distance education

Gender	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Male	145	98.3	25.63
Female	55	102.75	13.32



The above mean value of male 98.3 and female 102.75 shows that they are well aware and positive towards their distance education. The standard deviation also states that there is no much deviation as well and within in the 25.63 and 13.32 for male and female respectively. It describes the students' who pursue postgraduate program through distance mode are well aware and having positivity

on their mode of study. Both male and female has equally well aware about the distance education. They have lot of information related to distance education study centre and open Universities. IGNOU is one of the premium institutions which provide various facilities to the students for better and flexible education system.

Table-8: Means and Standard Deviations of Male and Female Distance Learners' Attitude towards Distance Education and the Results of 't' Test.

Categories	N	M	σ	t	Level of significance
Male	99	211.35	10.98	1.03	Not significant
Female	111	209.99	9.02		

The above shows the mean score of male distance learners (211.35) and the mean score of female distance learners (209.99). The difference between the mean scores of male and female distance learners' attitude is very less (1.36) and treated as negligible. The obtained 't' value (1.03) is not significant. Hence, there is no significant difference between the mean performance in the attitude of male learners and female learners through the DE mode.

The interpretation of the result

It is obvious that the quick changing environment because of the ever changing technology though it be called as development or necessity, change is inevitable. Days are gone people use to say that they have travelled to places to gain their degree from the prestigious university, but now person staying in a corner of a village in India can listen to the eminent faculty of Cambridge, Stanford and IIM and what not, name it. The key is the gain by the learner in turn to the society, which is the Attitude and Perception on the higher education, shortly Post Graduate. Irrespective of the gender, Nationality, Economical or Residential status of the learners, everyone look at the education and the Postgraduate degree with the same eyes. Right from the Management thinkers and to the common man have come to a conclusion that it the knowledge gained and implemented matters rather the way it has been gained.

V. CONCLUSION

The humane if found in a human by reflecting who he/she is inside. Attitude of his and other's perception on him are the direct mirrors which exhibits in and out of post graduate students through distance mode. The study has given such an immense pleasure beyond boundaries since the study

has taken multi country into consideration. It is apt that after the explosion of the Information technology the entire globe has become a normal village. It is not the race, face, economical status, the language you speak, but what you have gained all because of the inner attitude and outer perception. The study has concluded that there is positivity in all aspect whether the person studies in any mode has a responsibility towards his contribution and the behavioral changes he develops over the time. The place you hail from is immaterial unless and until you leave something worthwhile back to the society. The journey was ultimate as it has given the satisfaction of knowing how the education functions across the globe. It has also given a way to study what best can be done by the education department to attract and deliver the education in more better way to the upcoming generation as well. As the time and the global situation have thrown more lights on the involvement and the necessity of the technology which eased execution of distance education in a smoother manner, we must learn and adapt accordingly.

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