



A Study on Impact of Post Graduate Distance Learning Programme in the Case Institution- Master of Business Administration

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Abstract

The study was conducted to understand that how far the Open and Distance Learning (ODL) MBA program was useful to the respondents and to mainly identify constraints they faced while undergoing the program and the reasons for them to join the ODL MBA program in the case institution. The data collected from 60 students registered for the MBA program in ODL using a random sampling method. Data were analyzed using appropriate statistical tools like Percentage analysis, Chi-Square (χ^2) test, and Discriminant Analysis. Major findings reported that the respondents' motive behind joining the PG MBA program was to obtain promotion and increment, start a new venture, interest in the subject, and gain knowledge in management aspects. The suitable measures were suggested to address the challenges in order to increase the effectiveness of ODL MBA program.

Keywords: *Distance learning; constraints; influence; course.*

Introduction

Like the Erstwhile in 1962, the evolution of open and distance education in India has come into existence with the University of Delhi that started its courses in correspondence mode. Later this mode of education has gained moment after the establishment of Andhra Pradesh University in 1982, the first single-mode Open University presently known as Dr. B. R. Ambedkar Open University. Subsequently, this paved way for the diversification in higher education and witnessed an increasing demand for the ODL courses (Kulandaiswamy, 2002; Oliver & Philip, 1991). Presently, there are 14 open universities and nearly 250 ODL institutions operated by Central, State, Deemed to be, and Private Universities along with many stand-alone institutions. In association with this

around 1629 recognised ODL programmes are run by the concerned institutions in the country (DEB-UGC). This growth was due to the profound interest shown by the learners across boundaries. The peculiar education mode aimed at cutting down the impediments of caste and class, smooth out inequalities and providing an opportunity to educate the deprived learners in the society.

The directorate of open and distance education is one of the constituent unit of case institution, vested with the responsibilities of providing distance learning programme through correspondence mode. Courses offered in the correspondence mode viz., certificate courses, diploma courses, PG Diploma courses and PG degree programs such as Master of Business Administration

and M.Sc.(Environmental Science) targeted at far-reaching the various segments of the entrepreneur, self help groups, farming community and other ambitious learners interested in establishing industries in rural areas.

As the beneficiaries of these courses were largely being farmers, entrepreneurs, agro-based industries, employed and unemployed rural youths. The real impact of these courses on the learners has not been documented. Hence, this study was conducted to determine the impact of the postgraduate distance education courses in Master of Business Administration offered by case institution in terms of the acquaintance of knowledge gained, skills acquired, economic benefits attained and constraints faced by the learners.

The overall objective of the paper is to study the impact of post graduate distance education programme with reference to Master of Business Administration offered by the case institution. The specific objectives were firstly to analyze the association between completion of the programme and demographic characters of the respondents and secondly to analyze the reasons and benefits gained by the participants of the ODL programme.

Review of Literature

An overview of the researches conducted in measuring the effectiveness of distance education was reviewed. A study conducted by Cavanaugh, Gillan, Hess, and Blomever (2004) applied meta-analysis, a qualitative tool to analyse the impact of distance education on students. Reviews on 116 numbers of articles were done specifically on the effect of distance education. The results confirmed that distance education was equally efficient as conventional face-to-face instruction for open learning students. However, the overall mean effect was found to be non significant and showed a meagre difference between students participated in online programs and class room face-to-face instruction.

Bentley, Shegunshi, and Scannell (2010) in their study contemplated the issue of students' dissatisfaction with the assignment instructions and marking in distance education in MBA.

The findings suggested planning for a more integrated approach for standardization of assignment instructions and marking criteria unified across all the MBA modules.

Kumar et al.(2003) suggested some steps to improve distance education system such as availability of various media at the study centres; provision of requisite infrastructure & supporting technologies for use of various media; and developing the skill and attitude in counsellors/educators to handle the various media etc. should be taken for providing better academic support to the learners.

Method of data collection

The data collection was done with the use of a well-structured and pre-tested questionnaire. The students were contacted through various means such as direct contact with questionnaire, telephonic interview, and questionnaire sent by email and post. Questionnaires were sent to the postal address of the enrolled students with self-attested envelope. The total sample is 60 among which 23 candidates responded through telephonic interview, 20 candidates through email, nine candidates responded through direct contact and nine candidates through post. The collected data were analyzed using appropriate statistical techniques like Percentage analysis, Chi Square (χ^2) test and Discriminant analysis.

- I. Association between completion of the programme and demographic characters of the respondents

The association between demographic characters (age, gender, marital status, location, occupation and annual income) and completion of the programme was verified through chi square analysis individually and the results were presented below.

1. Completion of the programme and age of the respondents

H0: There is no association between completion of the programme and age of the respondents.

H1: There is association between completion of the programme and age of the respondents.

