
Thesis Abstracts

Teacher Training by Distance Education with special reference to Sri Lanka

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In this dissertation an attempt is made to examine the extent to which distance education approaches to teacher education are feasible and effective. Special attention has been paid to the Sri Lankan situation as the country is heavily dependent on distance education methods to train a growing backlog of teachers at both the non-graduate and graduate level. In the light of information obtained from research studies carried out on the distance teacher training programmes in Sri Lanka, the researcher has attempted to explore the present and future potential of Distance Teacher Education Programmes in the country.

The literature review consists of two parts. Part I covers the period between 1965 and 1979, dealing primarily with teacher training in general. Part II covers the period 1980 to 1992 in which more attention has been paid to the literature on distance teacher training.

The theoretical basis of distance education and teacher training at a distance is also considered in the study. The concept of distance education, its background, definitions, ideas of teaching and learning using the distance mode, its advantages and disadvantages are discussed at length. Further the concept of teacher training,

its importance, advantages of distance teaching for teacher training and a classification of distance training systems are considered.

A comparative study of distance teacher training programmes in three different countries also constitute a major component of this study. For this purpose one programme from the Open University of United Kingdom (OUUK) Teacher Education Programme, and two programmes from the Zimbabwe National Teacher Education course (ZINTEC) and the Primary Teachers Orientation Course (PTOC) of the Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU), Pakistan are considered. A description of the present scene regarding teacher training in Sri Lanka is also presented as part of the study. It includes reference to both the conventional methods and distance teaching approaches used to train graduate as well as non-graduate teachers.

Finally evaluation studies of the distance teacher training programmes in Sri Lanka are critically reviewed. Recent evaluations done by Flinck (1986), Dock et al (1988), Ed. CIL (Educational Consultants India Limited) (1989) and Nielsen and Tatto (1991) are considered.

Based on the findings the following conclusions have been made. The distance training programmes for non-graduate teachers are found to be functioning well. Even though the output has been below initial expectations, the programmes operated with a high degree of internal efficiency. The programmes indicated a high retention rate and examination pass rate. Both Dock et al and Nielsen and Tatto have commented on the failure to establish a viable Tamil medium programme. This was due in part to the lack of Tamil staff in the institute. The level of success of the science/maths course

seems to be rather below the level of the Elementary course. Maths and science and the teaching of skills could be improved using distance education particularly if the tutorial support and group learning processes are strongly incorporated in the design. It is revealed that distance based programmes have had impact upon teaching practices and it was also found that in general distance trained teachers appear to be more interested in their work than untrained teachers.

The evidence reviewed in this study would seem to support the large scale expansion of distance taught teacher education programmes. As such Sri Lanka is set to become an important centre for developing and evaluating such schemes, a system from which others can learn.