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ANALYSIS OF ACADEMIC COUNSELOR'S OPINION ABOUT THE TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMMES OFFERED THROUGH DISTANCE MODE BY UNIVERSITIES

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ABSTRACT

The main purpose of the study was to analyze the perception of the counsellors about different aspects related to the teacher education programmes offered through distance mode. The sample for the present study constituted of sixty Counsellors'. They all were having minimum five years of experience as a counselor. An opinionaire was used to collect the data. All data were presented as percentages. The present study found that With regard to the adequacy and clarity of self instructional materials near about 70 per cent of the total respondents have expressed their satisfaction with the adequacy and clarity, the sequence of ideas and explanation and the questions of self study given in the SIMs. 97 % counselors have expressed their opinion



about the Coordinators role during counseling sessions in a positive way. Further said that with regard to the allotted time for the counseling classes and its comfortability for the counsellors, the study shows that 80 per cent of the total respondents expressed their opinion with a positive way means time is sufficient for them.

KEYWORDS: Analysis of Academic Counselor's , Teacher Education Programmes , human resources.

INTRODUCTION –

The initial preparation of teachers is critically important for professionalizing teacher

education. It should reflect both, the expectations which the community holds about the role of teachers and the skills and abilities of the individuals who enter the profession. Professionalization of teacher education requires raising the standards of entry in the profession, interviewing as part of assessment procedures, employing teacher educators on standardized rigorous procedures, providing regular opportunities for the professional development, and starting regional institutions for preparing teacher educators.

The most important part of distance mode teacher education

programme is the counselors. In India, there have been discussions, seminars, conferences time and again for the orientation and workshop for the academic counselors and there is a general agreement that the quality of education in schools depends in a large scale on the quality of teacher education and the on the quality of the academic counselors.

The role of teacher educators and teachers i.e., academic counsellors in distance mode in any aspect of education can never be overemphasized. In this connection I want to analyze here the opinion of the academic counselors' about various aspects of distance mode teacher education programmes.

Teachers have an important role to play in making education relevant to the needs of the emerging modern society. Only enlight-

tened, competent and emancipated teachers can meet the aspirations of society by providing quality education to learners. This is possible only if the teachers are well trained through effective teacher education programmes.

Teacher education programmes through distance mode in our country is few decades old. The Kothari Commission of 1964-66 recommended opening alternate channels for clearing the backlog of untrained teachers summer courses, vacation courses, part time courses and correspondence courses. In order to institutionalize this mode of teacher training, CIE of Delhi University, then a constituent of NCERT, started in 1966 a B.Ed programme through the correspondence-cum-contact mode.

*Counselling is the most important but often neglected activity in any distance education programme. Unlike the conventional mode, where students have instant and constant access to the teachers in the distance education mode, counseling at various stages in the programme like admission, assignments, personal guidance etc. acts as a buffer to reduce the psychological stress and anxiety of the students.

All the study centers of the university have some academic counsellors who are appointed by the university to provide tutorial support to students. The academic counsellors are selected on the basis of their academic qualifications, experiences and also according to their special interests in teaching students of different age groups, social and linguistic backgrounds. The contacts cum counseling classes by the counsellors are conducted at the study center.

In the distance system, the counsellors play the role of the teacher. These counsellors are also called academic counsellors. The academic counsellors and their role are very important in distance mode of education as they are in direct contact with the distance learner. They are the one who have the task of guiding, motivating and instilling the spirit of enquiry and moral leadership in the learners.

Academic counseling in distance mode of education does not mean delivering classroom lectures on a topic in the text. Rather it means that a tutor has to impart study skills to learner so that he/she can prepare a topic; help the learner to overcome specific difficulties to understand a topic, impart study and exam skills to the learner. The academic counselor has to be good teacher and communicator. Sometimes, the counselor has to perform the task of non-academic counseling, such as informing, advising and counseling about the administrative aspects. The counsellors should also create an environment to interaction among the learners and with the teacher so that discussions are generated and new and creative ideas emerge, which are the basis of innovation.

The academic counsellors should be able to provide moral leadership to the learners and also inculcate in them the same moral and ethical values.

NEED AND PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Research in distance education is less focused on the Academic Counsellors and more on the materials and means of transmission. Review of related literature shows few studies on teacher education through distance education mode. Hence I felt the need to study in detail, the perception of Academic Counsellors of the Study Centers of the various universities which are offering Teacher Education Programmes through distance mode situated in the erstwhile Andhra Pradesh in respect of different aspects such as

- + university criteria,
- + time schedule
- + counselling Session and
- + the study centers

RESEARCH QUESTION

What is the perception of Counsellors regarding the teacher education programmes offered through distance mode in Andhra Pradesh?

