CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED
BY A DISTANCE LEARNING ORGANISATION

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ABSTRACT

Distance learning as the name indicates is a learning, learner gets from distant places. In this learning system, learner and educators are separated by space & time.

Lots of distance learning organizations are spreading to meet the increased demand of current & future needs of adult education. The rapid spread of these organizations doesn't mean that these organizations are easy to open and run. There are various challenges faced by these organizations.

Keywords: ICT-information and communication technology, SLM-self learning material, SME- subject matter expert, F2F- face to face.

INTRODUCTION

Distance education dates to at least as early as 1728, when "an advertisement in the Boston Gazette... [named] 'Caleb Phillips, Teacher of the new method of Short Hand" was seeking students for lessons to be sent weekly (wikipedia.org). Now a day the demand for distance learning is increasing rapidly. There are numerous reasons for this like:

> ➢ It helps the learner in their career advancement.
> ➢ It helps them to learn some additional skill.
> ➢ It helps them to upgrade their qualifications & skills.
> ➢ It provides them additional qualification without disturbing their job.
> ➢ It is more convenient than traditional/conventional method.
> ➢ It is cheaper than traditional method.
> ➢ It is a more flexible system of education.

With the use of ICT distance learning is beneficial to learners present in any corner of the world. Latest technologies like virtual classrooms, video conferencing, teleconferencing, broadcasting through T.V. & radio are used by many renowned organizations in distance learning.

But with the increase in technology the various challenges are also came in front of these organizations which need to be sorted out for effective learning.

17

CHALLENGES

Interaction & Motivation
The main challenges in front of distance learning organizations are interactivity with the students. In conventional teaching method there is F2F interaction between the leaner & educator.

They can get the actual feedback of their lecture at the learning place not only through the verbal communication but also through the non verbal communication of the learner (body language, gestures & facial expressions). The educator can directly interact & motivate their students for the learning whereas in distance learning the interaction & motivation of the learner is a big concern.

Though with the advancement of ICT in many organizations lecture through virtual classrooms & teleconferencing are carried out to increase the interactivity in distance learning. Though the use of ICT is beneficial in increasing the interactivity with students but motivation is still a big issue for these organizations.

Learning Material
The learning material used in distance education is also a big concern. The print material used in distance learning is called self learning material or self instructional material. This material is different from text books used by learners in conventional education. The print material used in distance learning should be self evaluative, self explanatory, self motivating, self instructional & self learning. The challenge comes in front of these organizations in development of this material due to various reasons:

- ➢ non availability of experts in the relevant field
- ➢ non availability of SME with expertise in writing SLM
- ➢ lack of availability of trainers who can train these SME on writing SLMs

Limitation of Software
Though the use of ICT is bridging the gap between the conventional learning & distance learning still there are some limitations of these technologies. In a virtual class one can not accommodate as much student as one can in a conventional class.

Examination
The difficulty regarding online examinations to ensure proper behavior of students without a human monitor is another big challenge in distance learning.

Student Training
Another problem encountered in distance learning is the lack of student training, particularly in reference to technical handling. Many adult students are not well versed in the uses of technology such as computers and the Internet. Using electronic medium in distance learning can affect students who lack computer skills.

Quality
Maintaining quality with respect to preparation and implementation of instructional material is also one of the major concerns for distance learning organizations.

Discipline

Lack of discipline among distance education faculty is also a cause of concern for distance organizations.

Staff Development

There is lack of staff development programs. Due to this the quality in the preparation, implementation & evaluation of the educational program get affected.

SUMMARY and CONCLUSION

Distance learning is not a new field, but still it didn't receive much importance in the field of education. The rapid growth of the adult learner population is increasing the demand of distance learning techniques. The demographic study of the learners will help target the adult learner population and proper training will help organizations to develop course materials and techniques appropriately. Evaluation at each stage of program (planning, designing, implementation & evaluation) in distance education will help overcome problems encountered by students and faculty. Understanding the technical problems is important, especially with the rapid expansion of technology.

BIODATA and CONTACT ADDRESSES of the AUTHOR

Dr. Sangeeta MALIK working as an Assistant Professor with Academics Department. she started her career from a school where she worked for 3 years. she involved there not only in teaching activities but also in other developmental activities of the school like developing new teaching techniques, development of various teaching aids and also the supervision work. After that she worked as a lecturer in Home Science College in Maharana Pratap University of Agriculture and Technology, Udaipur. She conducted classes for UG students. She also worked in Govt. Meera Girls College, Udaipur. Here she conducted classes for PG students and also guide students in their thesis work. Presently she is working with Symbiosis Centre for Distance Learning as an Assistant Professor, faculty of Education, Humanities & Social Sciences. She is involved in various responsibilities here like preparation, implementation & evaluation of self learning material, conducting virtual classes, online faculty sessions, solving queries of students, follow up with authors & some project work.

She has done her PhD, MSc. & BSc. from I.C.College of Home Science, CCSHAU Hisar, Haryana. My dissertation title at Ph.D & M.Sc.were "Impact of Intervention Package on Social Problem Solving Skills of 6-8 Years old Children" & "Impact of Intervention package on Mental Abilities of 5-6 Years old slow learners" respectively. she also did Post Graduate Diploma in Human Resource Management from SCDL, Pune in 2011. she cleared National Eligibility Test (NET) in 2001 and IELTS in 2005.Through all my degree programs I was a University scholarship holder. she got appreciation certificate from Board of School Education Haryana for effective teaching. Her research paper got the award of best paper at 8th international and 39th national conference of IAAP on positive health and well being held in MD University Rohtak, Haryana. S e has published 6 papers in International and National Journals.

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