

“ A STUDY ON PROFESSIONAL COURSES BY DISTANCE EDUCATION IN SHIVAJI UNIVERSITY KOLHAPUR: ITS OUTCOME ”

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Abstract:

. A better understanding of the expectations of mid-career learners enrolled in distance MBA studies may assist program designers in developing meaningful curriculum, and lead to improved pedagogies.

This paper aims to find out the expectations of the distance learners from the professional courses offered through distance mode. This study reports the results of a survey, which asked distance MBA learners about expected career outcomes, why they had chosen the distance mode format, and what skills they expected to acquire

Key Words- MBA learners, distance education, MOOC, professional courses

1. Introduction:

Distance education is a mode of delivering education and instructions, often on an individual basis, to students who are not physically present in a traditional setting such as a classroom. Distance learning provides "access to learning when time and distance, or both separate the source of information and the learners." Distance education courses that require a physical on-site presence for any reason (including taking examinations) have referred to as courses of study. Massive open online courses (MOOCs), aimed at large-scale interactive participation and open access via the web or other network technologies, are a recent development in distance education.

Distance learning as being a bi-directional (and massive) technological system, used in a strategy of teaching, that substitutes the interaction teacher - student in the classroom for the systematic support of didactic resources and tutorial material to propitiate to the student an opportunity for autonomous learning.

It as a planed learning that usually occurs outside of the traditional teaching places and, as a result requires a course project, special instructional techniques, special methods of electronic or other communication technology, as well as, special organizational and administrative systems. The principles of access equality have been important values that lead this field.

Professional Courses- A professional course which is someone who has completed formal education and training in one or more profession. The term also describes the standards of education and training that prepare members of the profession with the particular knowledge and skills necessary to perform the role of that profession. In addition, most professionals are subject to strict codes of conduct enshrining rigorous ethical and moral obligation. Professional standards of practice and ethics for a particular field are typically agreed and maintained through widely recognized. Some definitions of professional limit this

term to those professions that serves some important aspect of public interest [1] and the general good of society.

In some cultures, the term is used as shorthand to describe a particular social stratum of well-educated workers who enjoy considerable work autonomy and who are commonly engaged in creative and intellectually challenging work.

The Value of the MBA

To understand what motivates students to enroll in an MBA program, it is important to consider the perceived value of completing this degree. Research has focused on the career impact of the MBA and on specific skills acquired in the process of earning the degree. Some research has reported specific age and experience effects on the value of the MBA in skill acquisition and in career progression. For example, in one study, more promising career switching opportunities held greater importance for a younger (under 35) sample segment, while those with 8 or more years of work experience placed greater importance on improving analytical ability (Thompson & Gui, 2000). Learning about business in general and making new business contacts were more important for those with less than 8 years of work experience. Significant age and gender interaction effects were found for assertiveness skills acquisition, while significant age effects were found for sensitivity to differences and to diversity skills (Simpson, Sturges, Woods & Altman, 2005). Other studies, however, have found no effects for gender and experience (Zhao, Truell, Alexander & Hill, 2006). Still others have claimed that MBA graduates with more work experience reap fewer benefits.

Profile of the Study area:

Shivaji University Kolhapur, Maharashtra;

Shivaji University as a State Government University was established in 1962. The Jurisdiction of the University is spread over three districts viz. Kolhapur, Sangali, and Satara with strength of over 2,50,000 studying in 281 affiliated colleges and recognized institutes in its jurisdiction. It is named after the Great Maratha warrior and founder of the Maratha Empire, Chhatrapati Shivaji. This region of Maharashtra is proud of its rich and varied socio-cultural heritage. Under the innovative and social; reformist leadership of Chatrapati Shahu Maharaj, the ruler of the princely state of Kolhapur.

Centre for Distance Education; Shivaji University Kolhapur, Maharashtra;

In order to enhance, the quality of their education and reach out to the larger section of the society has various reasons remained distant from the portals of learning. It may be the working class, women, housewives or those who have aspirations for furthering their education, the Shivaji University, aiming at social inclusion has opened its doors to them by proposing the Centre for Distance Education (CDE).

The Centre for Distance Education, being as a self-supporting unit have been providing services to distance learners like admission, Preparation and distribution of SIM, contact sessions, counseling, library facilities and conducting examination etc. The Centre for Distance Education is conducting professional courses such as Master of Valuation and

M.B.A from 2008 as per UGC guidelines to cope with the needs of students aspiring for professional qualifications.

