Chapter 5:   Findings, Conclusions and Implications

5.1.   Summary

A right description of student's evaluation program should help in identifying the 'gap' and making improvement on the same. Vrasidas et al (2003) makes a statement that an appropriate time and scientific evaluation should lead to a better outcome on student's evaluation. An evaluation by the students should reflect well the 'merits' on education with clarity and precision. Such instruments are significant because they are of a greater importance for distance learning courses. Unlike a traditional course, these courses don't have a personal interaction. The merits can be assessed only with a different scale based on understanding of the subject, content and online medium. Emery et al (2003) suggests that a well designed questionnaire / feedback form should help in deciding weaknesses in the program and make new additions in the content.

In so many years of expertise in delivering education, Distance learning-based courses are thought to be relatively young. Some of the universities apply the same methods of evaluation which are used for traditional courses to the distance learning courses. However, the problem lies in the fact that this method is never proven to be appropriate or inappropriate. Subsequently, some light could be shed on this process y obtaining the views of students towards this method of evaluation. It could also help in proving if the traditional instruments are reliable enough to evaluate the distance based course study. Students were also asked if they wish to contribute towards this process by participation. For this the researcher did get a positive reply.

This section of the work 'outlines' these differences in distance and traditional education systems, motivation, competency and elements of the feedback. This chapter will aims at concluding the findings into 4 sections – synopsis of the study, critical assessment of the literature, analysis of the findings and Conclusions.

5.2.   Critical Review of the Literature

An analysis of the above literature was an inspiration to create the eleven research questions.

Discussion were made with regards to the contents, course delivery and the course pedagogy were diverse enough to call for a different evaluation tool and system. Serious discussion also occurred in the literature in regards if the students were competent enough for evaluating, which also questioned if the student were motivated enough for providing valid and reliable responses.

A debate was also observed over the use and the purpose of the evaluated results. How frequently the results should be delivered was a frequent topic which was found to debatable apart from the type and amount of the feedback during the course. Conclusively, there was also a difference in opinion observed incase if the students should be considered and the customers of the study centre. However, there was rarely a student's perspective taken on this point.

5.2.1. Distance Education – 'Concept'

According to the literature review on the topic it was found that there has been an expansion in the distance learning program and previously in this course only aged people used to take their admission; whereas now almost all group and all class of people take the admission in this class (Mangan, 2001; Thomas, 2001). In one of the studies it was found that, out of six students that were online, 5 of them were doing distance learning program the main reason was that they were doing job (Thomas, 2001). According to one of the researches that were conducted by Mangan 2001 it was found that many managers who were doing their jobs, cannot leave the organization and come for the classes and attend the full day classes or the on campus program so they choose the distance learning so that do the job in the day time and in the night time when they are free they could watch the online programs.

The top most reasons why the students choose the online programs were given by Moskal and Dziuban (2001) were that they were flexible; people have a sense of desire that

they have to join the online programs, and the problem to manage the time for the people who are doing the job or something. Further it was seen that the most of the people that were into the distance learning program were time constrain and they have to manage the job, family and many other things as well (Galusha, 1997).

Interaction in the distance learning environment is the key element to student success and transfer of information. Moore and Kearsley (1996) affirmed so as to present are four main rudiments so as to the teacher be supposed to think when education is talented from side to side distance knowledge. Primary, the teacher may by no means observe the scholar response to what the teacher is adage or responsibility. Subsequent, the efficiency of education is relative to the teacher employ and information of the knowledge concerned. Third, instructor in distance knowledge lessons must to center on scholar emotion, particularly their incentive. Fourth, teacher must attempt to support and offer scholar assurance in the untried surroundings.

Schott, Chernish, Dolley, and Lindner (2003) conclude rising and convey route, curriculum, and agenda at a distance necessitate ability and administrator to believe a lot of issues counting how to conquer fence to effectual and competent completion of distance learning track, curriculum, and agenda. Moore (2001) comments so as to be victorious in transporting online lessons, ability should: permit scholar to scholar communication with negligible ability interference; connect scholar in normal coursework in arrange to check development and arbitrate when wanted; offer particular concentration to scholar with little height of personality directedness; and assist scholar turn out to be additional self-directed. Scholar in remoteness teaching course and program often feel remote and anxious.

The arrival of PCs, communications, and the World Wide Distance education has offered an unparalleled chance for teachers and scholars to study in a helpful atmosphere (Galusha, 1997). It is fascinating to memo, nevertheless, that scholars have replied to this altering atmosphere more expertly than have educators. As per a 1996 periodical commentary (Syllabus, 1996), more than 50% of the California State College scholar form, but less than 50% of the teacher, own home-based PCs. Gaining appropriate gear and exercise is crucial in educator receipt of distance education. Kinnaman (1995) spoke the necessity for educators to receive and develop comfy with expertise in order so as to support scholars.

Online and distance learning playing a main role in thoughts and performance during the complete learning procedures, in reference of crucial topics like through which mode student get the knowledge, what could be the most suitable and best way to teach them, and what kind of resource management should be done so that required information can be given to the learners.

Online and distance education approach is the way of discover the new information and interaction tools, to recognize the fresh requirements of education part and fresh views for providing and utilizing the information to the public. In specific online and distance education system are having the capability to maximize the customer-oriented and learner focused method toward the training, with this approach two way benefits can be obtain i.e. wide range of tutoring institutes acquaintances on the one side and society based organizations, business and company on other side.

5.2.2. Survey Instrument

While the survey instrument was being developed to use within this study, the imformation gathered during the literature review was of considerable guidance. Some of the recommendations which believed to be useful to create valid and reliable survey instruments are: ensuring that the language fits the audience (Tyler, 2001), limiting the survey question to 20 (Twigg, 2001), refraining from asking for predictions (Tyler, 2001), no two answers to be asked in the same question (Tyler, 2001), selecting the non controversial and easy to understand questions to avoid misunderstandings (Tyler, 2001), to make sure any question would not influence the students responses (Patten, 2000; Thomas & Brubaker, 2000), to conduct an anonymous survey (Willis, 1993) and have others check the questions for minor mistakes or researcher bias (Patten, 2000; Thomas & Brubaker, 2000

5.2.3. Population

The choice of the survey media was an online education form. The total number of students who were requested over the email to contribute for participation were 2238. These students were recognized by the Information Technology division at Centres' as having finished a Distance education-based course for the period of Spring 2012, Fall 2011, and Summer 2012.

They were also selected on the basis of completion of a traditional course in the past, currently enrolled at the centre and ranked freshman or higher status. At first, in attendance were 537 respondents. After the review of the statistics, due to failure, about 107 cases were removed from the list and believed to have concluded a traditional and Distance education-based course assessment. Subsequently, the sample was limited at a total of 430 students.

5.2.4. Findings

Since the time the survey data was collected and analysed, the findings from the review had emerged evidently. The below findings include the entire sample and the results based on it.

Each of the research questions and its associated findings are posted as per included in Chapter 4.

5.2.5. Demographic Data

The characteristics of the students from the centre who participated in the survey were asked their major course in their study, current class level. Gender, the amount of distance based courses completed by the candidate in the past, non-traditional or traditional classification and the number of dropped distance learning courses by them.

The other two questions which were a part of the demographic survey section were strictly maintained as criteria which must be met for data included in the study.

5.2.6. Current class level

This study comprised of the class level from the junior college through degree level. Although it is common for high school level students to take up the distance based courses, this section of the level was excluded from the study.

Majority of the survey respondents were seniors with (52%), the Graduate students contributed (21%) of the study population and the juniors were (19%) who were the second and third highest respondent groups.

5.2.7. Major course of study

Even though there were eight major courses of study choices accessible, merely three ranked about 20% or higher. Firstly, Education (26%) ranked the highest, second came in health/human services at (21%), finally, business contributed (20%) and here students were recognized as the greatest number of respondents

5.2.8. Gender

The quantity of females who contributed in the study significantly outnumbered the number of male respondents. Approximately, the females (73%), contributed towards three quarters of the respondents size.

5.2.9. Traditional student status

The participants were in this stage, asked to identify their current student status after they were briefed about the definition between the traditional and non-traditional studentship. About 57 % of students reported themselves as traditional students, hence concluding a fairly even split. A diversity of feedbacks was established in the number of Distance education-based courses finished.

Out of the total sixteen categories, just three were considered at a frequency higher than 15%: 3 (20%), 2 (18%), and 4 (17%) In conclusion, the distance learning based course completions were the major popular choices.

