

## Investigating the Effectiveness of Distance Education Centers

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### ABSTRACT

Presented study was done with the purpose of evaluating the effectiveness of distance (remote) educational centers from the point of view of managers and authorities of Bandar-Abbas city in the year 1390. The community of study was all managers and authorities of distance (remote) educations of Bandar-Abbas city. The statistical sample was equal to actuarial community due to the limited number of authorities which was 30 persons. The questionnaire that made by researcher was used to collect information which its validity and reliability has been reported to be in appropriate level. The mean and standard deviation were used to analyze the collected data of descriptive Statistics and one sample T test was used for inferential statistics. The results of study showed that from the point of view of managers and authorities of distance education centers of Bandar-Abbas, these centers have low efficacy on promotion of culture of using the modern educational tools and methods among students and providing proper condition for enriching the student's scientific information by using the world wide information sources. On the other hand these centers have high efficacy on compensating the lost opportunities of education, reinforcement of scientific capacity and stamina of students by using the supplementary educational software, facilitating the scientific relation of students-teacher and students-student, providing new educational opportunities for employees without educational degree and encouraging uneducated group, generalizing and stabilizing a scientific and native educational system for acquiring a pattern which is suitable for uneducated group and providing infrastructure, hardware, software, content production by using the capacities of private sector as the second opportunity of formal education system. The article has been ended by discussing about the findings and the practical implications of findings about education.

**KEY WORDS:** distance, educational centers, authorities, students

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### INTRODUCTION

Human being needs education in today's word because of its complicated social life. Adapting to the social environment, occupation, family life and even spending leisure time and lots of other activities need persistent education. in today's world, families has put a great part of their educative role upon the organization and institutions which officially educating children and teenagers in certain stages with specific conditions and are assigning their duties one after another to higher stages. While these institutions have an undeniable importance, but it seems that they can't meet all educational need with a method which has been known as face to face education. It can be claimed that kindergarten, school and university can't guarantee a lifetime education all by themselves and with traditional methods.

It is obvious that curious human make changes and on the other hand tries to keep up with these changes and transformations and use all possible tools and supplies, in this regard and according to the current needs, social connoisseurs, education and training specialists and education experts, have researched and created a new method for education people and society and its publication.

One of these methods is distance education [1]. Distance education has defined as teaching or learning experience which transfers educational contents by using a wide range of technologies to the learners [2]. Autopiters is defining distance education as: distance education is a way of transferring skills and attitudes which specially has optimized for producing high quality educational content because of distributing the organizational work and responsibility and also wide use of specialized media and providing the opportunity of educating the learners at the same time, regardless of their locations [2]. Peters believes that distance education is an individual systematic organized structure which learners provided with purposeful educational content and progress of the learners is under the supervisions of the tutors which each one has his/her own responsibility and these goals can cover long distances through media [3]. The counterpoint of distance education is direct or in other word face to face education which come true through direct contact of teacher and students [4]. Holmberg describe this phenomenon as a sophisticated opportunity of learning which the physical distance of learners and donor organization (the university basically covered by an informing institution whom connect students and university together. education in such educational curriculums become possible via systematic processes which called "distance study" [5]. The effectiveness of distance education centers have been studied in different researches [6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13]. Won and Timothy

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[14] studied about present position of distance education and also taught lessons by distance education. The results of this study showed that distance education is still in its initial phase of growth and development. Lack of experience, sophisticated human resources, limitation of media and also rejection of this method by institutions and employers were the noteworthy points of distance education. Also there wasn't a significant difference between the students of conventional traditional universities and distance education in their academic performance and flexibility and ease of distance education for adult learners with personal preoccupation is confirmed. In a study of relation between methods of learning of adults learners in online courses of Pace university and prosperity and satisfaction of their learning, Klinger showed that despite the lack of significant relation between preferred learning style, prosperity and satisfaction of online learning, there were a significant interest and satisfaction of online learning in almost all of the adult learners who have been participated in this survey. The results of this study provided a model for future investigation about online education and adult learners. In a study about comparison between the results of learning in traditional classes and television courses, Beare [15] found out that there wasn't significant difference between the students of traditional courses and television courses. In another study which made by Ranor [16] which named "Feasibility study of having distance education classes in Iran's national oil refinement and distribution company" the results showed that most of the respondents asking to have such courses and showed a great interest to utilize the courses. A group of respondent believed that having such courses is depending on holding up seminars and initiating employees with such courses and their benefits and thought that lots of educational problems will be solved by holding up such courses. Again Ebrahimzadeh [17] in another study with the subject of "transferring from distance education university to virtual university" concluded that using information and communication technology in the process of teaching-learning and even education would be helpful to increase the quality of both and using an interactive multi-media computer will help learners to learn their favorite skills and knowledge with high level of proficiency in their desired pace and according to their abilities.