Table.1.1. Details on Completion of the programme and age group of the respondents

S.No	Completion of the programme	Age Group			
		<30	31-40	41-50	>50
1	Yes	15 (50.00)	13 (68.43)	6 (75.00)	2 (66.67)
2	No	15 (50.00)	6 (31.57)	2 (25.00)	1 (33.33)
Table value -7.815, Calculated value- 2.617, Degrees of freedom-3, N-60					

(Figures in parenthesis are percentage to the total)

From table 1.1, it was clear that as the age increased as the share of respondents who completed the programme also increased. The calculated chi-square value was lesser than the critical value at 5 per cent level significance. Hence the null hypothesis was accepted. It could be concluded that there was no association between completion of the programme and age of the respondents. So, either young candidates should be attracted or the course delivery process has to be simplified to enable age old respondents to complete the course.

2.The Completion of the programme and gender of the respondents

In H0: There is no association between completion of the programme and gender of the respondents.

H1: There is association between completion of the programme and gender of the respondents.

Table 1.2. Details on Completion of the programme and gender of the respondents

S. No	Completion of the programme	Gender	
		Female	Male
1	Yes	22 (51.16)	14 (82.35)
2	No	21 (48.84)	3 (17.65)
Table value -3.841, Calculated value- 4.938, Degrees of freedom-1, N-60			

From the Table 1.2, it could be inferred that, the major share of the respondents who completed the course were male. The calculated chi-square value was found to be more than the critical value at 5 per cent level significance. Hence, the null hypothesis was rejected. It could be concluded that there is association between completion of the programme and gender of the respondents.

1.Completion of the programme and marital status of the respondents

H0: There is no association between completion of the programme and marital status of the respondents.

H1: There is association between completion of the programme and marital status of the respondents.

Table 1.3. Details on completion of the programme and marital status of the respondents

S. No	Completion of the programme	Marital status	
		Married	Unmarried
1	Yes	25 (73.52)	11 (42.30)
2	No	9 (26.47)	15 (57.70)
Table value -3.841, Calculated value- 5.984, Degrees of freedom-1, N-60			

(Figures in parenthesis are percentage to the total)

From the table 1.3, it could be inferred that majority 73.52 per cent of the respondents who have completed the course were married. The calculated chi-square value was higher than the critical value at 5 per cent level significance. Hence, the null hypothesis was rejected. Hence, there is association between completion of the programme and gender of the respondents. The share of the male candidates in joining the course was very high, correspondingly the share of failures also high.

2.Completion of the programme and location of the respondents

H0: There is no association between completion of the programme and location of the respondents.

H1: There is association between completion of the programme and location of the respondents.

Table 1.4. Details on Completion of the programme and location of the respondents

S. No	Completion of the programme	Location	
		Rural	Urban
1	Yes	18 (54.54)	18 (66.66)
2	No	15 (45.46)	9 (33.34)
Table value -3.841, Calculated value-0.909, Degrees of freedom-1, N-60			

(Figures in parenthesis are percentage to the total)

3. Completion of the programme and occupation of the respondents

H0: There is no association between completion of the programme and occupation of the respondents.

H1: There is association between completion of the programme and occupation of the respondents.

From the Table 1.5, it could be inferred that, the share of the respondents who completed the course was about 58 to 60 per cent who were employed. The calculated chi-square value was lesser than the critical value at 5 per cent level significance. Hence, the null hypothesis was accepted. It was concluded that there was no association between completion of the programme and occupation of the respondents.

Table 1.5. Details on Completion of the programme and occupation of the respondents

S. No	Completion of the programme	Occupation				
		Public sector employee	Private Sector employee	Self employed	Housewife	Student
1.	Yes	12 (60.00)	15 (57.70)	4 (57.14)	2 (100.00)	3 (60.00)
2.	No	8 (40.00)	11 (42.30)	3 (42.85)	0 (0.00)	2 (40.00)
Table value -9.488, Calculated value- 1.406, Degrees of freedom-4, N-60						

(Figures in parenthesis are percentage to the total)

4. Completion of the programme and annual income of the respondents

H0: There is no association between completion of the programme and annual income of the respondents.

H1: There is association between completion of the programme and annual income of the respondents.

Table 1.6. Details on Completion of the programme and annual income

S. No	Completion of the programme	Annual Income				
		Less than 90000	90000-200000	200000-500000	500000-1000000	More than 1000000
1.	Yes	2 (66.64)	2 (50.00)	22 (64.70)	9 (52.95)	1 (50.00)
2.	No	1 (33.34)	2 (50.00)	12 (35.30)	8 (47.05)	1 (50.00)
Table value -7.815, Calculated value- 0.529, Degrees of freedom-3, N-60						

(Figures in parenthesis are percentage to the total)

From the above Table 1.6, it could be inferred that, the share of the respondents who completed the programme was under the annual income category of 2 Lakhs to 5 Lakhs. The calculated chi-square value was lesser than the critical value at 5 per cent level

significance. Hence, the null hypothesis was accepted. It could be concluded that there was no association between Completion of the programme and annual income of the respondents.

Reasons for Joining MBA under ODL by the Respondents

The respondents had multiple reasons to join the PG programme in Open and Distance

Learning. The reasons stated for selecting the Master of Business Administration (MBA) and the reasons for joining Open and Distance Learning in case institute to pursue the PG degree were presented in this section.