5.2.10. Distance learning based courses dropped

It was observed that distance learning courses had reported only 5 categories. The number of respondents was never dropped below the percentage of 79 %, while on other hand; only 16

% had dropped only 1 course. The rest of the remaining drop rates had remained the same and lower than 5 %.

5.2.11.   Institutional Barriers

In India the last decade has played a key role on the developmental activities in the region of distance learning. Especially after the privatization policy the industry has gained forthright. The working students have a good mix of distance learning courses (both government owned and private) to accommodate learning within their sphere of occupational obligations. Unfortunately the concept has not seen the right application.

The researchers have identified barriers that inhibit the growth in this sector – unavailability or resources, program costs, dearth of infrastructure and equipments, lack of instructions, guidance and technical assistance. Galusha (1998) has identified Distance Education as cost intensive. It is not just about books and lecturers. A lot of investment is to be made on infrastructure, ICT technology, networking and computers. There has to be a continual effort to improve upon the software upgrade and technical assistance with every quarter or year.

All this prohibits participation as the cost factor leads to a significant rise on the fees structure.

Cho and Berge (2002) do also mention that often the resources are 'not' distributed evenly by the universities.

The large investments made on library services, lecturers and tuition is sometimes not 'shared' with the online students. The distance education students find it hard to access these resources (Galusha, 1998). Such lack of focus is what leads to negative publicity among the student population (Flowers, 2001). The Distance Learning programs find this very hard to neutralize the negative word.

The researchers do also conclude that most universities or institutions would 'neglect' the basic equipments while in their pursuit of technological advancements. Information and

Communications technology takes the centre stage while everything else goes into background. Gladieux and Swail (1999) substantiate this – the cost of education goes up with the investment on ICT, but little bit precipitates into quality of lecture, student-faculty interaction and the frequency of instruction.

In contrast to our perceived benefits of ICT, the distance education fails to balance this with the availability of basic infrastructure. Kerka (1996) mentions that in the poorer or distant places the students would wait for long hours for the faculty to 'connect' and erase any doubts / questions. This gets more difficult for the students who work for odd hours or fixed schedules.

Zirkle (2003) says that 'scheduling' of courses is also one of the institutional barriers. The institutions or universities must not be relieved with the initial setup for the programme. It must also be seen whether the students are actually able to attend the program in the given schedule. In context to working students, the program needs to be managed flexibly. The faculty should be able to teach at 'off' times through video-conferencing and satellite communication. There is a greater need to have academic programs that are flexible to meet the requirements of its target audience.

Wagner (1993) speaks of the mode of teaching as the barrier to distance education. A lot of educators do still believe in the class-room teaching which is inappropriate for the online purpose. Some educators find it hard to keep pace with the student's learning on online medium. Apart from the teaching, the faculty needs to accommodate to the teaching style, teaching medium and teaching methodology. Wagner believes that the 'non-continuous' mode of communication demands a change in the teaching conduct.

Levine and Sun (2002) propose that every course needs to be accessed and revised for its impact on the students. The faculty has to be internet friendly; one that utilizes software tools for teaching, sends across emails/ reports to the students and chats on online medium for an interactive study. These are all activities that are technology, time and labour intensive; and require efforts more than the on-campus teaching.

Cho and Berge (2002) believe that Distance Education has to be techno-savvy. It must be based on an effective institutional network of ICT technologies and technical assistance; and

this is a significant barrier. The students who are 'not' well versed with internet and computers find it hard to remain focused. Zirkle (2003), Berge (2002) and Galusha (1998) have therefore emphasized on ICT technologies and an attitudinal shift towards using them.

5.2.12. Concept on Student's evaluation

For a good period in time the educators were relying on the word 'trust us' for the purpose of student's evaluation. The parents, students, public and the stakeholders believed the assessment, which was based purely on the teacher's cognizance (Algozzine et al, 2004). Wright and O'Neil comment that student's evaluation had soon become part of the teaching methodologies and styles of the contemporary time (Chen & Hoshower, 1998).

Student evaluation was also found to serve dual purpose of 1. Improving teaching mechanism 2. Making faculty accountable for the teaching methodologies - (Sutherland, 2000; Griffin et al, 2003). The information was found to be very useful in evaluating understanding, decision making by the educators and improvement on the teaching methodologies. Chen and Hoshower (1998) do also mention that the criterion was found useful on program assessment, promotions, tenure and basic administration.

In the present era, the education councils & affiliations have emphasized on using Internet for a more pronounced effort on education. But, Scanlan (2003) believes that the education systems are yet to be developed to assess on-line courses. New applications have led to a situation where the student-faculty interaction is very minimal and has only been reduced to grades or marks. The controversial part is that it seems very demeaning and controversial. The teaching methodologies on distance learning and online medium give little scope on student's evaluation. Especially when the working students belong to a professional category and the communication happens through an Interlingua.

Not many like the scrutiny being done directly to the job performance and nothing being said about the teaching mechanism. Emery et al (2003) believes this to be a unidirectional flow of ideas and gets very complicated when it takes place through a translator. The author comments that the students find 'Rating Questionnaires' as very cheap and only a convenient measure of evaluating the faculty and teaching methodologies.

The student's evaluation does seem to suffer a 'gap' on concept and application (Spencer and Schmelkin, 2002). The instrument has been found to lack the validity, reliability and consistency (Spencer and Schmelkin, 2002; Griffin et al, 2003 and Algozzine et al, 2004). The purpose of assessment is being questioned for its significance in the light of new practices on teaching; Distance education being one of them. A lot of researchers have questioned the prevalent measures on teaching effectiveness and student evaluation is again being considered a major issue on education. Especially because a lot of educators have opposed this practice of being evaluated by a student. Algozzine et al (2004) makes a similar conclusion on this and states that the students lack the competence or ability to differentiate between a good teacher and a bad teacher.

The ambiguity on the questionnaire complicates it further. This is the reason why the researchers have unanimously approved that teaching is one complex term and this must include a finite definition of an effective teacher. The term 'teacher' must be understood at a greater depth and the student's evaluation should be based on this definition. Similarly, evaluation is also a relative term and must be addressed properly.

5.2.13. Expectations with 'Student's Evaluation'

Evaluation is to rate, assess or measure against set criteria (Anonymous, 1999). Algozzine et al (2004) comments that the criteria must be set on a comprehensive assessment of the teaching methodologies, subject area and the education system. It must be addressed accurately. But, a lot of faculty members and even students find evaluation a 'popularity contest'. It is for this reason that a lot of studies have raised question on the attitudes of the students and how this relates to the evaluation system. A true response would come only when the students believe that their assessment is going to make a significant difference to the overall teaching mechanism (Budd, 2002).

Griffin et al (2003) makes a deviation on this and comments that student's evaluation is often not done for its real cause. What should have otherwise been considered for identifying core issues on teaching mechanism is subjected to salary incremented, deciding promotions and increasing tenure. Such utilization of data leads to a complete destruction of objectives with student's evaluation. Sutherland (2000) believes that the data must be used

for both summative and formative functions. The assessment should grant a check and stability to the education system and reflect upon the quality of the teaching methodologies.

The educators often fail to understand that students do only provide the data and not the information. It is the responsibility of the educators to utilize this data for the intended purpose and make a multiple use of this. As discussed earlier, the deviation occurs when the same data is used for taking decisions on promotions, salary rise and career advancements (Neumann, 2000). It is important that the data is used for the applied research and 'not' for basic research.

Neumann (2000) has therefore proposed different factors for a scientific utilization of student's evaluation.

- More than one source of information and methods should be considered for collecting the student evaluation data to reveal this complex interplay of factors
- The interpretation of data should be based on interaction between different variables
- Mean score signifies improper use as this must be discussed as a range

Mckeachie (1996) makes similar conclusions with the student ratings.

- ✓ Student's evaluation of course
- ✓ Student's evaluation of teaching
- ✓ Student's evaluation of personnel decisions

The perspective is therefore an important term on student evaluation. How the faculty looks upon it, how the students look upon it and how the stakeholders look upon it would find the degree on its significance. In context to India, the trend is getting stronger and more educational institutes believe to see a apprentice as a prospective customer (Tricker et al, 2001).

Student's evaluation is being seen as a mix of student and customer concept. Education is also being seen as a 'product' of commercial importance (Budd, 2002). The institutions find student satisfaction very important for the long term business objectives and the students also

seek 'value for money' in the form of education credit and university degree. This commercial side of the education system has led to a give and take situation.

