

Educating the educators through distance mode: Chhattisgarh experience

¹ Anjali Kumari, ² Dr. Sambit Kumar Padhi

¹ Research Scholar (JRF), Department of Education Guru Ghasidas Vishwavidyalaya Central University, Bilaspur Chhattisgarh, India

² Assistant Professor, Department of Education Guru Ghasidas Vishwavidyalaya Central University, Bilaspur Chhattisgarh, India

Abstract

Distance-Education Programme (DEP) is a major intervention started by the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), Government of India, on 1st July 2003 to train teachers of the country under SSA programme and the course is popularly known as Diploma in Elementary Education (D.El.Ed). This is intended to upgrade the professional competencies of working teachers in the elementary schools who have entered in the profession without formal training. This paper deals with the training of elementary teachers through Open and Distance Learning (ODL) mode in Chhattisgarh started under the supervision of SCERT from 07.05.2012 with the permission of NCTE. The main objective of this study was to find out the perception of the elementary teachers enrolled in the D.El.Ed. (ODL) programme regarding relevancy and applicability of this programme, academic support they get and impact of programme on untrained teachers. The researcher was used survey method under descriptive research for this study. The sample consists of 300 untrained elementary school teachers pursuing Diploma in Elementary Education through ODL mode as participants from the different study centres of the Chhattisgarh were selected for the study. The data in the study have been gathered through the questionnaire in which the open ended questions take part. Students were asked to give their feedback on areas associated with the relevancy and applicability of this programme, academic support and impact of the programme. To study the perceptions as perceived by the trainees, content analysis was incorporated. The collected data were tabulated and analyzed with the percentage technique. Analysis of data indicates that programme is relevant and applicable for the teacher trainees as they imbibe skills to transfer their implicit knowledge into practical knowledge but still there is a need to improve the programme to cater the expectations of trainees and society at a large. The areas that emerged to be a matter of concern in the present study are outdated course designing, absence of co-curricular activities, inadequate and less experienced resource persons, insufficient academic support.

Keywords: Distance education, In-Service Elementary teacher education, Diploma in Elementary Education (ODL) programme, Learners opinion

1. Introduction

Teacher is the most prominent component in the process of making education more effective and accessible to children, as teacher is the heart of the school and they are the main pillars of the society (Duggal, 2005) [14]. Therefore, to benefit the teachers in their role a sound professional training is indispensable. Teacher education in India has a strong historical prospective. As a different outside interference, it starts moulding from the ancient education system and till the present system of education taking shape according to the global and local needs of Indian society (Balwaria and Gupta, 2014) [4]. In this connection a paradigm shift was take place in 20th century namely “education for classes to education for masses” (Joshi, 2005) [18] and to deal with this expansion a national programme has been launched which is commonly known as ‘Education for All’ (EFA). This swing formed gigantic challenges to education in general and to teacher education in particular. In order to fulfilment of this objective many national level programmes such as Sarva Siksha Abhiyan (SSA) and Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) are implemented at the national level. The National curriculum framework on school education-2005 (NCFSE, 2005) [25] also highlighted the urgent need for quality education in schools and need to make the classroom environment welcoming for students from diverse cultural background. In keeping the spirit of NCF-2005 the National

curriculum Framework on Teacher Education-2009 (NCFTE, 2009) acknowledged teacher education as a key factor for quality improvement in schools. With the enactment of Right to Education Act-2009 [29], responsibility to train all untrained teachers through a course approved by the National Council Teacher Education by 31st March 2015 was given to both the central and the state governments.

To meet such problems Open and Distance Learning (ODL) mode was chosen as an alternative for teacher training. because it has capacity to: 1) to reach a large number of students, including remote areas, 2) the tutors and trainees don’t need to be replaced while they learn, as they continue to work 3) once the system has been established and learning materials developed, the cost of enrolling extra students is relatively low (Carr, Fung and Chann, 2006) [6]. The NCF (2005) and NCFTE (2009) also emphasizes the need of distance mode for in-service training because it has the capability to reach to the teachers ‘on the job’ without interrupting the classroom teaching. Distance-Education Programme (DEP) is a major intervention started by the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), Government of India, on 1st July 2003 to train teachers of the country under SSA programme and the course started to train elementary teachers was known as Diploma in Elementary Education (D.El.Ed). The Elementary Teacher Education programme through Open and Distance Learning system is

proposed for advancement the professional competence of working teachers in the elementary schools who have entered the profession without formal training. The National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) also accepts Open and Distance Learning (ODL) as a useful and feasible mode for the training of teachers presently serving in the elementary schools.