OBJECTIVE

To find out the perception of Counsellors about different aspects related to Teacher Education

Programmes offered distance mode, i.e.

- (a) University Criteria (b) Time Schedule
(c) Counselling Sessions (d) Study Centers

DELIMITATION

The study was delimited to the Government Universities of erstwhile Andhra Pradesh.

The study was confined to only those Universities which are offering B.Ed course through distance mode.

The investigation was restricted to those Academic Counsellors who were having at least five years of minimum experience as academic counselors.

METHOD

In order to achieve the objective of the present study, survey method of descriptive, qualitative type was used. The investigator adopted the survey method of research for collecting data.

SAMPLE

The sample for this present study constituted of sixty Counselors' having minimum five years of experience as a counselor from twelve study centers of the six sampled universities of erstwhile Andhra Pradesh.

TOOLS

An opinionnaire was prepared and duly validated by experts in the field of education and distance education for this purpose. After validation, some items were revised as per the suggestions of the experts, some were ignored and some new one's got included. The opinionnaire for the learners contained questions on five-point Likert scale. The researcher visited each of the selected study centers and the opinionnaire was personally administered to the concerned academic counselor. The data were collected during workshop and counseling session and data were obtained through personal contact.

DATA ANALYSIS

The main purpose of the study was to analyze the perception of the counsellors about different aspects related to the teacher education programmes offered through distance mode. Data thus collected were arranged, tabulated and analysed using percentage analysis. All data were presented as percentages. Findings of the study have been given as below:

Table - 1
Counsellors' Opinion with regard to the University Criteria

Item No.	Item	Percent Response				
		SA	A	UD	D	SD
1	The criterion for the selection of counsellors by the university is rational.	12 (20%)	34 (56.66%)	8 (13.33%)	5 (8.33%)	1 (1.66%)
2	Satisfaction of the counsellors with the way the university train them.	14 (23.33%)	30 (50%)	7 (11.66%)	8 (13.33%)	1 (1.66%)
3	Satisfaction of the counsellors with the facilities provided to them by the university.	13 (21.66%)	26 (43.33%)	4 (6.66%)	15 (25%)	2 (3.33%)
4	Counsellors are given guidelines in advance for evaluating the assignments.	10 (16.66%)	35 (58.33%)	6 (10%)	8 (13.33%)	1 (1.66%)

With regard to the rationality of the criterion put forth by the university for their selection counselors were asked to provide their views (about 76.6 per cent) agreed that the criteria is rational and the university

follow the criteria. Some Counsellors (about 10 per cent) disagree with this criterion and feel that it is not rational. The remaining 13.4 per cent respondents are not sure of this criterion and preferred to the undecided option.

From the above table for the item number 2, it is very clear that the percentage of dissatisfied respondents with regard to the way the university train the counselors is negligible. This means that the respondents are satisfied with the way the university train them. Barely 11.6 per cent of the total respondents are not sure means they have not decided.

It can be deduced from the above table for item number 3, that majority of the respondents (about 65 per cent) have agreed that adequate facilities are provided to them by the university. About 28 per cent respondents disagree with the item which gives an impression that facilities at the study center given by the university are not adequate. However, the remaining 8 per cent of the total respondents have not shown agreement or disagreement, they are neutral.

About the guidelines or the orientations before the evaluation of assignments from the university side, two-third of the total respondents have expressed that the university conducts Orientation Programmes for the academic counselors where they are given an exposure to their role and responsibility with special reference to evaluation of assignments. 15 per cent of the respondents do not agree and the remaining 10 per cent neither shown their agreement or disagreement with the statement.

Table - 2
Opinion of Counsellors' about the Study Centre

Item No.	Item	Percent Response				
		SA	A	UD	D	SD
1	Counsellors of the study centre are comfortable with their coordinator.	27 (45%)	28 (46.66%)	1 (1.66%)	2 (3.33%)	2 (3.33%)
2	Counsellors get cooperation of the other staff members of the study centre.	25 (41.66%)	30 (50%)	5 (8.33%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
3	Counsellors attend workshops and other training programme organized by the university.	21 (35%)	29 (48.33%)	5 (8.33%)	3 (5%)	2 (3.33%)
4	Study Centre has all the infrastructural facilities to run this programme.	11 (18.33%)	32 (53.33%)	7 (11.66%)	10 (16.66%)	10 (16.66%)
5	Study Centers have well equipped ICT labs for students.	7 (11.66%)	22 (36.66%)	9 (15%)	14 (23.33%)	8 (13.33%)
6	Satisfaction of the counsellors with the adequacy and clarity of SIMs.	15 (25%)	29 (48.33%)	5 (8.33%)	10 (16.66%)	1 (1.66%)
7	Availability of teachers at the study centre to preview the video programmes.	6 (10%)	27 (45%)	8 (13.33%)	12 (20%)	7 (11.66%)

From the above table it is obvious from the response of the respondents for the statement with regard to the adjustment or relation with the coordinator of the study center 91.5 per cent of the respondents are with a

view that they are comfortable with the coordinator of the study center. The remaining 8.5 per cent are whether disagreeing or are not sure.

