

## Acceptance of Self-Learning-Based Model among Online and Distance Learning Pupils: A Qualitative Study

**Prashant Ubarhande, PhD**

Assistant Professor, Symbiosis Centre for  
Distance Learning, Pune, INDIA  
[prashant.ubarhande@scdl.net](mailto:prashant.ubarhande@scdl.net)

**Radhika K, PhD**

Assistant Professor, Symbiosis Centre for  
Distance Learning, Pune, INDIA

**Shashank Bhandakkar**

Assistant Professor, Symbiosis Centre for  
Distance Learning, Pune, INDIA

**Tejaswini Shevate**

Assistant Professor, Symbiosis Centre for  
Distance Learning, Pune, INDIA

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### **Abstract**

*Conventional teaching methods exclusively focus on the use of textbooks and face to face lectures; however, studies of teaching efficacy have shown that most learners who are taught using this manner do not fully grasp the course material and its real-life utility. Non-traditional teaching strategies have been proposed by numerous scholars, however there is no scientific agreement on the best non-traditional teaching strategies that are adapted to learners' abilities and most successfully fulfil the course objectives. The current study intends to investigate how ODL learners feel about the self-learning approach. The purpose of the current paper is to demonstrate that there is a compelling need to examine closely how self-learning-based models are created and governed. Researchers have conducted a qualitative study of the replies provided by ODL learners and have classified them then beneath different themes The investigation produced useful recommendations, which included a list of the advantages of the self-learning-based approach.*

### **KEYWORDS**

*Self-learning, ODL, acceptability, qualitative study*

## **Introduction**

Every society needs education as a key element, and investing in education is necessary for every country to achieve sustainable economic growth in all of its manifestations. Hence, the focus of many nations' development has shifted to knowledge and skill acquisition.

The foundation of conventional teaching strategies is laid on lecturers outlining material from a textbook. Learners therefore are not active participants. unconventional teaching strategies on the other hand spark learners' creativity and curiosities and encourage them to participate in class activities (Chen et al., 2021) . In the past two decades, a number of researchers and authors have proposed a variety of non-traditional teaching strategies to maximise learners' successes (J. K. Ritter, 2020)

Because each learner has a diverse set of skills and talents, it is impossible to find a single, effective strategy for every learner (Pinnegar et al., 2020).

Researchers have used the phenomenology approach to explore the acceptance of self-learning-based model among learners of ODL. The main purpose of this approach is to deduce a phenomenon (Creswell and Poth, 2016). The present study intends to uncover student's responses with respect to acceptance of self-learning-based model to make the learning effective using the phenomenology approach. Authors reached out to Learners of open and distance learning with following research questions: -

### **1. Research Questions**

- *RQ1: What are the benefits of self-learning model?*
- *RQ2: Categories of the benefits of self-learning model?*
- *RQ3: Is self-learning model yields more ease of learning among Learners over traditional learning methodologies?*

Answer to the above questions will provide insights into understanding the importance of self-learning model. The findings of the study will be useful to regulators, higher education institutes (HEIs) learners and teachers of not only ODL environment but also of traditional teaching environment (Ubarhande & Bagade, 2020). This will also help to grow use of self-

learning-based models in the Indian education industry. These insights will also provide clues as to how the academic programs should be designed in future to maximise the student interest, provide time flexibility, with minimum engagement cost to program facilitator.

Students who are taught through traditional methods spend majority of time listening to lectures and working on assignments at home. The authors of “the effectiveness of an inverted classroom to a traditional classroom in an upper-division engineering course” noted in 2013 that Learners who participated in self-learning programmes performed better or at least on par with Learners who received instruction through more conventional means (Mason, 2013). Although they had trouble with the self-learning-based format at first, learners were able to adjust to it fast and discovered that it was useful and beneficial. Similar to this, Anderson, H.G (2017) explained that Learners who were taught using the self-learning-based teaching technique saw a significant improvement in their short-term performance. The pre-test and post-test outcomes of were evaluated by (Koo C. L., 2016) learners to evaluate the efficiency of the self-learning-based method and discovered that, despite some Learners having issues with the time necessary, there was overall a significant improvement. their performance has been enhanced.

According to (Sun P. et al, 2010), the instructor's function in the self-learning model is limited to acting as an advisor for all of the methods used to help Learners reach their individual goals. In 2011, Robertson (Robertson J., 2011) outlined how the self-learning approach involves Learners in the learning process by having them organise their tasks, evaluate their completion, and revise their objectives. In other words, using the self-learning educational technique gives Learners more control over their education because they are responsible for more aspects of their assignments (Klopfenstein B. J., 2003).

With the use of the self-learning approach, Learners can thoroughly examine the course contents and speed up or slow down their education in accordance with their particular needs. The self-learning approach, according to (Grandinetti M., 2013), can serve as a basis for lifelong learning. Stewart (Stewart, 2007) conducted research on the self-learning educational approach and found that Learners were driven by a strong desire to learn and gave their all to finish their courses in order to get work experience.