Master of Valuation Distance mode:

Due to liberalization of economic policy by Government of India, convertibility of Indian Rupee, globalization of market, climate for foreign investments all together has increased over all activity considerably in couple of years and the same is increasing. The role of professional valuator under these circumstances is most significant and crucial.

A valuator is highly skilled professional, who with matured technical expertise and skill prepares a valuation of land, buildings or possessions for specific purpose. The work of valuation extends from residential property to large estates, factories, offices & shops. In view of growing importance of professional valuer in real estate business, the Centre for Distance Education, Shivaji University, Kolhapur, started Masters Course in Valuation at Distance Mode.

So far 465 students were registered since year 2008 for postgraduate degree of Master of Valuation and 32 students have successfully acquired postgraduate degree of Master of Valuation, while another 50 students are expected to acquire degree in the next two years.

Master of Business Administration Distance Mode:

In the post-globalization period, there has been a huge requirement of trained and well-qualified work force with a MBA degree to cater to the needs of manufacturing and service organisations. Further, the already employed professionals in manufacturing and service organisations, are do not have an MBA degree, have also a great need to upgrade their qualifications by acquiring an MBA degree through distance mode.

In view of this, the Centre for Distance Education, Shivaji University, Kolhapur has introduced two M.B.A. Courses in the distance mode. i.e. MBA Executive and MBA Distance.

2. TOObjectives of the Paper:

- ✚ To analyze the effectiveness of professional courses offered through Distance mode.
- ✚ To identify expectations of Distance Learners regarding curriculum of the Professional courses like MBA and MCA while taking admission.
- ✚ To identify expectations of Distance Learners from Self Instructional Material
- ✚ To identify the need for new professional programmes and courses under Distance Education

3. Hypotheses of the Study:

H0= There is no significance difference between Course expected and Course offered for distance learners.

H1= There is significance difference between Course expected and Course offered for distance learners.

4. Scope of the study:

The topical Scope of the present study is related to effectiveness of the professional programs offered by Centre for Distance Education Shivaji University, Kolhapur. The Geographical scope of the study is confined to the jurisdiction of Shivaji University. The analytical scope of the study is to fulfill the objectives set. The functional scope is to put forward the suggestions to the Centre for Distance Education Shivaji University for better planning and starting new professional courses.

5. Research Methodology of the study:

In order to fulfill the above objectives the relevant information has collected through the following methods.

5.1 Primary Data- Primary data collected through in depth unstructured interviews as well as structured questionnaire.

Researcher personally interviews based on structured questionnaires with the selected courses students in CDE Shivaji University, in order to obtain more relevant Information which is not covered in structured questionnaires, researcher has made use of personal discussion with the respondents

5.2 Secondary data- The relevant secondary data collected from the various records with concern department CDE, as well by finding various Libraries and Internet.

5.3 Sample Design- The researcher had access to the sample frame consisting of the admission list of professional Courses like MBA. The research study, a systematic random sampling method used.

- **Systematic Random sampling** – According to systematic random sampling method list of students admitted for the course in 2013-14 in Shivaji University has selected.

- Sample (n) = $\frac{\text{Population size}}{\text{Sample size}}$
= 310 / 100

Sample = 3.1

a) Survey method issued for the study.

Sample: By using systematic random sampling method Distance Learners of MBA and MoV Courses has selected as a sample.

6. Findings and Interpretation:

6.1 Demographic Information of the Respondents

a) Age wise Distribution:

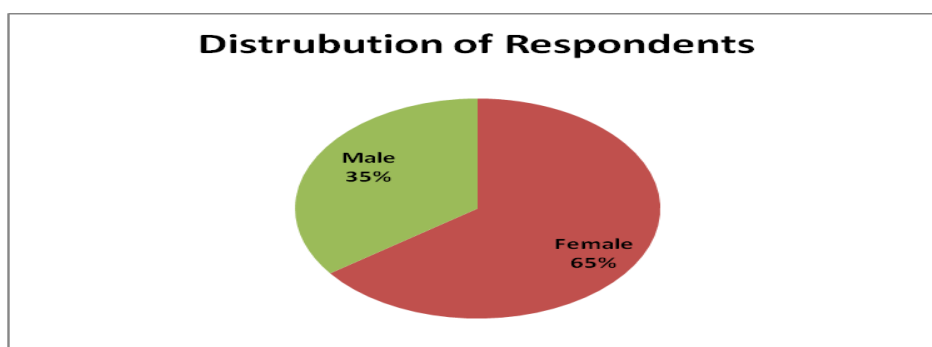
Sr.No	Charcterstics of the Respondents	Number	Percentage
1	Age		
2	21-29	81	27

3	30-39	111	37
4	40-49	93	31
5	50=<	15	5
6	Total	300	100

(Source: field survey)

Interpretation: Above statistics shows that Age group (30-39) have more contribution i.e 37% which indicates that mid career people those who are searching better opportunity and upward movement in same job profile, preferred to take admission for distance professional courses.

b) Gender wise distribution



Interpretation: Above statistics shows that 65% female. Which mean females who actually don't have enough time to devote for regular mode courses because of family responsibilities so that they choose option distance learning to come in to the main stream.