Distance education started on 19<sup>th</sup> century, based on post services and first distance education center ascribed to Isaac Pitman in Britain in 1840 [18]. Distance education in Iran first started with the aim of increasing educational coverage and then making up a way for increasing quality and transformation in content and method of education in 2004 [19]. Approximately a decade after the starting of distance education in Iran, this question has been raised that if these centers fulfill the predicted purposes or not and how much was the effectiveness of these centers in the field of distance education. Hence, based on the theoretical foundations and investigations, efforts will be made to survey the effectiveness of distance education of Bandar-Abbas from the point of view of its managers and authorities. So the present study it is about to analyze the effectiveness of distance education in Bandar-Abbas on promotion of culture of using the modern educational tools and methods among students, providing proper condition for enriching the students scientific information by using the world wide information sources, the range of effectiveness as the second official opportunity of educational system in compensating the lost opportunities of education, reinforcement of scientific strength and stamina of students by using the supplementary educational software, facilitating the scientific-investigative relation of students-teacher and students-student, providing new educational opportunities for employees without educational degree and encouraging uneducated group, generalizing and stabilizing a scientific and native educational system for acquiring a pattern which is suitable for uneducated group and providing infrastructure, hardware, software, content production by using the capacities of private sector.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present study is a descriptive survey. The statistical population of the study has to be selected through the managers, teachers and counselors of the executive centers due to the versatility of distance education employees, so in order to assimilate the employees, the management group has been chosen and forasmuch as the number of such centers are limited in Bandar-Abbas city, all the managers who working in high school grade in such centers formed the actuarial community and The statistical sample. Data collecting tool is a research made questionnaire which evaluate the effectiveness of distance education centers in 8 sections. The validity of questionnaire graded as appropriate by using the supervisor's comments and counselor and scientific resources and its reliability was equal to 0.95 according to Cronbach's alpha method. In order to analyze the data, in descriptive statistics section, the indexes of mean and standard deviation calculated and in inferential section, the one sample T test was used. The calculation of this research made by the SPSS Ver.16 statistical software.

## RESULTS

As mentioned earlier, the indexes of descriptive statics of mean and standard deviation are calculated for each of variables of the study. In table 1 mean and standard deviation of effectiveness range of distance education center is presented.

As you can see in Table 1 highest mean is related to Compensating lost opportunities of education and lowest is Using modern educational tool. in order to answer the research question and surveying the effectiveness of studied distance education centers, the mean scores of respondent compared in each field of effectiveness with theoretical mean of 3 with one sample T test. The findings are presented in Table 2.

As you can see in Table 2 in two fields of using modern educational tool and enriching the student's scientific information, the mean score of participants were lower than theoretical mean and the calculated T value is also significant. In other word, the distance education centers have low influence on these two fields but In other fields, the mean scores of

participants were higher than theoretical average and the calculated T value is also significant i.e. distance education centers have high influence on these fields.

**Table 1.** mean and standard deviation of effectiveness range of distance education center

Range of effectiveness	N	mean	Standard deviation
Using modern educational tool	30	2.31	0.56
Compensating lost opportunities of education	30	3.95	0.53
Reinforcing students scientific capacity	30	3.56	0.56
Enriching the students scientific information	30	2.56	0.73
Facilitating the scientific-investigative relation	30	3.37	0.63
Providing new educational opportunities for employees	30	3.84	0.52
Stabilizing a scientific and native educational system	30	3.68	0.53
Providing infrastructure, hardware, software, content production	30	3.56	0.68

**Table 2.** Comparison between mean scores of range of effectiveness and theoretical average by single group T statistical test

Field of effectiveness	MD	T value	DF	Significance
Using modern educational tool	-0.68	6.64	29	P < 0.01
Compensating lost opportunities of education	0.95	9.76	29	P < 0.01
Reinforcing students scientific capacity	0.56	5.51	29	P < 0.01
Enriching the students scientific information	-0.43	3.26	29	P < 0.01
Facilitating the scientific-investigative relation	0.37	3.26	29	P < 0.01
Providing new educational opportunities for employees	0.84	8.77	29	P < 0.01
Stabilizing a scientific and native educational system	0.68	7.06	29	P < 0.01
Providing infrastructure, hardware, software, content production	0.56	4.53	29	P < 0.01

MD= Mean difference, DF= Degree of freedom

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of presented study is surveying the effectiveness of distance education centers from the point of view of managers and authorities of such centers in Bandar-Abbas. As presented earlier in findings section, from their [managers and authorities o distance education center in Bandar-Abbas] view point, distance education has low influence on promotion of culture of using the modern educational tools and providing proper opportunities for enriching the student’s scientific information. on the other hand , such centers have high influence and effectiveness on compensating the lost opportunities of education, reinforcement of scientific capacity and stamina of students, facilitating the scientific-investigative relations, providing new educational opportunities for employees, generalizing and stabilizing a scientific-native educational system and providing infrastructure, hardware, software and content production. Findings are in conformity with the studies which have been made in this research area.

Generally the results of the study showed that distance education centers have high influence and effectiveness on scientific and hardware aspects like compensating the lost opportunities of education and producing educational content but have low influence in software fields like promotion of culture of using the modern educational tools and enriching the student’s scientific information. In future researches, obstacles of using modern educational tools and also cognitive and emotional consequences of using remote education system can be examined. In generalizing the findings, using the self-report questionnaire and also number of actuarial community which was limited to managers and authorities of distance education of Bandar-Abbas Should be considered.

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