An unhappy student would instantly show elsewhere and the institution will cease to exist if the students don't come in good numbers. As a product, education is hard to compare. The educators might have a tough time in utilising student evaluation for creating value out of education or to evolve the commercial benefits out of it. Tricker et al (2001) has therefore commented about the parallels between the education industry and the service industry. Meeting student expectations and satisfaction has become the 'key' objective for the education system. The educational institutes can therefore utilize student evaluation to increase its reputation, retain students and keep them satisfied.

This can therefore be seen as a marketing tool to capture information on customer's buying behaviour and improving quality on education. Tricker et al (2001) does also mention about how the distance education provider can utilize evaluation as its selling point.

But, caution has been raised by many a researchers on this concept of viewing student as customer. Martinson (2000) outlines a few many of them.

- ✓ A lot of teachers believe that students take control of their destinies and this makes them feel threatened (Willis, 1993).
- ✓ Often the students are perceived to be inexperienced and immature to make such evaluation (Paswan & Young, 2002),
- ✓ Lack of validity and reliability (Emergy et al, 2003)
- ✓ Lack of credibility and incapability of the students (Chen and Hoshower, 1998)
- ✓ Lack of clarity of thoughts (Laverie, 2002)
- ✓ Lack of critical thinking (Soderberg, 2002)
- ✓ Herd mentality (Laverie, 2002)
- ✓ Teaching cannot be reduced to grades or numbers (Martinson, 2000)
- ✓ Competition among the teachers (Emergy et al, 2003).

A lot of researchers (Mark, 2000) do also believe that fear of bad evaluations stem to curbing creativity and experimentation among the teachers to evolve new thoughts and

applications on the education system. But the same time a lot of other researchers believe that students are better placed to judge the strengths and weaknesses of a course curriculum.

Students have the first hand understanding of the course material, learning limitations, instructional methods and it is because of them that the specific weaknesses of the program should surface. It is often possible that the educator / teacher believe in teaching with a certain textbook but the students find it hard to comprehend. Also, if the teacher has a certain teaching style which most students might not find easy to understand. In such a situation, it is the student who should evaluate and provide a feedback.

In spite of all the concerns regarding inexperience, immaturity and biased thinking, a student does come across as a good medium for evaluation. It is however suggested to only obtain the data from the students and not the summative information. White (2000) believes that the data needs to be sourced from only the students and it must be analyzed to reach an objective conclusion. Martin has explained various such scales for evaluating faculty-

1. To what extent the students could learn during the course
2. To what extent the knowledge was relevant, current and integrated
3. To what extent the students could increase their critical thinking
4. To what extent the course material was organized, conceptualized and sequenced
5. To what extent the knowledge was kept abreast with researches in the knowledge domain
6. To what extent the courses, current research and disciplines were integrated
7. To what extent the teaching methodologies were kept updated based on an active interaction with the peer group, publications and academic meetings
8. To what extent the students were able to generate the necessary skills

Information on all of the above 8 questions should be used as secondary data and must be subjected to necessary evaluation by the policy makers, administrators and peers for a summative evaluation. Martin (1998) has considered the student's evaluation as mere opinions. Without a summative evaluation the same should lead to dirty politics, unethical competition, insecurities, faculty gaming and distraction from the main course.

It is therefore very necessary that the students evaluation is observed scientifically otherwise it should lead to decline of the education system. Martin (1998) further makes a statement that instructors often omit the difficult topics from the course material to make it look easy. Some would teach only those topics which are good for scoring and 'not' attend to the whole syllabus. The 8 questions were therefore the right approach to student's evaluation. The unethical side and the gaming practise must be discouraged to allow the students to succeed on their own merit.

It is very important that the faculty takes ownership of the student's evaluation. The feelings, values and the attitude towards this assessment need to be improved. The same holds true for the students also. The process gives the students an active role to make an improvement over the education system (Marshall, 2000). In fact the students should go on to make suggestions on the student evaluation form for making it more productive.

Spencer and Schmelkin (2002) comment that, active participation can bring changes directly as well as indirectly over the teaching methodologies. Paswan and Young (2002) mention that instructors invest a lot of energy & resources to meet the objectives on education. But the definition of education differs from one person to another. Rapert et al (2004) define this as conceptual clarity, meticulous analytical skills, breadth of knowledge, oral communication and understanding of the subject. But, it is very important that educators do also understand the perspective of the students.

The outcome to most researchers suggests that improvement on teaching was the key criterion and this was followed by salary rise, promotion, faculty tenure and motivation. The research also led to conclusion that the attractiveness of the student's evaluation was based on how the students see its implementation. Holcomb et al (2004) claim that mostly the respondents believed in the traditional approach on student's evaluation. The distance learning course was also included in the list.

5.3.   Feedback--Role of Feedback on Distance Learning

Conceptually, a positive feedback should evolve a positive reinforcement in an individual in being able to actively engage in the learning process (Fogg, 1998). The active participation should make the person 'take-on' the challenges of a strict course regime, apply intense efforts and look for problem solving strategies. With a positive feedback a person might develop a positive understanding towards mastering workout skills with enthusiasm and optimism; the individual finds pleasure while doing regular course (Kolata, 2000).

Instruction on the other hand tends to evoke a 'passive' participation by a person based on negative reinforcement. The person tends to exert less commitment and might give up on early stages. With a negative feedback the self-initiative is missing and the person work entire under influence of extrinsic reasons; the pleasure is missing with the course activity (Villegas and Stout, 2001).

The literature provides a wide description of the behavioral studies both experimental (motivation based) and class room (Instructional). There are compelling evidences about how class room training based on 'instructional' training affects the attitude of the learner.

For an interactive education portal, a person enters with certain baggage; comprised of expectations, beliefs & habits. During the process the process of evaluation, training methodology, use of rewards and feedback systems greatly influences in individual's commitment to his course regime (Kolata, 2000). The reinforcement theory suggests that based on whether an individual's behavior is punished or rewarded, greatly alters his reinforcement to a particular behaviour. The 'extrinsic' motivation theorist (Witherspoon, 2001) have propounded that mechanic assumptions about a certain behavioral aspects produce a mixed outcome.

While assumptions made on 'cognitive behavior' produces a better extrinsic reinforcement. Atkinson (1964) suggests that an individual might not persist in a task, without a perceived value attached to it upon completion. For a different point of view, 'intrinsic' motivation theorist believe in motivating an individual based on an intrinsic cue, that evolves out of intellectual competencies to find 'accomplishment' in what they do.

5.3.1. Views on 'Positive feedback v/s negative feedback

Rosenthal & Jacobson (1968) have proposed that the feedback both in the form of negative or positive has a considerable influence on the individual's attitude to the job. The feedback can also be 'more intrinsically' classified as effort attribution and strategy attribution. The effort attribution (Schunk, 1983) would attribute an individual's success or failure to his efforts. Many a researchers have commented that this form of feedback often undermines an individual's competencies, as the success is accredited to his or her efforts. The individual too tend to believe that whatever success has come, it is because of the efforts that they have put in (Anderson and Jennings, 1980).

A positive feedback in the form of praise doesn't always yield a positive outcome (Meyer, 1982) similarly; a negative feedback in the form of criticism doesn't always have a negative outcome. There are instances when praise has lowered the learner's self-confidence as the person interprets this as a low evaluation of his performance. While in certain cases, praise 'lowers the bar' for the learner and makes him satisfied of his performance.

On the contrary, Criticism for a poor performance is reflected as higher expectations of a learner's abilities. This should keep him motivated for showing a better result. Still a 'true' feedback backed by a suggestive action is what generates a better result.

It is therefore suggested that a negative feedback or a positive feedback have their own implications for the perception of individual's competence. What really matters is the context in which an individual is being accessed. It is therefore necessary for the trainer to carefully evaluate about the objective with the feedback.

Kanouse et al. (1981) have defined praise as a positive evaluation of an individual's performance, attributes or products within the validity of the standards upon which the evaluation is done. The theorists have equivocally suggested that positive feedback enhances the intrinsic motivation with in an individual for an improved performance (Cameron and Pierce, 1994; McKay, 1992).

The frequency and the validity of positive feedback are positively associated to an individual's self assessment of his capabilities, which in turn evokes the feelings of accomplishment, social pride and achievement. The analysis further reveals that this intrinsic motivation keeps an individual 'committed' to his task or duties. Anderson et al (1976) goes on to suggest that with positive feedback as the source of motivation the individual would indulge more into the same task for a further improvement. This justifies the reason why an education portal should apply positive feedback for communicating results to its members.