Table 6.2: Factors that student consider for selection of institute while taking admission:

Sr. No	Student Related Factors	Mean score
1	Suggestion from the friends & coulees'	2.03
2	Reputation of the Institute	2.08
3	Opportunity for part time work	2.56
4	Self motivation of the student	2.50
5	Financial background of the family	2.10

6	Support from the financial institute	2.06
7	Career goal of the student	1.59
8	Social status	2.42
9	Friend circle	2.33
10	Word of mouth	2.06

(Source: Filed survey.)

Inference:

Among all student related factors, most influencing one are career goal, self motivation & least influencing factors are opportunity for part time work; reputation of the institute . which further enhances that it is much considered by students while making selection of institute. Opportunity for the part time work has mean score of 2.56, which further enhances that it is not much considered by students while making selection of institute.

Table 6.3: Students expectations from the course offered to them:

Sr. No .	Attributes	Mean Score for MBA	Mean Score for MoV(RE)
1	Industry oriented syllabus	4.50	3.52
2	Standardized study material	3.88	4.30
3	Contact sessions on regular basis	4.56	4.00
4	Proper communication channel with all the students	4.22	4.30
5	Expert counseling sessions on general topics	4.16	4.25
6	Special arrangement for slow learners	3.45	3.12
7	Online examination and assignment submission	4.12	4.52
8	Virtual classrooms or broadcasting of important lectures	3.66	4.02
9	Study centres should available at state level.	4.12	4.60
10	Offline exams should organize on weekends.	3.95	3.56

Interpretation: Interestingly, above statistics shows that distance learners expect much more from the course curriculum mostly indicated significantly they expect online sessions, notes as well as Online examination and assignment submission . Which will help them to access as per their convenient time. Also they stick with content of the course as per market oriented.

Table 6.4: Perceived usefulness of professional courses:

Sr. No	Feature	Mean
1	Facilitates upward move to consulting	4.54
2	Facilitates upward move to related organization	4.04
3	Facilitates upward move to another field	3.34
4	Facilitates upward move to another industry	3.28
5	Essential for career success	2.18
6	Facilitates upward move in current organization	2.12

(Source: filed survey)

Interpretation: For this sample, the MBA and Master of valuation (MoV) was perceived to have the greatest instrumental value for moving into the consulting field and for upward career moves in related organizations or to another field. Additional analysis of these instrumentality dimensions revealed significant differences based on current position level, specifically between the self-employed and the rest of the sample. For example, in comparison to first line supervisors or senior management, the self-employed did not view the MBA as instrumental for a promotion or upward career progression. An upward move to another industry was less important for the self-employed compared to first line supervisors and middle management. Finally, a move toward consulting was a more important career outcome for the self-employed in comparison to senior management.

Table 6.5: Reasons for choosing the Distance Professional program like (MBA)

Sr. No	Reason	Mean Score
1	Distance format fit with personal need	4.58
2	Program offered desired specializations	4.35
3	Program is progressive	4.30
4	Program is most accessible	3.80
5	Program invites student input	3.33
6	Relatively short time devote to pursue the degree	3.23
7	Program and job requirements could be coordinated	3.07
8	Program was recommended by peers/colleagues	2.67
9	Program was recommended by previous teachers	2.16

(source: Field survey)

Interpretation: The most important reasons were accessibility, fit with personal life, perceived progressiveness of the program and desired specializations offered. On a number of variables, effects for age and gender are found, compared to men, women were more influenced by the program structure fit with personal life. Whether the program offered the desired specialization, by recommendations from peers or colleagues and by the shorter time to complete. In addition, people were interested to maintain balance between job and education for future promotion.

