

COMMUNICATION

Composition, Problems and Motivating Factors of Correspondence Course Students

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Abstract: *In this study the author discusses the factors which motivate students to opt for correspondence courses of Allahabad University. The paper also discusses the problems faced by the students while pursuing their study. The findings suggest that efforts should be made to attract and cater to disadvantaged group, including women. The problems faced by the students should be resolved on priority basis.*

Introduction

The national policy on education - 1986 has emphasised that the disparities in educational opportunities for scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and other backward sections of the society as well as for ruralites and girls need to be removed at the earliest so that the equality and social justice in education may be achieved. Since children and youths of the disadvantaged groups mostly cannot attend formal education because of various social and economic constraints, the distance education system has been suggested by the experts as a viable and cost-effective alternative system of education for them. In spite of the shortage of teachers and the materials required to meet the increasing demands of higher education and the social pressure to enhance the facilities of higher education have been increasing day by day since independence. In these circumstances the distance education system was considered best to expand and equalise the educational opportunities of higher education. The University of Delhi made a pioneer effort in 1962 in this regard by starting correspondence courses for Bachelor's degree. Inspired by the success of Delhi University's experiment, the Kothari Commission (1964-66) recommended that the opportunities for own-time education through programmes like Correspondence Courses should be extended as widely as possible. The commission was of the view that correspondence courses will reduce capital cost and cut short the recurring expenditure substantially. On the recommendation of Kothari Commission, the UGC formulated guidelines for introduction of correspondence courses in Universities and in 1970's several universities started correspondence courses at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. The period after 1980 witnessed a major thrust in the area of distance education as many existed universities started correspondence courses/distance education programmes and several new open universities were set up

in India. The introduction of correspondence courses and open system of education has provided a momentum to the efforts for expanding the access to higher education for a large chunk of population in India . It is estimated that at present about one fourth of total students at the university level are pursuing their education through correspondence / distance / open system of education. In fact the main purpose of education through correspondence / distance / open system is to provide an alternative but cost-effective method of education to enable a large number of persons with necessary aptitude to acquire further knowledge and to improve their professional competence. No doubt the distance education system takes education to the doorsteps of needy individuals. In the present paper, an attempt has been made to study the composition, problems and motivating factors of correspondence course students.

Objectives

As have been mentioned earlier the purpose of this paper is to throw light on the composition, problems and motivating factors of correspondence course students. To be more specific the main objectives of the present investigation may be written as follows:

- To study the composition of the students studying through the correspondence courses.
- To identify the various problems being faced by the students of correspondence courses.
- To determine the various factors that motivated the students to join the correspondence courses.

Method

Only one institute of correspondence courses i.e. the Institute of Correspondence Courses and Continuing Education, University of Allahabad, Allahabad has been taken for the present study. This institute offers correspondence courses for the degrees of B A and B Com of the University of Allahabad. All the students enrolled in the session 1998-99 have been included for the compositional analysis while the data provided by a random sample of 342 students has been used for achieving the rest two objectives.

The various biographical information i.e. the sex, background and caste of students were noted down from the admission application forms of the students. The data regarding the problems and the motivating factors were gathered by administering a questionnaire designed by the investigator. The simple descriptive statistical techniques have been used to analyse the gathered data in order to achieve the objectives of the study.

Results

The present study is a three-fold study, which attempts to achieve three different objectives. As such for the sake of convenience the obtained statistical results and their

discussion have been presented under the following three headings

Composition

The various compositions for B. A. and B. Com. students separately as well as for the entire group of total students with regard to sex, rural/urban background, and caste have been presented in the Table 1.

Table 1: Compositions of students

COURSE	BA				B COM				GRAN D TOTAL	
	Part 1	Part 2	Part 3	Total	Part 1	Part 2	Part 3	Total		
N	8548	8869	6369	23786	1102	981	691	2774	26560	
SEX	Male	79.07 %	85.64 %	84.20 %	82.89%	80.94 %	79.92 %	79.29 %	79.92%	82.58%
	Female	20.93 %	14.36 %	15.80 %	17.11%	19.06 %	20.08 %	21.71 %	20.08%	17.42%
LOCALITY	Rural	63.18 %	45.80 %	42.53 %	51.17%	19.42 %	19.67 %	12.30 %	17.74%	47.68%
	Urban	36.82 %	54.20 %	57.47 %	63.18%	80.58 %	80.33 %	87.70 %	82.26%	52.32%
CASTE	General	55.03 %	67.24 %	68.46 %	63.18%	85.03 %	91.23 %	89.44 %	88.32%	65.81%
	OBC	37.05 %	27.17 %	27.05 %	30.69%	13.34 %	07.75 %	09.81 %	10.49%	28.58%
	SC	07.70 %	5.45 %	04.38 %	05.97%	01.63 %	01.02 %	00.43 %	01.12%	05.46%
	ST	00.22 %	00.14 %	00.11 %	00.16%	00.00 %	00.00 %	00.28 %	00.07%	00.15%