But a positive feedback must also be assessed for the 'negatives' that it might bring to the fore.

5.3.2. Extrinsic Reinforcement:

The reinforcement theory suggests that based on whether an individual's behavior is punished or rewarded, greatly alters his reinforcement to a particular behaviour. The implications of the reinforcement theory also suggest a contingency model based on desired behaviour. The model (Villegas and Stout, 2001) proposes that the praise, appreciation or a positive feedback should be utilized to reinforce commitment to an assignment, while a negative feedback should serve as punishment. The model suggests that a contingency approach i.e. a likely feedback for a likewise behaviour should be an optimum strategy to evoke a desired behaviour.

The motivation theorists (Lieberman, 1992) have also found certain limitations to the extrinsic reinforcement theories. Often the 'subjects' of reinforcement i.e. the external cues are not valued by the individuals. For an education portal, a discounted 'weight loss program' upon achieving a targeted weigh loss could work for some, but might not motivate every member. Similarly some individuals might not 'create' a realistic chance of achieving benefits of extrinsic reinforcement i.e. rewards, benefits or goodies. Such tools might just produce a temporary relative performance but would surely not work for a longer term.

This might also have a detrimental effect on the 'self-initiation' of those individual who don't product that good result, but at least they do. Most importantly, the extrinsic reinforcement might even 'undermine' the benefits of the intrinsic reinforcement.

The literature therefore suggests certain positive outcomes of an extrinsic reinforcement 'arising out of external cues' but the limitations is equally significant; particularly so for an interactive education portal.

5.3.3. Cognitive Mediation:

Hallahan & Sapona (1983) have suggested that modifying the overt behaviour based on influencing the covert thought process is an effective model to produce a necessary outcome. Meichenbaum (1977) believes that with cognitive mediation an individual becomes more responsible of his own action; sets his own goals, monitors his own behavior, checks his growth without any need of an external intervention. Cognitive Mediation thus produces a 'self-regulated' learning for a long term effect.

For an interactive education portal such theoretical findings suggest that with cognitive mediation the benefits are many. With a positive feedback an individual could be 'programmed' to achieve a desired result by regulating his own behavior. Also, desired behaviour is maintained for a longer period with any need to 'control' behaviour. The theoretical implications of cognitive mediation suggest that 'self-assessment' is the key to evoke self regulated behavior and with a positive feedback this can be cemented for a much better outcome.

Still, certain theories (Mace et al, 1989) suggest that cognitive mediation complement reinforcement theories as a substitution for external reinforcement. The individuals might show a regulation of their own behavior only if they can alter the behaviour for a like consequence. This also finds a better application of behavioral studies for an education portal because the individuals in a 'self-driven' state would regulate their eating or course habits for a positive outcome.

A 'positive' feedback in this state would only augment their spirits to achieve more. The theoretical findings do suggest that for an interactive education portal a positive feedback an individual could be 'programmed' to achieve a desired result by regulating his own behavior.

Also, desired behaviour is maintained for a longer period with any need to 'control' behaviour

5.3.4. Analysis of the findings

The literature review outlines 5 key aspects of student's evaluation program.

1) How it addresses the student's skilled and individual needs
2) What is the expected flexibility of the distance learning programme
3) What is the expected quality of the distance learning programme
4) What is the degree of contact students expect with the course
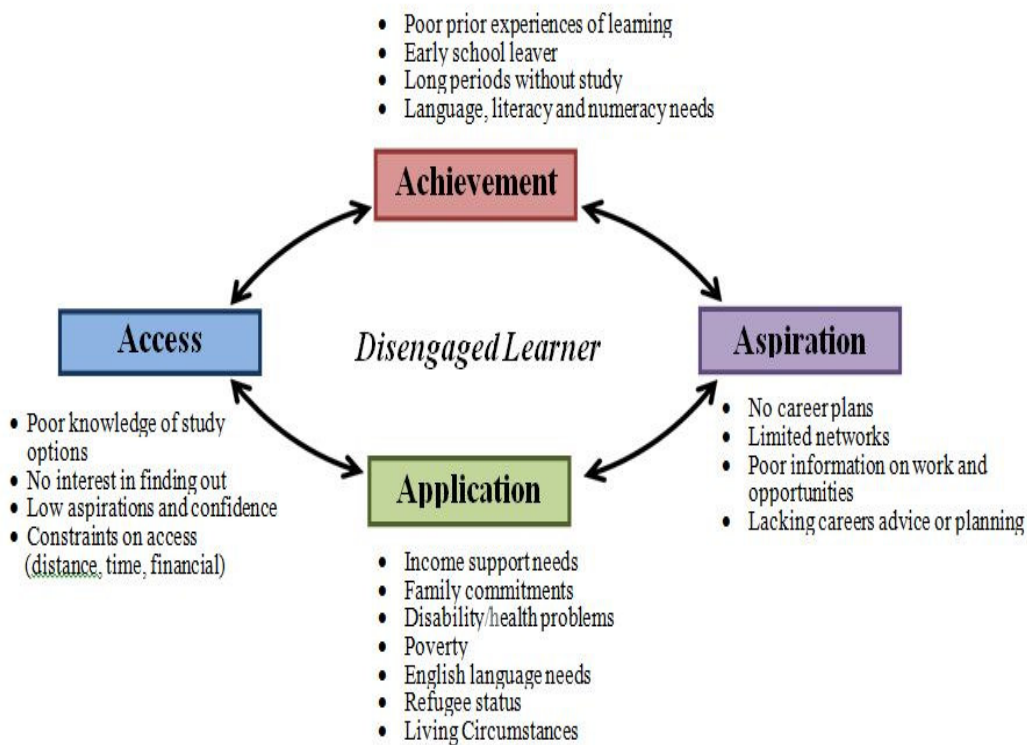5) How the students rate the type of assignments and content of the course.

- Poor prior experiences of learning
- Early school leaver
- Long periods without study
- Language, literacy and numeracy needs

Achievement

Disengaged Learner

Access

- Poor knowledge of study options
- No interest in finding out
- Low aspirations and confidence
- Constraints on access (distance, time, financial)

Aspiration

- No career plans
- Limited networks
- Poor information on work and opportunities
- Lacking careers advice or planning

Application

- Income support needs
- Family commitments
- Disability/health problems
- Poverty
- English language needs
- Refugee status
- Living Circumstances

Figure 1: Disengaged Learner

5.4. Research Questions

Eleven research questions evolved from this study and are provided below.

Subsequently, presented are the research queries and the outcome of the data from each related survey question.

The respondents were asked different questions that show the difference between a traditional and a distance learning course and to know about the services which can be offered to them to reduce their difficulties.

QUESTION 1: To identify the differences, as conceived by the students of a Distance Education Course and that of a traditional course regarding the evaluation, management, monitoring and organization of the two education systems.

The responses showed that a significant difference was there on Technology capability, Technology used Lessons plans, Lessons assignments, Instructional style and Learning approach. However, the frequency of Student's Evaluation with the Distance Learning Course was more as compared to Traditional course. Also, the responses were broadly similar on communication i.e. 38% and 30%.

It was observed in the responses of the students that more than 50 % of students agreed about the student participation which was 5 out of 10. Most students agreed on the:

- Improved responsibility for learning (83%),
- 65 % agreed on making use of the bulletin boards helped,
- about 69% students said that online discussion were helpful and
- 59 % thought that the activities given during classroom session were beneficial.
    The remaining responses had received a less than 50 % response from students. It mainly included:
    - 42 % of students mentioning that the information received was more condensed and manageable,
    - 33 % and 34 % of them believed multiple perspectives were presented and that more time was devoted to check the contents.

- The remaining 38 % believed that more emphasize was given into building a community and improving the social interactions with 24 % and 14 % each.

However, more than 50 % of students agreed on 4 out of the remaining 15 options and were asked about any observed differences during their distance learning process. About 27 % of the students observed the difference in teaching methods by the tutor. The 4 options included:

- Restricted course lessons, which were 71%,
- Made use of course plan (60%)
- another 60 % provided technical path, and
- Suggested more learner-oriented activities (51%).

The remaining responses got less than 50% student agreement which were:

- 48 % given road map for learning, better variety of assets (47%);
- 43 % gave more feedback;
- Used or not covered content (39%);
- some fostered collegiality measured at 34 %;
- 30 % felt the tutor acted in more supportive role,
- 29 % and 27 % thought the tutor used greater variety of presentations and used variety of lessons methods.