1.1 In –Service Teacher Education through ODL Mode

In service teacher education is mainly based on the needs of the teachers to reconstruct and update their knowledge from time to time as well as reequip their teaching skills so that they work in their field very effectively and face all the related field obstacles very competently. In- service teacher education and training programmes have their own journey from pre-independence and post-independence period which is characterized by various policy and recommendations of different commissions and committees in context of its content and process. According to Perraton (2003) [27], this is the area where distance education has been used extensively to provide pre-service Teacher Education, upgrading of academic qualification, in-service continuing professional development in subject content areas and instructional methods. Kothari and Dinker (2009) [11] and Nath (2012) [24] in their paper highlighted that the conventional modes and methods of teaching are not adequate for providing Education to all specially in the remote areas, so in order to make the teaching learning process effective and interesting as well as accessible to all, Distance mode of Education is one of the most effective means. Fozdar, Kumar and Saxena (2007) [16] found that most of the teachers were satisfied with the course materials and the Personal Contact Programme (PCP) conducted during the programme. According to Young and Lewis (2008) [39], the National Centre for Education Statistics (NCES, 2002) reported that approximately 6% of all instructional faculties have taught at least one distance education class.

Chhattisgarh is the 26th state of the Indian union came into existence on 1st November, 2000. The state is inhabited by a people of large cultural differences. Due to newly formed state and cultural diversity the state has great challenges in the field of education. On the one hand more number of teachers was required to fill the unmanned school and on the other there arose the need of teachers capable of managing diversified classrooms. All these challenges stood mounting to the newly formed state of Chhattisgarh. However some states may not have the capacity of teacher preparation in the numbers required. In these recognised state, Chhattisgarh is one of them (Department of school Education and Literacy, MHRD-2012) [10]. Beside it to fulfil the another objective of RTE Act 2009 [29] as stated in Section 23(2), one of the biggest challenge faced by the state is training for the large number of Untrained Teachers, who will be recruited without possessing prescribed qualification. These teachers were huge in numbers, so training in the traditional face to face mode, without loss of teaching time in school was uphill task for the state. Seven states including Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Chhattisgarh, Bihar, Assam, Jharkhand and West Bengal have prepared strategies for enabling the existing Untrained Teachers to acquire the D. Ed qualification through ‘distance cum contact mode’. In Chhattisgarh training of untrained teachers is provided under the open distance D.Ed programme

of SCERT (Department of school Education and Literacy, MHRD-2012) [10].

At the commencement of in-service teacher education programme for elementary teachers through Open and Distance mode much mystification raised among stakeholders regarding planning, organizing, quality, usefulness and success of the programme. Such as:

- As Chhattisgarh is a new born state with several social and cultural diversity, how this programme will cater all those obstacle with its prescribed structure
- Due to so much geographical barriers, how will be the resources made available for the trainees.
- As majority of stakeholders are not familiar with distance mode of learning, which can cause discontinuity and misconception about programme and it may be lead to failure of the programme.
- As this programme has only few couple of days for face to face session, then how it will compete with regular mode of training.
- How all the concern folks will make balance between their school work and ODL work parallel?
- As per the statistics there are 45,223 elementary teachers were untrained (source: Chhattisgarh JRM team report) [9], then how they will manage training activities for all those trainees.
- With so much obstacles related to time, physical and human resources etc. how SCERT/government fulfill the norms and standard prescribed by the NCTE especially for this programme,
- What will the percentage of the success and usefulness of this programme in the context of Chhattisgarh?

Despite the raising of such doubts by stake holders, training of elementary teachers through Open and Distance Learning (ODL) mode In Chhattisgarh started under the supervision of SCERT from 07.05.2012. Basic Training Institutes/District Institute of Elementary Teachers and Government higher secondary schools in state have been demarked as study centres. The orientation of Co-ordinators nominated for programme implementation and resource persons for giving training in the study centres has been done in SCERT (Source: SCERT, Chhattisgarh 2013) [34].

1.2 Learners opinion about Open and Distance mode of Learning (ODL)

The Co-ordinators, resource persons and learners are the major group of stakeholders in case of teacher education programme through open and distance mode. As learners are primary constituent so it is very necessary to consider their views and opinions in evaluating the effectiveness of any distance education programme. The structure and effectiveness of the programme depended upon the different components like Self learning Materials, support services, Evaluation and monitoring techniques and its relevancy lay impact on the trainees which help them to imbibe new things, become skilled and retain in this programme with interest.

Self-Instructional Materials are act like sources both of content and support as all the activities support provide in classroom interaction are built into it themselves (Satyanarayana and Sesharatnam, 2000) [31]. Fozdar, Kumar and Saxena (2007) [16] found that Most of the teachers were satisfied with course materials and the Personal Contact

Programme (PCP) conducted during the programme. Most of the students are satisfied with the overall quality of distance education courses (Thapliyal, 2014) [38].