The Internet and social media, including Facebook and Twitter, are essential parts of college and university Learners' everyday lives, having an impact on them in many ways, including

their ability to learn (Cao Y., 2013). According to a report, university Learners are progressively incorporating computer-mediated social networks into their academic life, making them a significant part of their daily lives.

## **2. Methods**

### **2.1 Study Design**

Present study is exclusively focused on exploring the acceptance of self-learning-based model among Learners of ODL and gaining insights on improvising it. The study also gives an insight as to how acceptance of self-learning-based model yielding benefits among Learners of ODL.

### **2.2 Selection of Participants**

The participants are Learners of online and distance learning who have acquaintance with self-learning-based model. Learners categorically mentioned that the viewpoints, inputs, expressions, answers are their own and not of the company in which they work which they represent and they have gained this insight throughout their learning careers.

### **2.3 Data collection**

The Learners were interviewed over phone calls. This was chosen for the reason of suitability and convenience for both interviewer and interviewees. The authors have thoroughly reviewed the literature, using databases such Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar where these studies are listed. Using these resources, authors designed the preliminary set of questions which was based on literature review and questions were framed so that they should be able to extract the most relevant information. These questions were prepared to enable the authors to carry out semi-structured interviews.

### **2.4 Sampling Strategy**

Qualitative research uses snowball sampling methods extensively where samples consist of units which have similar interest (Biernacki and Waldorf, 1981). The method is used to reach out to a specific group of people who have similar traits and characteristics and it would be difficult to reach out to them otherwise. Self-learning-based model among Learners of ODL is very niche and specific areas and these are usually not known to all. Therefore, the snowball sampling method was found to be more appropriate for the present study. The sampling unit

consists of Learners who are from specific domains such as management, law, education and information technology.

### **2.5 Sample size**

Unlike to quantitative studies, qualitative ones are always sample size independent. The latter is influenced by the number of respondents, whilst the former is more motivated to explore phenomena. The saturation point in qualitative investigations depends on a number of variables, including the quality of the data, the scope of the study, the information provided by participants, and the study design (Morse, 2000). Because the current study is qualitative in nature and has a very specific focus, there won't be as many participants. The quantity and quality of the data are another crucial determinant of size; the more these, the fewer participants are required. The authors took interviews and decided to stop the interviews when saturation point was achieved and no new insights were emerging from the respondents. Saturation started coming from expert 15 onwards, so this study included 18 interviews as the final sample size.

### **2.6 Data analysis**

By using a qualitative research methodology, the main goal of this study is to get a thorough understanding of how self-learning-based models are accepted by online and distance learning Learners.

Structured content analysis, one of the most well-known approaches, is utilised as a data analysis technique because it can provide useful information by carefully analysing texts.

When doing content analysis, the writers employed the same methods as in quantitative investigations (Long and Johnson, 2000). Developing ideas for upcoming quantitative investigations is the goal of the qualitative content analysis, which never invalidates any theories (Mayring, 2014). Researchers should employ content analysis in a methodical and clear way in order to reap its benefits (Elo and Kyngäs, 2008). The raw data collected from interviews is used to perform latent analysis to derive relevant results.

### **2.7 Rigor**

The current study was carried out by four authors. Many activities were done simultaneously by all the authors in the sense of conducting a literature review, preparing semi-structured

questionnaires, getting time slots for interviews from experts, transcribing, coding, extracting themes, proofreading, finalising of manuscript, final submission, etc. All the authors consulted each other after each interview to discuss the insights given by the learners along with strategizing the future course of action.

### **3. Results and Analysis**

Most of the experts and learners mentioned and gave their inputs on the condition of anonymity, therefore they have been coded as R01, R02 and R03. All the discussions were conducted using other audio-visual means OAVM. The experts and learners belong to many fields including education, content development and the IT industry. The average time duration taken for interviews was 09.78 minutes.

**Table 01: Cluster analysis of respondents**

<b>S. No.</b>	<b>Cluster</b>	<b>Theme(s)</b>
1	Gen-Z	Ease of Use
		Practical Application
		Time/Duration
2	Millennial	Conceptual Understanding
		Applicability of knowledge gained

#### **3.1 Gen Z**

As per the research conducted by Michael Dimock, president of Pew Research Center, Generation Z, also called Gen-Z, zoomers, iGeneration, centennials, post-millennials, or Homelanders, term used to describe Americans born during the late 1990s and early 2000s. we have categorised the views of this group to get the better idea about acceptance of self-learning-based models among different age groups. Themes under this cluster are discussed in following paragraphs:

### **3.1.1 Ease of Use:**

Ease of use of any system determines its success. A system or model, which is not use-friendly may get out of the race sooner or later.

Sample verbatim as follows –

1. *If the self-learning course is available at the fingertips of learner, is user friendly and does not require much technological knowledge then popularity of these courses will be increase*
2. *The acceptance of self-learning material is largely based on the simplicity of language , rich content and powerful instructional design.*

According to respondents, ease of use of Self Learning Material is an Important aspect in its acceptance among Gen Z.