However, 24% believed that further collaborative environment would help and another 22 % provided more opportunities to practice; and put focus on building community (20%).

The third survey question focused on checking the methods in distance education between traditionally taught courses which comprised the third survey question. The student's participants agreed on 3 on 5 questions which resulted in 50 % of the respondent agreeing.

60% students offered as recognized differences in the monitoring of student activities, participation, and other behaviors. The agreed 3 options included 80 % of students

considering online discussion, the next 60 % agreeing student comprehension and around 53 % of student giving credit to continued student interactions. The remaining 39 % believed that evaluation after each section was necessary.

The different types of evaluations were listed while checking the differences in evaluation frequency. These included evaluating demographic information, pre evaluating the technicalities, evaluating the aptitude of participants, collecting the progress reports while doing the course, each section to be evaluated in the course and evaluating the overall course.

The concluding differences measured if Distance learning based course evaluations hold large number of open-ended questions and the media being used to evaluate these courses. 46 % of participants felt that same amount of open ended questions were found in both traditional and distance learning courses. During the traditional courses, 92 % students felt they were more often evaluated on paper .For Distance education-based courses, 99.8 % students felt they were more commonly evaluated online.

QUESTION 2:   To calculate the percentage of the working students who believe that the approaches on student evaluation for a traditional course are equally effective with a Distance education course.

The responses clearly indicate that 'lack of implementation' is one of core issues on student's evaluation program at a distance learning course. Mostly the instrument becomes a routine process and does less to bring the necessary changes on the education system. This definitely comes across as the key 'turn off' for most of the students.

Also the students weren't sure of the type of questions. 72% of the students believed that often the vagueness on questions and non-relevance are major issues with the course. This prompts them to take the evaluation less seriously. This was followed by closed ended questions (58%), No gains (47%), Bias / popularity votes (42%) and incompetence of the students / evaluators.

However, it is evident that the distance learning and the traditional course both make of use of evaluation for measurement. Since we have learnt before, that many universities make us

of the same evaluation methods of distance as well as traditional course, the respondents were asked if this can be applied to both forms of courses appropriately. In all about 72 % of students believed that traditional learning instrument should not be applied on distance learning courses and around 80% of the students however felt that the distance learning course should have its individual measuring instrument for accurate results.

QUESTION 3: To understand the right use of evaluation data for improving learning in the students.

To understand how students rank the use of data evaluation and why do they feel it is important to improve the learning system.

60 % of students believed that improving the instruction methods and related course content can lead to a better education system. The rest of 3 ranks got a less than 50 % mark, where 43 % students felt instructor tenure at the institution affected teaching ability, 42 % felt instructor promotion was keeping the tutors motivated and 27 % believed that raise in instructor salaries was impacting their teaching skills.

About 3/4th of the respondents have said to believe that 'communication' is one of the most important aspects of a distance learning program. It is very important that there is an effective communication and interaction between the trainer and the students. In context to a distance learning program it was more relevant. 72% of the students also speak about the suitability on delivery for a distance course. A good proportion of students did also mention about resources, information sufficiency and utilization of technology. The responses revealed that the Graduates, Post graduates and Doctorate students believed that student's evaluation was of significant advantage in improving the lessons substance and trainer development.

QUESTION 4: To identify the factors that motivate student evaluation based on reliable and valid responses.

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The students were investigated for what motivated them for making a valid and reliable response. It was observed that mostly the students were motivated by the earlier assessment reactions by the management and the instructors. This substantiates what the

literature suggests. Students want to see the significance of the student's evaluation as some improvement over the teaching quality. Their prior evaluations should be reflected on to the teaching methodologies and the overall management. The students also mentioned about issues such as – specific questions (which allowed the students to speak with clarity and special reference), full replies (which allowed the students to make a comprehensive assessment), throughout the course (which allowed the students to assess every aspect of the learning course).

Motivation for students is an extremely important factor to get accurate responses from them. More than 50 % of students participated and agreed on 7 on 10 questions from the questionnaire. (79 %) instructor addressed the responses prior to evaluation, (75 %) tutor believes in assessment process; (71 %) management believes in assessment process; assessment questions may be nonspecific (68%); administration addressed prior assessment responses (66%); (60%) accurate questions that portray exact events and assessments given during the course and not at the end (58%).

A little less than 50 % of students believed that evaluations were clarified with examples, about 44 % felt that proper form list was used to evaluate and another 42 % thought that they were allowed to provide detailed responses.

Also taking into account, the respondents were asked what would motivate them to answer in a responsible and accurate manner. To which, 50 % of students agreed on 3 on 6 options. A large number of population of about 79 % thought that thir responses would not be addressed properly; another 72 % believed that irrelevant questions may lead to disinterest in the responses and 58 % believed that some question may not be able to describe the course experience accurately.

Subsequently, around 47 % felt their responses would fail to benefit the current students, 42 % felt that evaluations are based on the most popular answers and a fewer population (34 %) believed that students as evaluators are considered least competent.

QUESTION 5:   To find the criteria that scales the Distance education courses as useful and valid.

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The students were asked about the 'CRITERIA' with the distance learning course. The researcher intentionally induced words such as content, liability, controlled, supportive, emphasis, variety, fostered, provided, and collaborative and opportunities. The responses showed that 83% believed that Student's Evaluation augmented the 'Liability for the Faculty'.

A good fraction of students also opted for online discussion; student's learning growth and activities assigned. The responses showed that 71% believed that student's evaluation led to a better control over the course and 60% credited this to course guidelines.

A good fraction of students also believed the distance learning offered more responses, extra student-focused activities and a clear road map for education. The students also talked about key aspects on monitoring behavior. 80% of the respondents believed that online conversation examining was the key monitoring activity for the distance learning course. Half of the proportion believed that monitoring took place by soliciting learner observations and examining amount of learner communications.

Also, 1/5th of the students believed that the course helped in community building.

Students were expected to give a feed back on what could be helpful in developing the evaluation structure of the distance learning which is not found on the evaluation list of the traditional course. More than 50 % participants agreed on 7 out of 10 options. The most popular feedback with a 77 % response was that students valued the communication between the student and the tutor; this same population also thought that the quality of this communication was also of utmost relevance.

The second popular feedback was linked to online delivery of information where 72 % thought it needs to be effectively organized; they also believed this should be accurate and prompt. Around 68 % felt the need that institutions should carefully check the amount of study material needed to be displayed for distance learning and 66 % felt that since online

delivery is most helpful and efficient the tutor should be well versed with the communication skills to avoid misunderstandings.

The responses were however less for using technology appropriately (42 %), the amount of communication taking place between tutors and student with about 41 % , also 40 % believing in the quality of this communication. However, very few students responded with the benefits to the community development with 27 %.

QUESTION 6:   To explore more about the additional course feedback that goes beyond the end of course student evaluation for a Distance education course.

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    The responses showed that 'Learner Development Report' is one of the most important aspects of a feedback program to make a positive impact on the teaching methodologies. The development should showcase the abilities that the student has developed over a period of time and what has been the role of the instructor on this. The students also believed that evaluation of lessons sections (50%), contestant aptitude (48%) and review of experiences in course (46%) should be useful for the instructor.

About 3/4th of the respondents believed that 'communication' is one of the most significant aspects of a distance learning program. It is very important that there is an effective communication and interaction between the trainer and the students. In context to a distance learning program it was more relevant. 72% of the students also speak about the suitability on delivery for a distance course. A good proportion of students did also mention about resources, information sufficiency and utilization of technology.

A review of the feedback process comprises a part of the evaluation system. The students were requested to provide information if there was a need to give additional course information for assessment, besides the feedback given at the end of the course. A majority of about 68 % students said that there wasn't any additional feedback given.

 The student's perspective was taken to check what kind of feedback as helpful in the evaluation process of distance learning. More than 50 % students agreed on 2 out of 6

questions. 67 % students agreed that they could benefit from the progress reports and 50 % recognized the importance of assessing the course section appropriately.

48 % students agreed on the aptitude of the participant in evaluation, 46 % suggested that the past courses be reviewed in a timely manner. However, the least preferred responses were the need to pre assesses the technological abilities and the analyzing the demographics each comprising the responses of around 44 % and 19 % each.

QUESTION 7:   To know about when the additional student feedback should be taken during the course of the Distance education course.

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Consecutively, the respondents were asked to select from 4 options so as to determine the types of supplementary feedback occurred. All of the choices concluded about less than 50 % student responses. 43 % students mentioned that they have never experienced a request for an additional feedback.