Distance education has quality of freedom and flexible learning. Due to this nature it is viable and highly acceptable mode for learning. Alam, Waqar, Zaman, Shehzad and Mehmood (2012) [2] found that distance learning is most (55%) offered by younger learners (<30 years).

Çelen, Çelik and Seferoğlu (2013) [7] discussed that for effective implementation of distance education, the determination of teachers' attitude towards this technology is required primarily. They found that majority of teachers (73.6%) want to take distance education courses and believed that distance education facilitates learning.

Learning materials with many innovative ways of learning in distance education also provide own pace to the learners. Munyoka (2014) [23] said that Tele-education system has positively changed their way of learning in one way or another. Ilayaraja, Jeyachitra and Mahesh (2013) [17] also found that the students were satisfied with the library resources and services available to them in distance education programme.

Not only course material but teacher student relationship also place impact on teaching learning process in distance mode. As Carr, Fung and Chan (2006) [6] said that the importance of the tutors' roles, rigorous selection procedures are essential. Whereas Baipoledi (2010) [3] argues that most of the learners cried about poor facilities, over workload and poor academic support.

In order to enhance teaching learning, the institutions have to develop learning support services and facilities (Mohapatra, Singh and Rai, 2000) [22].

The outcomes of these studies indicate that learners are accepted distance mode as a feasible mode of the learning as it provides them freedom and own pace of study. This learning mode has capacity to develop knowledge and skills among learners through different innovative resources and also help them to retain in this programme with interest. However some studies also revealed that learners are faced so many challenges which need to be eradicate for the betterment of the programme.

1.3 Need of the Study

The Diploma in Elementary Education programme via Open and Distance mode (D.El.Ed, (ODL) is highly accepted programme by different states of India including Chhattisgarh to provide training to untrained elementary teachers who entered in teaching profession without prescribed professional qualification by National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE). It is also considered as an effective way to fulfil the aim of Right To Education- Act 2009. In this framework, a deep qualitative study was needed about how the elementary teachers who are registered in D.El.Ed, (ODL) programme perceive all the process of this programme. Hence, this study carried out to know the view of those untrained elementary teachers who enrolled in this teacher education programme that whether this programme is relevant for them or not, at what extent they get academic support and what changes they feel. So, finally the target group of elementary teachers is one of the primary stakeholders whose views and opinion need consideration to know the effectiveness the D.El.Ed. (ODL) programme. As the participants are experienced government

school teachers, this study help them to judge this programme not only through the eye of a learner but also through the eyes of a teacher.

1.4 Objectives

The major objectives of this study were to know the general perceptions of trainees:

1. To identify the Professional relevance and applicability of the programme.
2. To find out the Academic support which are provided to them during programme.
3. To assess the impact of the programme on the trainees.

2. Methodology

Open and Distance mode of education has made huge commitment in the field of educator training. Many teacher education programmes at different level accept this mode for teachers' education. Diploma in Elementary Education through open and distance mode is one of them. Therefore, the researcher was used survey method under descriptive research to know the opinion of trainees about D.El.Ed. (ODL) programme regarding relevancy and applicability of this programme, academic support they get and impact of programme on untrained teachers.

2.1 Sample

To study the effectiveness of the D.El.Ed. (ODL) programme as perceived by the trainees enrolled in this programme, 300 trainees perusing Diploma in Elementary Education through open and distance mode from the concern 15 study centres of State Council for Education Research and Training (SCERT), Chhattisgarh were selected. Considering the regulations of NCTE, the Diploma in Elementary Education through Open and Distance mode are meant for in-service untrained elementary teachers with a minimum of 2 years teaching experience in government schools.

2.2 Tool

The data were collected through questionnaire which was prepared for the trainees. In the preparation of questionnaire many literature, data tools used by different researchers on this theme and expert opinion were considered. The questionnaire comprised one open ended section in which respondent were asked to write down their Views about D.El.Ed (ODL) programme regarding 1) Professional relevance and Applicability of the programme 2) Academic support 3) Impact of the programme, (based on the article written by Carr, Fung and Chan in, 2002) [6].

2.3 Procedure of Data Collection

It involves careful administration of the questionnaire on all the concern participants. The researcher made a rundown of trainees of concerned study centre, and then 20 trainees were chosen randomly. For collecting valid information an introductory discussion was organized between researcher and respondents about the study. At that point dialog was finished with chose trainees, in regards to the questionnaire which they need to fill.