Table 6.6: Impression about the quality of Self-Instructional:

Sr. no	Items	Mean Score for MBA	Mean Score for MoV
1	Self Instructional Material as per my requirement. And which get at time of admission.	4.3	3.2
2	It provides me the exact information which is necessary to understand the theories and principles of the particular subject.	3.8	3.5
3	It also built up my confidence level to face the exam.	4.0	3.5
4	Self instructional material adds value to upgrade my knowledge.	3.5	3.5
5	Comparatively It's better than other Self instructional material.	3.2	2.8
6	Does the SIM provided to you has grammatical and as well as subject related errors.	3.2	4.2
7	Does the printing was not that much standard comparied to other universities study material.	3.5	3.8

(source: field survey)

Interpretation: Self instructional material is the backbone of distance education it clears that 23 % of the respondents are saying that self insrtustional material is as per their requirment. But only 17 % of the students are giving the comments that its having better qulity. So its reflects that SIM has having the scope for improvement. Also according to few students its add the value to their knowledge. Regarding SIM of Master of valuation many of students who were having ample amount of exeperience has registerd that SIM is not up to the mark. Also according to them there are errors related with grammer and content also the printing was not that much standard comparied to other universities study material.

Table 6.7: Distance learners overall impression about semester pattern and assignment submission:

Sr. no	Items	Mean Score for MBA	Mean Score for MoV
1	Writing of the assignments and project work doesn't add value to the knowledge.	4.5	4.0
2	I use to copy the assignments written by one my friend or colleague	4.6	4.2
3	It also built up my confidence level to face the	3.8	3.5

	exam.		
4	While doing physical dispatching the assignment problems occurs.	4.0	3.9
5	Assignments should be excluded from the course .	4.6	4.8
6	There should be annual pattern of exam.	3.9	4.2
7	Ovrall satisfaction of the course	3.9	3.8

Interpretation: data tabulated clears that students are unhappy about semester pattern and assignment submission. It indicated that university do rigorous inspection of the system and should take necessary action. In addition, make certain changes in the pattern.

Sr no	Items	MBA Distance Learning	MoV Distance Learning
1	Overall, this was an excellent course.	3.88	4.12
2	Overall, the support services was best	4.56	3.82
3	I learned a great deal from this course.	4.22	3.87
4	I gained a good understanding of concepts/principles in this field.	4.16	3.58

Table 6.8 : Comparative Overall Perceptions about Course offered:

5	The clarity of instruction and communication was good.	3.45	4.50
6	I will use what I learned in MBA course in my career.	4.12	4.00
7	I deepened my interest in the subject matter of this course	3.66	3.50
8	I was motivated to do well MBA course	4.12	4.20
9	I am confident in my ability to understand and apply concepts learned in this course.	3.95	4.16

Intpretation: Interestingly, however, distance-learning students indicated significantly support services play very crucial role more agreement that their analytical skills improved because of the course. Since the sections differed only in delivery method, this difference is intriguing. Distance education delivery may place more burdens on the learner in some cases than traditional classroom delivery because the student cannot rely nearly as much on class attendance to clear up questions on the material. Therefore, perhaps these students had to rely more on their own effort and had to find ways on their own to clear up confusing topics.

7. Testing of Hypothese and Inference:

H0= There is no significance difference between Course expected and Course offered for distance learners.

H1= There is significance difference between Course expected and Course offered for distance learners.

Testing of Hypotheses			
Professional Courses through Distance have demand	Course as per Expectation		Grand Total
	Yes	No	
Yes	103	66	169
No	98	33	131
Grand Total	201	99	300
Expected	113.23	55.77	169
	87.77	43.23	131.00
	201	99	300
	0.92425064	1.876508876	
	1.192353879	2.420839695	
	Calculated chi square	6.41395309	

Source: (field survey)

Inference: As calculated chi square value is 6.41 which is greater than Table Value at 1 degrees of freedom so **H₀** is rejected and **H₁** is accepted.

That is "There is significant difference between course offered and course expected". It indicates that still there is scope for improvement for the better practice and delivery of the course material to the target group of students.

Professional Courses through Distance Mode vs. Expectation from the programs:

N1	:	201
N2	:	99
Deg. Freedom	:	1
Chi²	:	6.414
p (same)	:	0.011323
Monte Carlo p(same)	:	0.0122
Fisher exact p(same)	:	0.013262

8. Suggestions:

I. Experts believe main driver of the distance learning is the availability of standard self-instructional material and proper communication channel. Most of the respondents also reported that due to the improper information won't be able to convert prospective student into actual student. Therefore, the university and the centre should have proper communication channel, they should outsource it for better performance, or they can have separate 24 hours helpline.

II. The students who pursue professional course through distance mode situated around the country, out of the country. For this centre should arrange broadcasted sessions of selective subject experts which students can access as per their convenient time through online.