Another 27 % students mentioned that they have experienced such requests only at the beginning of the course and a little less about 26 % said they had received this request after the course completion. However, only 25 % students had experienced requests for feedback after each examination.

The students were also asked about the prime time of conducting the student's evaluation throughout the duration of the course. The students responses clearly showed that ½ of the respondents believed that the course should be observed 3 times per semester. This should give enough time and space for the suggestions and the implementation.

QUESTION 8:   To know about when the additional student feedback should be taken during the course of the Distance education course, from student's perspective.

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About 56% of the respondents believed that student's feedback should be observed after every month. This was followed by 20% every 3 weeks and 15% for every week. The responses were clearly a suggestion that students wanted consistency on the evaluation process and to observe it more frequently.

Opinions of students were taken to determine when evaluation should take place during the course time. Almost 36 % felt the need to be evaluated on a monthly basis. However, around 27 % students felt that they should be evaluated at least every 3 weeks, 20 % suggested every five weeks, 15 % recommended it to be held weekly, 9 % suggested once a week and only 3 % students never wanted the evaluations to take place.

QUESTION 9: To identify the right media for student evaluation for a Distance education course.

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Here, students were asked to identify the appropriate and approved media which could be used to identify the gaps in student evaluation process and bridge them with the accurate media. Almost all of the students chose the online media which was the most popular choice lead by 94 % as the preferred media.

The responses showed a contrast on the two findings as the preferred choice for a Traditional course was found be 'Paper' and the same for Distance learning course was 'online'.

QUESTION 10:   To analyse the proportion of students who have found themselves as 'customers' in the system.
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What percentage of students perceives themselves as customers?

       An educational institute is successful if it is able to identify its students as customer and tries to utilize student's evaluation as feedback form. This question tries to investigate whether the students consider their selves as clients.

While students do pay a great amount of money for their higher studies, it is critical to undermine if they are considered as their center's customers. During this study, students were asked if they had considered their selves as customers of the centre. This result came out positive, with 78 % students believing themselves to be as the centre's customers.

These responses were clearly a reflection that students do consider themselves as customers as 3/4th of the students believed so.

QUESTION 11: To identify whether the students find themselves 'competent' for evaluating the Distance learning course.

The research outcome suggests that 99% of the students believed that they were 'competent' to evaluate the faculty members but not to evaluate a course.
Going one step further, students were asked if they felt competent in their ability to assess a lesson. A vast number of students around (99%) affirmed assurance in their capability to assess courses.

Secondly, the respondents who showed less confidence while evaluating the course were asked to spot the reasons. Although the table shows only six students who did not feel competent enough as evaluators, a couple of more students picked out added reasons for not being able to rightly evaluate.

I was found that, more than 50 % students had agreed to 1 out of 6 questions which contributed towards 17 % of the total questions. Around 56 % of respondents agreed on their inability to identify the bias. Another 28 % believed that good teaching methods often lacked knowledge, 22% said the terminology used was unfamiliar to them, 17 % thought that students should not be held responsible for evaluation and lastly about 17 % students felt they could not distinguish between their opinions on course topics and tutors.

Finally, the opinions of students who felt competent enough to evaluate the courses , where taken into consideration. In this case, 50 % of respondents agreed on 5 on 5 options leading to a 100 % achievement rate. Almost 93 % of respondents said they were aware of their

learning methods and knew if they were met or not, another 83 % said they wouldn't use one evaluation technique which they felt might harm to another.

The next 80 % of students felt there were constant evaluations and feedbacks taking place once they had interacted with their tutors and around 80 % of them felt the requirement for conducting evaluations. Lastly, around 64 % of the students thought that the actual evaluators are the administrators who contribute to a large extent towards these evaluations.

5.5. Conclusion

So far, there has been a great amount of developments in this study and data has been collected comprising the literature review, statistics and responses based on a survey. This section of the thesis is based on the gathered information and displays the relationship shared by it.

Research Question 1: The changes documented by respondents in distance and traditional learning methods

(Patton, 1997) states that judgments are made based on evaluations collected by implementing the tools to gather information. Accurate questions need to be asked in order to perform these tasks correctly. (Worley 2000) said that the assessment of courses does provide a much required data which can be utilized only if the correct elements are evaluated.

In 2003, Easton in his work, suggested that the evaluation process must be redesigned for assessment of course, developing organization, encouraging engagement and changing modes of monitoring, hence developing the requirement for virtual classrooms. So as to determine these changes, the work in this thesis sought to take the responses of students and their perceptions towards understanding the requirement for developing a different evaluation technique for distance learning course.

There is a huge difference between the students learning in a traditional classroom and at distance learning classroom. A large number of participants who contributed in the survey identified the below differences: less control on the course, the learning experience made the students more accountable making the learning experience more successful. Subsequently, it also made the students use the technological tools in a accurate manner proving them with more activists based on learning.

During this process, it was also observed that the power in distance education is based more on the student than the tutor unlike the traditional course (Marshall, 200). It was also observed that a student centered approach should be used in order to make the online learning experience more effective also suggested by Knowlton in 2000. Since these changes were observed during the study it was evident that the traditional approach had to be changed in order to make learning effective at a distance.

As already observed, around 60 % respondents did make use of the guidelines of the course for understanding; only about 48 % felt that the road map provided to them helped them understand what they will earn in the course, how the assessment will take place and what topics will be covered during the course. This suggest that, although many students may not

require a road map for learning, there are those students who might greatly benefit from this facility as they take a switch from their traditional learning towards online learning. It was also observed that help and directions were required in terms of assistance to use the technology to both the students as well as the tutors.

A survey developed by Shea, et al. (2001) was conducted at 250 institutions where respondents ranked technological support as number third on their list of improvements.

Since the distance learning courses today rely heavily on the technology to reach out to its students, it was evident in his research that more focus needs to be put on giving assistance and support for using technology to the students as well as tutors. The universities need to monitor the effectiveness of these tools and need to closely watch if the correct questions are asked and answered. It was also observed that the students perceived exercises and activities as being more helpful that the traditional teaching methods and hence the faculty needs to consider this feedback accurately in order to gain maximum student attention and focus.

In order to gain awareness regarding the evaluation techniques, the faculty needs to be aware of the benefits of the required changes. Accurate questions regarding the evaluation elements need to be brought up with careful attention.

Since the feedback process has been defined in a different manner for both traditional and distance learning, it is necessary in both aspects that a feedback be given for the learning process. However, since there is a lack of tutor being present at all times to guide the student, at times this feeling is totally eliminated from the student's learning process. Hence, it is important and vital to give a feedback to the students as frequently as the traditional learning even though the learning is physically separated from the tutor.

Subsequently, on the basis of course operation and design, students mentioned the need of high quality opinion to be extremely essential for growth Tricker, et al. (2001). It has also been observed in this research that lack of the accurate feedback could also lead to major dropout rates in the distance learning course.

As previously stated by the authors, the respondents also agreed that tutors were

- Supportive and understanding (30%),
- Making use of various presentation techniques (29 %),

- using a diversity of teaching methods (27 %) and
- About 22 % respondents felt the need to be provided with more opportunities.

> Hence, if the elements mentioned above are considered important from the point of view of students and may not be occurring at the course center, it is essential to inform the administrator and tutors to develop these so as to improve the learning process.

This study also put focus on the relationship between the student and the tutor interaction and its importance as perceived by the students. It was understood that the students valued the interaction above than the method of delivery and felt comfortable by this means of interaction.

Another mode of delivery preferred by the students was making the use of online interaction with the tutors and administrators of the university which would save them time and effort to commute to the institution. In this case, suggestions could be made that, when such facilities are developed, it is necessary to keep a track of the online activities of the students and evaluating their activities in a timely manner. This would also indirectly keep a track of the performance of the students.

A large number of the students acknowledged the fact that there are differences in the tracking activities of student, their contribution in the course, and other types of behaviors while keeping a track of their online deliberations. It is also advisable, to monitor the interactions of the students and also evaluate the content of the course other than the traditional use of examination.

Research Question 2: Here the students were asked if same evaluation techniques could be used in distance as well as traditional learning.

It was observed by Achtemeier, et al. (2003) that many institutions were making the use of traditional use of evaluation towards the distance learning course as well. The validity and reliability of this was critically questioned by the facts derived from this study.

The conclusions drawn from this research indicated that one type of instrument could not be used for both types of courses which would then question the uniqueness of the evaluations.