With regard to the cooperation from other staff members of the study center 90 per cent respondents have agreed with the statement means they are getting full cooperation from them. The disagreement level is nil meaning thereby none of them are disagreeing of their cooperation. A very low among the respondents (about 10 per cent) is not sure or has not decided.

Regarding the participation of the counselors in workshops, orientation or any other training programmes organized by the university, about 83 per cent respondents expressed their agreement and said that they attend all such programmes organized by their university. 10 per cent disagreed with their participation in any such formal training programme. The remaining 7 per cent respondents are not sure.

With regard to the basic infrastructural facilities at the study center for running the course, more than half of the respondents i.e. 52 per cent have agreed that the existing infrastructure sufficient to run the course. However, 43 respondents are dissatisfied with the available infrastructure and were of the opinion that study centers are to be well equipped with the present day demand. Only 5 per cent of the total respondents neither agree nor disagree with the statement.

Regarding the ICT labs at the study center the respondents (about 48 per cent) have found their ICT lab well equipped and they are well versed with the latest technology. 35 per cent respondents have disagreed and said there is no ICT lab as such in their study center. The remaining 17 per cent respondents left it unanswered means they are not sure.

With regard to the adequacy and clarity of self instructional materials (SIMs) (about 70 per cent) of the total respondents have expressed their satisfaction with the adequacy and clarity, the sequence of ideas and explanation and the questions of self study given in the SIMs. 22 per cent of the respondents have expressed their dissatisfaction and the remaining 8 per cent respondents are not sure.

Regarding the availability of teachers at the study center to preview the video programmes less than a little half of the total respondents (49 per cent) have expressed that teachers are there to preview the video programmes. However, one fourth i.e. 25 per cent are of the opinion that teachers are not there at the study center to preview and almost the equal number of respondents i.e. 26 per cent are not sure.

Table - 3

Item No.	Item	Percent Response				
		SA	A	UD	D	SD
1	Chance given by the counsellors' to the students to ask questions during the counseling session.	22 (36.66%)	37 (61.66%)	0 (0%)	1 (1.66%)	0 (0%)
2	Students are cooperative to the counselors in running the class smoothly.	24 (40%)	34 (56.66%)	1 (1.66%)	0 (0%)	1 (1.66%)
3	Individual differences among the students are paid much attention by the counselors	25 (41.66%)	28 (41.66%)	1 (1.66%)	4 (6.66%)	1 (1.66%)
3	Corrected assignments with feedback are returned to the students by the counsellors' on time.	23 (38.33%)	32 (53.33%)	4 (6.66%)	1 (1.66%)	2 (3.33%)

4	Counsellors' write suggestions on the assignments to improve its quality.	24 (40%)	30 (50%)	3 (5%)	3 (5%)	0 (0%)
5	Students go to the counselors to discuss their individual academic problems.	19 (31.66%)	32 (53.33%)	5 (8.33%)	3 (5%)	1 (1.66%)
6	Counsellors' give additional notes to the students in the counseling classes.	17 (28.33%)	33 (55%)	5 (8.33%)	4 (6.66%)	1 (1.66%)
7	Practice teaching encourages the students to become confident about their teaching skills.	24 (40%)	30 (50%)	4 (6.66%)	1 (1.66%)	1 (1.66%)
8	Classroom teaching makes the students discipline.	23 (38.33%)	32 (53.33%)	3 (5%)	1 (1.66%)	1 (1.66%)
9	Counsellors' support the existing system of evaluation of assignments and records.	15 (25%)	25 (41.66%)	3 (5%)	14 (23.33%)	3 (5%)

Counsellors' Opinion about the Coordinators role during counseling sessions

Regarding the chance to the students to ask questions during counseling sessions the respondents have given highest rating to the point related to their freedom to students to ask questions in the class which creates more enthusiasm and clear the doubt among the students. About 97 per cent have expressed their opinion in a positive way. The remaining 3 per cent of the total respondents have different opinion on this statement.

Regarding the student's cooperation in running the class smoothly about 96 per cent of the total respondents said that the students are very cooperative in nature and are preferred to be silent in the classroom while the classes are going on. The counsellors' even find among the students a spirit of enquiry, creation of environment which allows the counselors to ask questions and initiate discussion with the student's cooperation. Only 4 per cent of the total respondents have expressed their disagreement with this statement.