III. One of important issue related with assignments submission, which is important element for passing the professional course. As per survey it reflects that majority (i.e 75 % of the students table 5.4) of the student simply copy the assignment of other student and for sake of submission. This does not add Value in their knowledge. So for this University authority should adopt different strategy either they cancel the assignments submission from distance syllabus as like Mumbai University has did for distance mode courses. Alternatively, they can have other option like online assignment submission. In this they can take help of different institutions around globe which has adopted such system like gurukul dot.com etc.

IV. Majority of the distance learners especially class of female which are away from the main stream expects contact sessions or counseling sessions on regular mode basis. Therefore, for this all ready centers is doing in well arrangement of syllabus-oriented lectures. But for overall development they can arrange general lectures of experts as like motivational, social responsibility related, time management related which will not only improve their overall development but also it can help the centre to minimize the drop out ratio of the students.

V. While doing the survey researcher has come across few things, which indicates failure of the exam system to accommodate the huge number of the distance students in terms proper exam registration, assigning the exam hall tickets, declaration of the results in time, dispatching the results on their respective mailing addresses. About 65 % (table 5.6 of data analysis chapter) of the respondents are unhappy about the working nature of the exam section and. Every year there is huge number of student's issues complaints after post declaration of online result. For this University authority should implement certain changes in terms of working of back office. Moreover, they should undergo necessary training sessions after regular intervals. There is need of rigorous inspection by third party analysis of exam & result related processes.

VI. 50% of the respondents are dislikes the Semester pattern of the course because they are associated with organizations and theses organizations are not allowing them to take leave of 8-10 days for exam purpose. So students expect that there should be annual pattern of exam. In this matter university, authority should take feedback of the students and make the policy decision whichever is possible.

VII. While analyzing stated hypotheses it indicates that there is difference in the course offered and course expected by the students. This means there is scope for improvement for better practice to sustain in the cutthroat completion. As in the market IGNU, YCMOU, Mumbai University school of distance education etc are the big leaders which are innovating the strategies for tapping the target students as per their taste and preferences of the students. So in this regards university authority should take prior action and students and industry people inputs while framing the syllabus.

VIII. In addition, researcher has found that new admitted students are expecting the study material at the time admission; in this case centre is providing it in time. However, problem occurs at the time of revision of the syllabus by BOS section. According to the centre administrative and academic authority's process of SIM (self instructional material) is more or less one year. Therefore, centre is expecting there should be one year of gestation period between syllabus revision and implementation of the same.

IX. While interviewing the selected sample of the study, It also found that students about to complete the course are expecting new courses should be incorporated as separate paper, certificate courses or as new courses after analyzing the demand in the current market. As like "Plant & machinery valuation" and "ISO Certification, Quality Control courses Banking and ruler development related courses etc. In addition, as per observation of the level of competition it is necessary for this centre should do demand analysis for selected courses to remain the choice list of the students. This sample can be selected from heterogeneous groups like under graduate students, managerial level from the industries and Academic experts.

X. At the time of unstructured interview of the different sections of the personals of the centers, it observed that people are unhappy about certain things which not only hamper their quality of work but also students who come directly or indirectly in contact through different mode of communication as like telephonic, face to face or through mail get affected. So university authority

XI. Should organize certain sessions as like

- Personality Development
 - Cultural programmes for hunting the inherent talent of the employee.
 - Organizing the one-day tours on weekends for relaxation as well as for team building approach, which will help them to work as team?
 - Every day yoga classes for handling stress level and for more job satisfaction.
 - There should be meetings with higher authorities and working personnel's for solving the problems, issues and completion of the assignment given on every fifteen days or once in the month.
- Technology has provided

9. Conclusion:

The management education field with opportunities is to reach more student segments than ever before. Inspired program design coupled with innovative technological solutions has the capacity to address many recent criticisms of the professional degrees through distance mode and to improve the educational experience and outcomes for students. Our findings demonstrate that students consider the degree as a valuable career-related asset. While this study adds to the current literature because it is one of the few with a sample of Centre for Distance Education students who opted distance mode professional courses, additional research is needed to build confidence in the results.

Undoubtedly, there are limitations to the carry out the research around jurisdictions of the university. The extent to which these findings can generalized is not fully apparent but the results of this initial exploratory research supported by the conclusions of previous studies. These students enrolled in a program combining short-term residencies with distance course sessions, specifically targeting mid-career students.

It is also important to gather longitudinal data, which would be helpful in determining relationships between expectations and actual outcomes.

For the present, these findings may be of help to those involved in program and platform design for MoV & MBA as professional courses through distance education, because of the relationship between expectations and achievement in education.

To sum up it would be better and future for the Centre for distance education to do well in terms raising the enrolment ratio up to 30 % in coming years, which will contributes in overall socio-economic development of the country.

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