Table 2.1. Reasons for opting MBA by the respondents

S.No	Category	No. of respondents	Percentage
1	Interest towards the subject	8	13.33
2	Increment	16	26.67
3	Promotion	12	20.00
4	Knowledge gain	3	5.00
5	Additional degree	4	6.67
6	Start business	17	28.33

Among the respondents, about 29 per cent had disclosed that they have opted MBA due start a new business, while 26.67 per cent of them joined the programme for increment

purpose, 20.00 per cent for promotion purpose and only 5.00 per cent to gain knowledge in the management aspect.

Table 2.2. Reasons for joining ODL in Case institution by the respondent

S.No	Category	No. of respondents	Percentage
1	Prestigious University	12	20.00
2	Quality of education	11	18.33
3	Alumni	22	36.67
4	Atmosphere of the campus	8	13.33
5	Location	7	11.67

It is inferred from the table 2.1; that 36.67 per cent of the respondents who chose case institution was alumni of that institution while, 20.00 per cent joined case institution for its prestigious name and reputation, around 18 per cent of the respondents joined for its quality of education. Only a meagre 11.67 per cent opted due to easy access as university was in their native place. Hence, it is suggested that case institute brand name should be highlighted to attract more number of candidates for PG programmes under Open and Distance Learning.

Factors influencing the completion of the programme

Recent In this study, a discriminant analysis was performed to identify the factors influencing the completion of the programme. The course completion of the sample respondents was taken as the dependent variable (Discriminant variable) and the demographic characteristics of the sample

respondents were taken as the independent variable.

The magnitude of the Wilk's lamda was found to be 0.613, indirectly this indicated that the discriminant model had a good discriminating power. The probability $p=0.037$ of chi-square test was less than the value of $\alpha=0.05$, which again reinforced the good discriminating power of the model. The estimated coefficient of the variables in the model is presented in Table.2.3.

Table 2.3. Standardized Canonical Discriminant Function Coefficients

S. No	Predictor value	Coefficient
1	Marital Status	.864
2	Gender	.672
3	Age	.145
4	Occupation	.054
5	Income	-.233
6	Location	-.032
Wilks' Lambda – 0.613, Chi-Square – 6.389, df - 6		

As indicated in the table 2.3, that marital status and gender of the candidates were better predictors of the completion of the programme.

Benefits reaped by participants from joining ODL MBA

The respondents opined that they gained both theoretical and practical knowledge in MBA on credit appraisal in loan sanctioning, leadership, planning, forecasting, financial management in bank, human resource management, IPR, International trade, export, managerial skills and administrative effectiveness, Marketing management, SWOT analysis, logistics, ethical business, statistics, client relationship management, retail management, business management, agribusiness management and establishing contact with likeminded people. However, these factors have an effect on their attitude towards management aspects. The benefits gained by the participants were classified in these categories given in Table 2.4.

Table 2.4. Benefits reaped by participants from joining ODL MBA (n=60)

S. No	Category	Yes	No
1	Change in income level	9 (15.00)	51 (85.00)
2	Change in job level	11 (18.33)	49 (81.67)
3	New venture started	14 (23.33)	46 (76.67)

From the table 2.4, about 23.33 per cent of the respondents reported that the candidates had started a new venture after completion of MBA in Open and Distance Learning. Around 18 and 15 per cent of the respondents had increment in their job and income level respectively.

Expectation of the respondents from ODL MBA course

Generally, all candidates have expectations while joining the programme. These expectations were compared with the achievements of the candidates who had successfully completed the programme.

Table 2.5. Expectation of the respondents from ODL MBA course

S. No	Category (1)	Primary Expectation of the candidates who completed the programme (2)	Achievement of the candidates who completed the programme (3)	Percentage of (3) to (2) (4)
1	Increment	16	9	56.25
2	Promotion	12	11	91.67
3	New Venture	17	14	82.35

From the table 2.5, about 12 of the respondents expected promotion of which 91.67 per cent of them had obtained promotion in their job level after successful completion of the programmes. From the results it could also be inferred that nearly 57 per cent of the candidates who had successfully completed the MBA programme realized the benefits that they expected. This attainment of the respondents should be highlighted in the admission brochures to attract and encourage other individuals to take-up the ODL course and complete it successfully.

Conclusion

Albeit The respondents came to know about the PG MBA programme through friends, case institute website and through university staff members. Mainly, they joined MBA programme to get promotion and increment, start a new venture, interest in the subject and gain knowledge in management aspects. Likewise, case institute was selected for joining MBA primarily for its reputation, prestigious name, followed by quality of education and easy access to the university and also home campus for many respondents.

However, gender and marital status of the respondents had a significant influence on completion of the programme. Regardless of the respondents age, location, occupation and annual income respondents showed interest towards pursuing the PG course in the case institutions from the Directorate of Open and Distance Learning.

The suggestions emanated out of the study that the case institution can highlight the successful candidates who have reaped the benefits of completing the course, in order to

increase the enrolment of learners. Furthermore, to bring progress in the ODL mode of education virtual arrangements for classes online could be introduced, so that age old people and other disadvantaged people can make use of the learning effectively. Thus, these strategies would ensure the sustainability for this mode of education.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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