More than half the respondent population felt the need to create a separate instrument to evaluate the distance learning based courses. These students also felt that the same evaluation techniques may not justify their work and would rate them in an unequal manner. In the case where a new instrument could not be created a more improvised or modified instrument could be used for evaluation as per the standards required by the distance learning institutions.

Research Question 3: What do student identify as the suitable utilization of assessment data?

The main options found by the students were to improve the content of the course, improvement of the instruction methods, promoting the instructor, and considering the tenure of the tutor. The respondents in this study ranked the improvement in the instruction methods the highest. The respondents also ranked promotion of faculty, tenure of faculty and increase in salary as the least.

Since the study showed that improvement was most required in improvising the instruction method, this was not derived in the evaluation process. In order to implement the necessary changes in the techniques used for evaluation, the faculty members need to bring a change in the teaching practices and make sure that this change should not be just temporary.

Research Question 4: This question focuses on the motivational factors stated by students so as to provide a reliable and valid response for evaluation.

It was understood that accurate and relevant data could be gathered only if the student provide honest and sincere feedback (Vrasidas, et al., 2003).

Motivational

While many of the respondents believed that all the 10 options given to them could be considered as motivators, a majority of them also suggested different techniques which could help get valid responses. E.g. Previous responses to evaluation addressed by the tutor, tutor and administration believing in evaluation process, non generic evaluation questions, accurate questions pertaining to the subject, providing evaluation at the course time .This was in the order of 79 % being the highest and 58 % being the lowest. The other options which got a less than 50 % response were, allowing the students to give detailed response, providing examples and using the evaluation list.

Less Serious Responses

For more in-depth evaluation, the students were asked if there could be reasons which would affect their motivation level to answer less seriously. More than 79 % of respondents felt the need for tutor to address prior evaluation response. This had been proven correct from the less serious section, where students had mentioned that responses will not be addressed by the students.

72 % responses indicated that question may not be relevant to the subject and while 68 % said that evaluation process could be generic for all fields of research. Lastly there was a close match found between questions failing to describe experiences accurately and questions failing to portray exact events each being 58 % and 60 %.

Research Question 5: The different kinds of questions which are useful and valid for distance learning courses.

It has been evident from the previous literature that proper questions need to be formed to get the maximum information from the evaluations. It would also help reduce error and invalid responses. When the students in the survey were asked about the above question, many of them stated that this sort of question was never asked to them in the traditional mode of learning.

The respondents also identified the fact that the quality and amount of communication between the tutor and student is not mainly found in distance learning. In the similar field of communication, it was also found out that merely 41% of the respondents felt the amount of communication between student-to-student and another 27% of the respondents felt that this feature of student-to-student communication ranked at least high enough to incorporate. If a major number of students felt that they were not asked about the amount of communication between the tutor and student, then this possibly will be recognized as the main setback for Distance learning-based courses and it deserves to be placed on Distance education course evaluations systems.

Easton (2003) programmed the virtual communication process as a distance education challenge. Tricker, et al. (2001) in addition supported this plan, mentioning a need for repeated and high quality communication to substitute with the lack of face-to-face interaction.

However, Keeton (2004) documented a larger potential for discovering more intellectual differences in the distance learning, which related to student-to-student interactions could be affected more than before. Easton (2003) suggested sharing and creating a plan for communication earlier to the lessons establishing to help ease few of the communication problems that are bound to result from getting physically separated from the student-to-student and student and instructor.

Regardless of the many findings in communication process, only 27 % respondents mentioned the development of a community on an evaluation basis. It rather signifies the failure to identify the significance of building up a community.

Surprisingly, less than 50 % of students ranked appropriate use of technology on the placement on a distance learning course. Also in the past research has been conducted on this and emphasis has been based on its evaluation (Miller and King 2003) which lead to developing the guiding principles.

These values included:

- Technologies used right through the course should be coherent and consistent;
- Tutors should be aware of the competencies of their students if distance learning programs do not oblige students to have set technological competencies earlier to enrolling in distance learning;

- Appropriate technologies should be used for curriculum; and

- Student cultural, learning styles and character differences should be taken into account.

The truth is that there are many standardized technologies used currently in the distance learning course and that appropriate use of current technologies is a must to gain benefits.

Research Question 6: What added course feedback, other than end-of-course student evaluations, is presently required of respondents that could provide assessment information for Distance learning courses?

Feedback is usually considered a two way thing. The information and data obtained from respondents does prove as guidance towards how to progress in the course. However, during the traditional mode of learning it is easier for tutors to assess the feedback of the students and they have a good opportunity in doing so because the interaction is face to face (Benigno & Trentin, 2000).

As per the research, around 68 % claimed that other than course evaluations at the end of the course, the students were never asked to provide feedback during the course. To this it can be said that, it necessary to give the same amount of feedback towards the distance learning students and their needs should not be left ignored. If there is a lack of additional feedback, then the student development could be hampered.

A greater part of the respondents had little recommendations as a part of helpful feedback of the provided options. The most accepted choices as per the respondents were:

- Progress reports of student (67%) and
- Evaluation subsequent to each course segment (50%).
- Evaluation of the aptitude of the student as a participant of the distance learning course (38%),
- request of information on course experiences from the Distance Education department (46%), and
- Pre-assessing the respondent's technical abilities (44%).
- Merely 19% felt that demographic study was necessary. Since the significance of response has been acknowledged previously in this section, it was astonishing to see that respondents may not be that aware of its significance.

Research Question 7: The occurrence of additional feedback other than the end of course evaluations and when does it take place during the tenure of the course.

Firstly, during the research, it was observed that additional feedback from the students had occurred never (43%), hence, the respondents asked their requirement of when should the feedback occur according to them.

Below are the responses of the students:

- At the commencement of the course, so as to seek student information (27%);
- after covering each course section (26%); and
- Following each exam (25%).

   The requirement of more feedback all through the course represents
   - course development is less expected to take place,
   - less is knowledge about the enrolled students, and
   - Less respondent contentment experienced during the course.

Research Question 8: What according to the students is the best time to collect information?

Achtemeier, et al. (2003) affirmed instruction and feedback in online courses must be constant and Laverie (2002) suggested establishing a respondent managing team to aid the collection process for this information for the tutor. The optimistic relationship to the development of education has been identified when assessments are made use of during the first half of the semester (Anonymous, 1999). Respondents need feedback on the coursework, but they also want more recurrent and quick advice with regular interactions with the tutors (Shea, et al., 2001).

Miller and King (2003) claimed that many authors believe that advice, whether positive or negative, must be always given in a timely manner. It is also suggested that tutors articulate and create a strategy for feedback or procedure that is also agreed upon by students.

Since only 3 % students felt evaluations should never occur, it does not really suggest that the

This lack of majority does not mean students were against evaluation because only 3% stated evaluations should never occur. The maximum proportion of students felt that:

- A monthly evaluation was required (36%).
- The second highest percentage (27%) suggested a occurrence of 'every 3 weeks.'

  Based on the data collected, it suggested that the best time to conduct the assessment is per semester for 3 times. This was suggested by more than 50 % students. This frequency is almost similar to the suggested response where students felt it should be done once a month.

About to one-third of the respondents suggested that assessment should take place at:

- The beginning of the course (36%),
- After every exam (32%),
- And after every course segment (30%).
- Once again, only 3% felt that evaluations should never take place.

Research Question 9: What medium is favored by respondents for the student assessment of Distance learning courses?

According to the research around 94 % or students the distance learning form was the most favored choice of evaluation. Also, around 26 % respondents believed that the traditional paper, as well as the distance education evaluation forms very useful.

Since results reported earlier were 99.8% of the students completing online course assessments, media approval appeared to be more or less guaranteed.

Research Question 10: This question focused on understanding whether the students perceived themselves as customers.

More than 78 %, of non- traditional and traditional students agreed on the concept that there is a movement going on in India to perceive the students as customers of the organization. Hence, it indicates that this figure is consistently on the rise given the rising high cost of education. This will in turn make students expect more returns on the money and time spent on gaining education.

The respondent as a client belief may somewhat add to the uses of the respondent assessment, which regrettably is previously said to include too many purposes to be applicable. It was also suggested by Twigg (2001) that the students' assessments should focus on providing the information which they are looking for. Also it has been observed and strongly indicated that the student assessments has greatly emerged from the concept of 'student as customer concept'. However, in an industry where is it believed that the customer is always right, one has to observe caution about the 'student as customer philosophy'. So this never wrong concept cannot work if the educators need to provide quality education.