With regard to the counselor's attention towards individual differences among students, 90 per cent of the total respondents have expressed that they encourage creativity and provide opportunity to the learners as per their standard or grasping power. They give importance to the individual differences and accordingly treat the students. About 9 per cent said that they do not give importance to the individual differences.

In this statement the respondents were asked to provide their opinion on the returning of the evaluated assignments with feedback. Submission of assignments is compulsory in distance mode B.Ed. A considerable number of respondents (about 42 per cent) are of the opinion that they return the corrected assignments to the students. About 55 per cent of the respondents do not return the evaluated assignments with proper feedback. The remaining 3 per cent respondents are not sure.

With regard to the suggestions to improve the quality of assignments the students write, almost 90 per cent make some suggestions for further improvement in the next assignments. It is also interesting that barely 8 per cent of the respondents or evaluators do not put any comments or remarks for improving the quality of the assignments.

With regard to the discussion of students of their individual academic problems with the counsellors, the counsellors were asked to provide their opinion; almost 84 per cent of the total respondents have agreed that the students approach them with their personal academic problems. This indicates that there are academic issues and problems faced by the students' demands some discussion. However, 15 per cent respondents expressed their disagreement with this point. The remaining 1 per cent is not sure.

Regarding providing additional notes by the counsellors to the students in the classes, two-third of the total respondents expressed their opinion by saying that they provide additional notes to the students in the classes. The remaining one-third of the total respondents said that the course material is sufficient for them.

Hence they do not give any additional notes.

The opinion of the respondents with regard to the practice teaching and its impact on the students in making them confident in their teaching skills, majority of the respondents i.e. 95 per cent reveal that certainly teaching practice brings boldness among the learners. This also encourages the students to become confident in their teaching skills. Near about 3 per cent of the respondents do not find the teaching practice useful in encouraging them. The remaining 7 per cent of the respondents do not think either way.

As far as students discipline with regard to the classroom teaching is concerned, a majority of the respondents i.e. about 85 per cent said that classroom teaching is adequate and helpful in bringing discipline among the students.

With regard to the support of the counsellors in the existing system of evaluation of assignments and records, the study shows that 66 per cent of the respondents have expressed their opinion in favor of the existing system. Whereas, 28 per cent of the respondents have expressed their disagreement with the system of evaluation persisting. The remaining 6 per cent did not respond either in favor or in against.

Table - 4
Counsellors Opinion with Regard to the Time Schedule

Item No.	Item	Percent Response				
		SA	A	UD	D	SD
1	Counsellors feel comfortable with the time allotted to them for the counseling classes.	25 (41.66%)	24 (40%)	3 (5%)	5 (8.33%)	3 (5%)
2	Duration for counseling session is adequate for interaction with the learners.	17 (28.33%)	25 (41.66%)	9 (15%)	7 (11.66%)	2 (3.33%)
3	Counsellors give enough time to the students in the class to interact	23 (38.33%)	34 (56.66%)	1 (1.66%)	2 (3.33%)	0 (0%)
4	Time between evaluation and dispatch of assignments is adequate.	13 (21.66%)	25 (41.66%)	6 (10%)	10 (16.66%)	6 (10%)

With regard to the allotted time for the counseling classes and its comfortability for the counsellors, the study shows that 80 per cent of the total respondents expressed their opinion with a positive way means time is sufficient for them. 14 per cent have expressed their disagreement with the statement means they are in need of more time for counseling classes. The remaining 4 per cent is not sure.

As far as the duration for counseling and its adequacy for interaction with the learners is concerned, 60 per cent of the respondents feel that the duration is sufficient for interaction, familiarization and make an effort to know the background of the students. Barely 9 per cent of the total respondents have shown their disagreement with the statement. Here the interesting thing is that 22 per cent of the respondents are not sure.

This is with regard to the time given to the students by the counsellors in the class for interaction, 92 per cent of the total respondents said that they give enough time to their students to interact with them. They also create an environment in the classroom for their students for asking questions, and clearing doubts, which makes the class interactive instead of plain talking. 8 per cent of the respondents have shown their disagreement with the statement means time is insufficient for interaction.

With regard to the adequacy of time between evaluation of the assignments and the dispatch of the assignments to the concerned place it is found that 60 per cent of the respondents have agreed with the statement and find the time between these two dates sufficient for the evaluation and dispatch of the assignments. Whereas, one-fourth of the total respondents have expressed their disagreement with this point thereby, seeking more gap. The remaining 15 per cent have undecided.



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