2.4 Data Analysis

The data obtained from questionnaire were assessed by using content analysis of the written account from the trainees. The

collected data were tabulated and analyzed with the percentage technique.

3. Result and Discussion

The views of trainees on the Professional relevance and applicability of the programme, support which they received during programme and impact of the programme are presented in Table -1, Table-2 and Table -3 respectively.

Table 1: General perception of Trainees towards Professional relevance and applicability of the programme

S. No.	Items	Responses in percentage		
		Agree	Disagree	Undecided
1	It inculcate vision to be aware of the educational concerns	76.6	12.1	11.3
2	The courses are design as per the needs of elementary school teachers	30.7	51.6	17.7
3	The structure of the programme is academically sound	34.3	46.8	18.9
4	It provides good professional knowledge and skills	70.2	9.6	20.2
5	Skill and knowledge learned through programme is applicable in the work field	82.4	4.4	13.2
6	There is less scope for practical session as content are too theoretical	85.9	11.4	2.7
7	Learning materials are need to be edited and revised as per the present context	83.7	12.7	3.6

As evident from Table-1, 76.6% of the respondents acknowledged that teacher education programme provide them vision to be aware of the other educational concerns whereas 12.1% and 11.3% respondent reported that they are disagree and undecided respectively. 70.2% are agree on the view that this programme provide them good professional knowledge and skills though 9.6% respondents have negative view and 20.2% trainees are undecided. 82.4% respondents have positive view regarding what they learn is applicable in their work field whereas 4.4% and 13.2% respondent are disagree and undecided respectively. Instead of these findings, majority of respondents show their negative view regarding structure of content and self-learning materials. Only 30.7% trainees agreed that course are design as per the needs of the elementary school teachers whereas 51.6% and 17.7% trainees reported that they are disagree and undecided with the statement respectively. 34.3% respondents agreed that courses are academically sound where as 46.8% are disagree with this and 18.9% trainees are silent towards this. 85.9% respondents agreed that content are too theoretical however 11.4% disagree with the view that content are too theoretical. 2.7% don't show any responses. Furthermore 83.7% are in favor that learning materials are need to be edited and revised as per the present context whereas 12.7% and 3.65 trainees disagree and undecided.

A. Discussion

In the accordance of above findings it is clear that unanimously the respondent positively reported about the

relevancy and applicability of the programme. Through programme they get vision to analyze educational issues from different perspectives. It also helps them to learn new things and construct their own beliefs which help them to convey their knowledge in their working field. It is an important aspect to teacher's growth to which programme to be constructed. Ekmekci (2015) [15] found that 60% of the students thought that the course met their expectations whereas Munyoka (2014) [23] found that majority of respondent accepted that the Tele-education system increased their productivity and pass rate.

With regards to teachers perception towards the course designing and self-learning materials was found not very satisfactory. It shows that the learners expect more from the courses but course designing is not up to the mark as this was too theoretical and there was less scope for the practical which create exhaustion and lack of concern among students. Sharma (2001) [33], Doss (2005) [13] and Çelen, Çelik and Seferoğlu (2013) [7] found same result that Most of the course materials are written in text book style and lacks the characteristics of self-instructional materials. Chandrashekhar (2001) [8], Rumajogee, Jeeroburkhan, Mohadeb and Moonesamy (2003) [30], Stella and Gnanam (2004) [36], and Baipoledi (2010) [3] found that curriculum is out dated and the low emphasis on practical. So it is very important to edit and revise the learning materials as per the present context and also content should practical oriented as well as interesting. It is also found that resource persons were needed to use more examples and empirical facts instead of more theory.

Table 2: General perception of Trainees towards Academic support

S. No.	Items	Responses in percentage		
		Agree	Disagree	Undecided
1	Coordinators and resource persons are supportive	52.7	46.2	1.1
2	There is pleasant-sound relationship between tutors and trainees	65.2	33.4	1.4
3	Trainees are free to express their views and ideas easily	69.5	29.3	1.2
4	Resource persons are ready to help and provide guidance about course	83.4	15.2	1.4
5	The time allocated for Interaction with the resource persons is adequate	29.5	69.1	10.4

The Table-2 revealed that more than 65.2% trainees expressed their satisfaction with regard to the following aspects of academic support: 1) pleasant-sound relationship between tutors and trainees 2) they are free to express their views and ideas. Whereas 33.4% and 1.4 % trainees are disagree and undecided respectively on the view that there is pleasant

relationship, though 29.3% and 1.2% respondent are disagree and undecided respectively on the view that they are free to express their views and ideas. 83.4% trainees agreed that resource persons are ready to help and guide though 15.2% and 1.4% are disagree and undecided respectively. 52.7% trainees agreed that Coordinators and resource persons are

supportive whereas 46.2% trainees disagree with this view and 1.1% are silent about this. 69.1% respondents felt dissatisfaction that the time allocated for Interaction with the resource persons is adequate while 29.5% agree with the time allocation whereas 10.4% are undecided.