An observation of this table may reveal the following facts:

- (i) In all 82.58 % students are male while only 17.42% students are female. This large disparity in the enrolment of male and female students indicates that girls are far behind than boys in getting the benefit of the facility of correspondence courses in Allahabad University for continuing their higher education. The more or less same trend is evident in the sex ratios for arts and commerce students as well as for Part 1, Part 2 and Part 3 students separately.
- (ii) In all 47.68 % students are rural while 52.32% students are urban. This small disparity in the enrolment of rural-urban students indicates that ruralites are slightly behind than urbanites in getting the benefit of the facility of correspondence courses in Allahabad University for continuing their higher education. The more or less same trend is evident for B A Part 2 and Part 3 students separately while in case of B Com students as a whole as well as for B Com Part 1, Part 2 and Part 3 students separately relatively very large percentages of urban students are utilising the benefit of the facility of correspondence courses in Allahabad University for continuing their higher education in comparison of rural students. But in the case of B A students

as a whole and B A Part 1 students this trend is in the reverse order i.e. the percentage of ruralites is greater than the percentage of urbanites.

- (iii) In all 65.81 % students belong to general castes, 28.58% to other backward castes, 5.46% to scheduled castes and 0.15% students belong to scheduled tribes. This large disparity in the caste composition of the students indicates that OBCs, SCs and STs are far behind than general castes in getting the benefit of the facility of correspondence courses in Allahabad University for continuing their higher education. The more or less same trend is evident in caste composition of arts and commerce students as well as for Part 1, 2, and 3 students separately.

Problems

The percentages of B A and B Com students as well as for the entire group of total students with regard to the various problems being faced by them in studying through the correspondence courses have been presented in the Table 2. An observation of this table reveals that the duration of contact programme has been reported as the most

Table 2: Problems of students

PROBLEM AREAS*	BA			B Com			GRAND TOTAL		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
N	148	77	225	82	35	117	230	112	342
1. Availability of Information	29.05 %	50.65 %	36.44 %	30.49 %	54.29 %	37.61 %	29.57 %	51.79 %	36.84 %
2. Availability of Study Material	30.41 %	38.96 %	33.33 %	26.83 %	42.86 %	31.62 %	29.13 %	40.18 %	32.75 %
3. Quality of Study Material	16.22 %	22.08 %	18.22 %	18.29 %	29.57 %	21.37 %	16.96 %	24.11 %	19.30 %
4. Duration of Contact Programme	59.46 %	68.83 %	62.67 %	62.20 %	80.00 %	67.52 %	60.43 %	72.32 %	64.33 %
5. Arrangement of Contact Programme	24.32 %	15.58 %	21.33 %	24.39 %	34.29 %	27.35 %	24.35 %	21.43 %	23.39 %
6. Arrangement of Examinations	33.11 %	18.18 %	28.00 %	26.83 %	20.00 %	24.79 %	30.87 %	18.75 %	26.90 %
7. Examination Result	47.97 %	46.75 %	47.56 %	37.80 %	40.00 %	38.46 %	44.35 %	44.64 %	44.44 %
8. Guidance and Counselling	31.76 %	36.36 %	33.33 %	36.59 %	42.86 %	38.86 %	33.48 %	38.39 %	35.05 %
9. Boarding and Lodging	43.92 %	40.26 %	42.67 %	48.78 %	25.71 %	41.88 %	45.65 %	35.71 %	42.40 %
10. Cooperatin of Staff	37.84 %	53.25 %	43.11 %	41.46 %	54.29 %	45.30 %	39.13 %	53.57 %	43.86 %

* Some students have mentioned more than one problem area.

prominent problem by most of the correspondence courses students. In all about 64% students feel that the duration of contact programme is not satisfactory. They feel that the duration of the contact programme should be increased. As reported by the sample students, some other important problem areas are - examinations results (44.44%), Co-operation of staff (43.86%), boarding and lodging (42.40%), availability of information (36.84%), guidance and counselling (35.05%), availability of study materials (32.75%), and arrangement of examination (26.96%). More or less similar trend is evident for boys and girls as well as for arts and commerce students separately.