### **3.1.2 Practical Application:**

The practical application is how the knowledge learnt needs to be implemented in certain real-life situations. The mode of practical application along with theory gives everyone a clear explanation about the facts. Theory teaches about the experiences of others while by practically experiencing the particular task you can build your own experiences. Philosophically, knowledge is intangible but the practical application makes it tangible by applying those skills in practice.

Sample verbatim as follows –

1. *Today the education system mainly creates graduates with limited job opportunities. This is mainly because of lack of skills developed and practical aspects of all subjects taught.*
2. *To make self-learning-based model more acceptable , there has to be hands on experience backed to such models.*

Respondents are of the opinion that to Self-Learning Model can only get popularity if it is supported by practical examples, cases and in-built Virtual lab exposure.

### 3.1.3 Time/Duration:

Different Programs have different time duration to complete the same based on its content , learning outcomes and evaluation. We have asked experts and learners in ODL system to express their views on acceptability of Self Learning Based models and its relation with Duration required to complete the program.

Sample verbatim as follows –

*A self-learning-based program should not be time bound. There should exists learners' flexibility to read, refer and take tests.*

Maximum duration required to complete the program is calculated by considering various components. If a self-learning-based program is made free from time bounds, we may not have rigorous regulations on it. Here we contradict the sample verbatim in the sense that a program without any time bound cannot be regulated properly unless there are not commercial outcomes expected such as employability. Moreover, if a program is not time bound, there may be threat to relevance of some concepts in fast changing, technology sensitive, innovation hungry business processes.

## 3.2 Millennial

Researchers have clustered the responses in second category called millennials. A group of persons born in the 1980s or 1990s. Themes under this cluster are discussed in following paragraphs:

### 3.2.1 Conceptual Understanding

When it comes to education and certification, learners and experts fetch the conceptual understanding gained out of such certification. Most of the evaluations of short term and practical courses is based mainly on the conceptual understanding. We have identified this as one of the important themes to assess the acceptability of self-learning-based model among learners of ODL.



Sample verbatim as follows –

1. *Self-paced certifications should have measurable outcomes and clearly defined evaluation parameters. This will help recruiters to understand the conceptual understanding a learner achieved after having certification*
2. *We have ample of free content available to learn the concepts. Why one should pay and need certificate to prove that he/she got certain understanding unless he/she is applying for a job.*

Existence of conceptual understanding as an outcome of self-learning model has mixed views. We believe that, a course should generate strong conceptual understanding among learners to justify its applicability.

### **3.2.2 Applicability of knowledge gained**

Application of the knowledge is more important than to just acquire it. We emphasised on the applicability aspect of self-learning-based models to access the acceptance of the same among learners.

Sample verbatim as follows –

1. *Mentors in the field who can **not only be** instructors but also guest speakers and other industry professionals who can provide learner with priceless information not found in textbooks, as well as personal tales and feedback about their own life and work experiences can help Self Learning model more demanding*

A self-learning-based model should ensure that, its learners get the knowledge which they can apply in real life situations.

## **4. Implications**

The acceptability of self-learning-based models, which employ multiple platforms to automatically manage and certify learners, has grown over the past several years for a variety

of reasons, including the fact that they are straightforward, practical, and affordable. Concerns have been raised about the application and recognition of certificates obtained later as a result of the employment of such models.

Consequently, this study's goal is to look into these issues in India. By conducting semi-structured interviews with professionals and Learners in the fields of online and distance learning, this study adds to the body of literature, its findings.

Self-learning-based model can be regulated by regulatory authorities to provide it an authentic weightage so that the acceptability of such certification among recruiters rises. This would also help in reducing the cost of learning for both learners and facilitator of such certification. In addition, regulators have the ability to encourage such learning that are able to meet the requirements as per industry standards and put regulations into place.

## **5. Conclusion**

For a few reasons, self-learning-based models are currently undergoing a significant evolution. The first problem is that specialised learning is lacking in today's quick-paced world of information availability. The learner must commit time or money in order to get such specialised learning. Presence of high-quality, well-regulated self-paced courses would undoubtedly alleviate both issues. Second, since we live in the digital age, it is only natural to expect that this cutting-edge technology will aid in self-paced learning.

The purpose of the current paper is to demonstrate that there is a compelling need to examine closely how self-learning-based models are created and governed. We also contend that there should be an integration of behavioural aspects of learners and experts designing such model to make it user friendly and to align it to current industry requirements. In India, for example, the use of self-learning model has enabled hundreds of thousands of women to earn a degree, regardless of gender, caste, or social class. In South Africa, UNISA's Institute for Open Distance Learning contributed greatly to higher education. Virtual mobility, as a substitute for physical mobility, offers undeniable economic benefits for development policy-makers (UNESCO, 2020).

This study is qualitative in nature; hence it is subject to limitations like the inability to generalise the results. A qualitative article's goal places more emphasis on conceptualization

than generalisation (McCracken, 1988). So, adopting quantitative approaches may be given more focus in future studies.

More specifically, the components mentioned in the conclusions and conversations may be included in a survey, and a sizable poll could aim to measure the impact of the elements we noticed when speaking with the experts.

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