Research Question 11: This question was asked to students in order to understand if they feel competent about themselves in evaluation course?

Almost all of the students felt that they were competent enough to evaluate the courses, and only about 6 students out of the 430 students felt they are incompetent. However, even if all of the students believed they were competent, most of them still had a few reservations. Around 10 students had felt they were unable to identify any bias. The majority were ranked on a lower mark which included:

- Using unusual technology
- The incapability to recognize good methods of teaching, and
- Failure to detach feelings for course topics from assessments on the turor's and tutors' methods.

Almost all the students had agreed upon the same reason why they felt competent in evaluating themselves. The competency values are mention below from high to low:

- To understand the learning and consider if their point of views are met.
- Evaluations are used in the correct manner and to not harm anyone.
- To identify the requirement for evaluation.
- Since students are always interacting with the tutors but are evaluated by the administrators.

Many negative statements have been made about the respondents about them being the evaluator of themselves in the course. Many a times their ability is questioned and neglected. It has also been said they are incapable of avoiding any biases. Many of them have also stated that they may be incapable of identifying the features or characteristics of the efficient teaching.

Alternatively, many constructive things are being said about the competencies of the students. It was also observed that the students and faculty both have ranked successful teaching fundamentals as priority. It has been seen from this study that the students are the better judges when it comes to understanding the enthusiasm of professors and the resources in the course. Students may not be considered the best evaluators but the data collected from the evaluations could be very well considered important.

Students are also considered the greatest source of information since they are physically involved in the course procedure. However, students do think about themselves as being competent evaluators, careful measures should be taken to correctly motivate the students to provide accurate evaluation.

5.6. Implications

Many implications came out from this research work study. The current section identifies these implications, suggests what can be done, what is to be done, as well as explains different ways to achieve the set proposals.

Implication 1:

If the traditional evaluations are used for the evaluation of courses of distance education system, then the said evaluation becomes ineffective for the distance education based courses.

For making an evaluation valid, it is necessary that it should measure the same thing for which it was developed. Prevention of the missing data which provides understanding about the actual substance of the course is the main benefit of creation of an evaluation method. This also helps for changing the way of teaching the traditional courses.

It does not mean that the foundation of course evaluation of the traditional courses should be totally removed or scraped but it should be modified to preserve the important data.

The modification must be done according to the questions asked on the different topics like:

- Various methods used for communication – for both counselors with student and also between students.
- Technologies available & technologies used.
- Quality and quantity of activities.
- Different teaching methods – Its quality and techniques.
- Kind of feedback – From Student to counselor and from counselor to student.
- Morals and values of life
- Sense of belonging to a community
- Experience of learning and experience of learning guide.
- Suitability of the role accepted by the counselor

It means the modification can be done but it must be based on the present evaluation system.

Implication 2: Ineffective course evaluations brought by changes made in the traditional methods.

If the evaluation process for traditional course and distance education based course are not reevaluated or modified, then the institutions running these course will suffer.

The traditional course evaluation will also require changes or modifications if more and more traditional classrooms introduce new technology into its syllabus which is common even for the distance learning courses, resulting in the blending of both methods.

Keeping this in mind, changes introduced for the above mentioned questions will also prove suitable for traditional course evaluation.

Implication 3: Respondents believed themselves and the center's customers.

It should be remembered that the students think themselves as the customers of the universities and colleges. If they are not satisfied in the said industry, as a rational customer they will go to some other college or university for satisfaction.

If the study center fails to communicate or respond positively with the students, then they will easily change the college or university which will naturally affect the present and future enrollments.

As a customer, a student needs an enthusiastic service provider who could motivate him into choosing their product. It is always expected by the customer that the service provider must be passionate about the product as well as about the service to be given to the customer. The feeling of enthusiasm is very much necessary in order to gain the confidence of the student customer.

As a wise customer always wants to know about the thoughts of the seller about the customer satisfaction from the product which he sells to the customer; likewise a student is also very much keen in knowing about the interest and enthusiasm of the study center, in both the course as well as the students.

It is very necessary that the customer expects a demonstrated interest of the service provider in the consumer and consumer satisfaction.

It may sound unusual or unpopular but the training of customer service is considered essential for the staff, the counselors and the administrators.

Implication 4: Problems in distance learning by means of using the technology.

While it was mentioned in the survey results, it could be said that the forever changing technology will always create curves in the learning for students. In order to diminish this problem, recommendation to create a standard technology plan could be put forward to institutions. Hence, student would get familiar towards technology after finishing the first distance course, leaving students full with concentration and time to focus on the real course.

It's also necessary to simultaneously to train the faculty so as to how to use the technology in their stride to enhance learning techniques.

Implication 5: Respondent assessments are normally administered after it is too late for developing scope of improvement in the present course.

Generally the evaluation of the course is conducted at the end of the academic year. Such evaluations at the end of course are considered as the only evaluations for both the traditional as well as distance learning based course.

Due to this the regular students of the current year sometimes suffer and face a bad experience. This is because such students though are regular in their studies during the entire year, but due to some reason are not able to remain present or could not fetch good results in the end of year exams creating an unsatisfactory experience.

On the other hand, though brief, evaluation of periodical intervals will of course help a student to gain the confidence. Also due to continuous practice of studying it will help them upgrade their knowledge skill which ultimately is the aim of education.

It however, does not mean that the end of year evaluations should not take place at all; but it is necessary for getting into the next group or class for higher level.

Implication 6: Indentified flaws in the design of evaluation forms.

During this research work, many suggestions were experienced:

- The framing of questions must be done in such a manner that it should exactly describe the experiences about the course.
- Avoid those questions which do not relate to the course which is to be evaluated. It is very much required to observe the link of the question with the said course.
- Generic questions should not be deceiving. Such questions could de-motivate or motivate reliable & valid response, so they must be taken into consideration at the time of development phase of evaluation.

It was further suggested that there needs to be inclusion of many questions on evaluation which indicate (address) the uniqueness or (differentiality) of the distance based courses.

It should include the following points:

- Adequately provide resource for instructions for the course of distance learning.
- Online delivery of the question relating to effective management for delivery of material through internet.
- Appropriateness of distance education based delivery.
- Capabilities of instructor for written communication for online course details.
- Sufficiency of information supplied to the students regarding the distance learning.

Implication 7: Community building techniques lack in distance education courses.

Past review of literature has mentioned the need to build proper community of student at the distance learning institutions. The research has demonstrated a huge difference in the traditional community and distance learning community. The traditional community was very well established and functioning unlike distance learning community.

Although, community building characteristics are different in distance learning, exceptional measures need to be observed in order to establish it. Relevant activities and exercises need to be implemented which could to collaborative efforts of students in building a community and developing its learners.

Additionally, consistent use of the bulletin boards and online discussion forums will help aid this process. However, it is also advisable that universities also take help from professional community building institutions.

Implication 8: Distance learning courses lack sufficient feedback.

As the distance education based courses are based on isolation, there is great importance to the feedback. The students of the distance learning course also deserve to receive the feedback equal to those of the traditional course classroom students.

For achieving the goal of education, more and more feedback should be given to the distance learning students.

The duration and quality of the time of communication between the counselor with student and the student with counselor helps to provide more opportunities for feedback.

It is necessary to provide feedback throughout the duration of the course, which is valuable to both the faculty members as well as the students.

This can be done in various ways, such as:

- Reports on the progress of the students.
- Every course evaluated separately
- Evaluation of technological abilities
- Course aptitudes for distance education
- Professional development methods or strategies for the use of feedback would be welcome.
- Continuous feedback is expected during the complete course work.

Implication 9: reliable and valid response must be encouraged from the students.

Generally the students do not take the course work and evaluation seriously and so they provide less reliable feedback. These students who fail frequently are careless regarding evaluation.

Many changes are needed in the process of evaluation to motivate or encourage the students to provide reliable information about the evaluation.

Therefore the changes in evaluation process are also suggested. The usefulness of data must be explained to t he students because it is necessary that the respondents must be made aware of such benefits of the data.

Evaluation activities must take place during the course duration period , which will help to make required changes before the end of the said course.

- Every time when the changes are made, the counsellors / instructors should inform the same to the students.

- Include only those questions which are related to the course so that the evaluation form will gain its due importance.

The administrators & instructor should describe the theme or their belief in the evaluation form.

Continuous communication by speaking in a positive manner and displaying an urge for these evaluation topics will help to accomplish the set goals.