Motivating Factors

The percentages of B A and B Com students as well as for the entire group of total students with regard to the factors that motivated them to join the correspondence courses have been presented in the Table 3. An observation of this table reveals that the most prominent motivating factor to join the correspondence courses, as indicated by the subjects, is the desire to obtain the degree of the University of Allahabad. About 45%

Table 3: Motivating factors of students

MOTIVATING FACTORS*		BA			B Com			GRAND TOTAL		
		Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
N		148	77	225	82	35	117	230	112	342
1.	I wanted to do BA/BCom from Allahabad University, but could' get admission in regular course	45.27 %	40.26 %	43.56 %	48.78 %	42.86 %	47.01 %	46.52 %	41.07 %	44.74 %
2.	I could not get admission in regular course in any university or college	10.14 %	07.79 %	09.33 %	10.98 %	11.43 %	11.11 %	10.43 %	08.93 %	09.94 %
3.	Being an employed person, I could not attend regular course	10.81 %	05.19 %	08.89 %	12.20 %	11.43 %	11.97 %	11.30 %	07.14 %	09.94 %
4.	Being a housewife, I could not attend regular course	00.00 %	14.29 %	04.89 %	0.00 %	05.71 %	01.71 %	00.00 %	11.61 %	03.80 %
5.	I want to spare my time for competitive examinations	12.16 %	15.58 %	13.33 %	15.85 %	22.86 %	17.95 %	13.48 %	17.86 %	14.91 %
6.	I was too late to take admission in regular course	17.57 %	19.48 %	18.22 %	14.63 %	28.57 %	18.80 %	16.52 %	22.32 %	18.42 %
7.	It was not possible to get desired subjects in regular course	21.62 %	28.57 %	24.00 %	00.00 %	02.86 %	00.85 %	13.91 %	20.54 %	16.08 %
8.	Facility of regular course was not available near to my residence	02.03 %	01.30 %	01.78 %	03.66 %	05.71 %	04.27 %	02.61 %	02.68 %	02.63 %
9.	Study material of correspondence course is of good quality	14.19 %	18.18 %	15.56 %	18.29 %	22.86 %	19.66 %	15.65 %	19.64 %	16.96 %
10.	Correspondence course is cheaper than regular course	11.49 %	06.49 %	09.78 %	13.41 %	11.43 %	12.82 %	12.17 %	08.04 %	10.82 %

* Some students have mentioned more than one motivating factor.

students have mentioned that they joined the correspondence courses because 'they wanted to do BA \ BCom from Allahabad University, but couldn't get admission in regular courses'. Being late to take admission in regular courses (18.42%), good quality of study materials (16.96%), non-availability of desired subjects in regular courses (16.08%), availability of spare time for competitions (14.91%) and low cost of correspondence courses (10.82%) have also been reported by the respondents as the some other important motivating factors to join the correspondence courses. But all these factors lie far behind to motivate the students to join the correspondence courses. All the remaining factors including in the study have been reported by some students, less than 10% of them, as the motivating factors to join the correspondence courses. More or less similar trend is evident for boys and girls as well as for art and commerce students separately.

Suggestions

On the basis of the statistical data presented in the various tables and the interpretation made in the foregoing section, the following tentative implications and suggestions may be made

- (i) More efforts should be done by the educationists, administrators, social workers, policy-framers and volunteer organisations to encourage the girls / women, ruralites, and the youths of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes to avail the facilities of correspondence courses and distance education in order to continue their higher education.
- (ii) The institutes of correspondence courses and the centres of distance education/ open education should take urgent, effective and continuous steps to realise and rectify the various problems being faced by their students.
- (iii) The institutes of correspondence courses and the centres of distance education/ open education should make serious efforts to improve their academic programmes and to make them more attractive so that students get motivated to join them because of the quality and usefulness of the programmes rather than the reputation of the degree awarding institutions.

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