B. Discussion

It is clear from the above findings that these aspects were indeed crucial to the success and effectiveness for the training. Result revealed that there was need to allocate some more adequate time for interaction with the tutors not only on content issues but on their personal need too. It is also need to develop a healthy relationship between tutors and trainees by

sharing their experiences. Beside this it was also needed that Coordinators and resource persons become facilitators and provide such environment in which trainees easily convey their ideas without any threats. Dockter (2016) [12], Semradova and Hubackova (2016) [32], Mahini, Forushan and Haghani (2012) [21], Sung and Mayer (2012) [37] suggested that there was need to create good relations between teacher and learners by sharing their personal stories and experiences for enabling the students to develop their skills and motivated towards self-learning. Thapliyal (2014) [37] and İsmaan, Dabaj, Altinay and Altinay (2004) [18] also suggested that there should be healthy communication between the teachers and students and among peers must be encouraged and practiced.

Table 3: General perception of Trainees towards Impact of the programme

S. No.	Items	Responses in percentage		
		Agree	Disagree	Undecided
1	It enable the trainees to become independent learner as well as a researcher	71.3	28.6	10.1
2	Trainees become more skilled in professional field	72.6	18.4	19.0
3	Learners become motivated to avail other courses through this mode	42.3	33.5	24.2
4	Due to flexible nature of this programme trainees enjoy to study in it	41.9	40.7	17.4
5	It produced more motivated, confident and disciplined teachers	72.5	17.4	20.1

As evident from Table- 3, more than 72.5% trainees expressed their view that trainees become more skilled, motivated, and confident and disciplined in professional field. However 18.4%. and 19% trainees show their disagreement and silent respectively towards the view that trainees become more skilled in professional field. 17.4% and 20.1% respondent disagree and undecided respectively towards the view that it produced more motivated, confident and disciplined teachers. Only 41.3% trainees agree that trainees become independent learner as well as a researcher but 48.6% and 10.1% respondents are disagree and silent respectively about this statement. only 42.3% trainees agree that they become motivated to avail other course through this learning mode whereas 33.5% and 24.2% respondents are disagree and silent regarding this statement. Same as 41.9% respondent reported that due to flexible nature of this programme they enjoy to study in it though 40.7% and 17.4% trainees show their disagreement and silence regarding this account.

C. Discussion

A substantial proportion of respondent accepted that this programme enable them to become intensive learners and researcher over a limited period but it is essential that they use to improve and enrich themselves through this practice. This programme emphasis on this quality and develop this skill by giving assignments and project works which need the skill of self-reading as well as nature of researcher. To become a lifelong learner, teachers must be endorse this capacity and imbibe this habit throughout the life. These practices also improve confident and disciplined to them. It is also crucial for them to promote this capacity among their pupils (Carr, Fung and Chan, 2006) [6]. Another finding was that trainees enjoy to study in this mode but below than 50% trainees have positive responses regarding this. Ekmekci (2015) [15] found same result that 40% of the students thought that they liked 'flexibility' of the course most, where as 35% of the students stated that they enjoyed synchronous courses most. It means that this programme could not inculcate interest and motivation in trainees that's why there is need to revise whole

programme and find out those lacuna which create constrain for the trainees.

3.1 Concluding Comments

In order to meet the target set by the RTE Act- 2009, Chhattisgarh government adopted open and distance mode to train untrained elementary in-service teachers and uplift their quality. This programme comprised all the important measures which need to successful implementation of any programme but execution is not appropriate. From the above findings it become clear that programme structure is relevant and applicable for the elementary teachers in their work field but designing of courses is not up to the mark as it is too theoretical with less scope of practical practices. So it is highly emphasised that course should be based on self-pedagogy theory, practical oriented with lots of examples and modified as well as updated time to time as per the requirement. There is also need to incorporate different co-curricular activities and innovative resources. The Study centres should provide all the necessary facilities with adequate academic support. To create a good learning environment it is also recommended that there is need to recruitment of trained, sincere, committed and experienced resource persons and improve tutors –learner’s relationship. It is also recommended that there should provision of counselling of the trainees regarding contact programmes, learning materials, uses of resources and about their problems so that they enjoy this learning mode and participate in all activities with dedication. To establish credibility in this programme it is also essential that management must be welcome views of stakeholders and incorporate those ideas in their plane and execution.

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