**Distance education or distance from education**

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The integration of technology in [education](https://dailytimes.com.pk/568424/educational-institutions-in-sindh-closed-until-march-13-to-contain-coronavirus/) is blessing if properly used and professionally incorporated and is curse for the students if poorly planned. The correspondence-based education started in nineteenth century for sharing knowledge and assessing skills in specific disciplines. After independence, there was a major focus on industrialization and infrastructure development in the country. The Education for the masses and Higher Education for them remained subject of less priority. Then cameIndra Gandhi University in India and we were compelled to establishPeoples Open University in Pakistan during 1970s which is now a days known as Allama Iqbal Open University. The old-fashioned correspondence-based education model for teaching-learning was in use for almost two decades and then some experimentation of face to face and on campus requirements were introduced.

The conventional teaching-learning method involves interaction of students with teacher, peers, library (books), and he is also able to use laboratory facilities of the University. Whereas in distance mode of education students are expected to use self-paced learning method for reading the content. As there is no direct interaction with the teacher or with other students therefore many ideas and concepts remained unclear. It is an established fact that new knowledge needs to be built upon existing information and for this lecture method is one of the established ways which helps to introduce new concepts and provides opportunity to studentsto raise questions. In the absence of such face to face interaction most of the students of distance mode are compelled to use technology tools for searching and finding information relevant to their topics. The use of google and YouTube is increasing these days due to non-availability of teacher for guidance on daily basis. Again, due to unawareness of proper ways to find information out of these sources the students are left as a confused personality with little knowledge of everything and remain unclear about the processes.

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The lack of interaction students with teacher and among the students themselves also costs in terms of lack of confidenceand their understanding of the concepts in right manner. The competition among the peers is also missing part which most of the times compelsthem in conventional on campusprogrammes to do more for better grades or position in the class. The behavioral aspect of inspiration and motivation from the teacher is also missing thing in the distance education which is mostly present in conventional face to face teaching-learning system. Currently, some of the institutions are offering education through distance mode which is creating further distance from education and resultantly a confused generation of students is graduating in disciplines which require extensive reading, interaction, discussion and proper assessment. The commercialization of education and availability of job through political and other means is main reason of demand of all type of degrees. As Higher Education Commission considers all degrees at par whether these are awarded through conventional mode or through distance mode of education, therefore, people have access to power are just trying to fulfill requirements of degrees as a formality.

In order to maintain the quality of programs and of graduates produced by the Universities. All constitutional institutions are responsible to assure that standards and requirements of these programs are being met in desired manner. Further, it is core responsibility of the institution to find alternatives for face to face interaction of students with teachers, peers and course content. The best solution for this is deployment of Learning Management System (LMS) for distance education programs, which provides virtual connectivity to students with teacher, content and with his peers. It can be made mandatory for the external or private students as well. The institutions should have policy for enrolling all students of distance, external or private modeto the LMS and teachers should be given assigned workload as per rule for regular interaction with students in terms of Synchronous and Asynchronous mode. The content of the courses may be divided in the weekly readings, quizzes and peerfeedback on the discussion board of LMS. Students should be asked to visit LMS on daily basis and there must be some guidelines for sharing feedback on the content as well on the posts of the peers during each week of the semester.

The responsibility of teacher should be to correct or guide the opinions and ideas of students shared on LMS and if some students is not joining these virtual discussions online then he may be followed up for assessing the reasons of inactivity and guiding him to catch up the pace at which peers are performing in these LMS based discussion activities. There is also provision of making groups and assigning them tasks according to their choice or based on their performance in different concepts. The interactions through Synchronous mode are possible as different communication software are available free of cost these days.

Higher Education Commission has provided different tools through Pakistan Education Research Network (PERN) for teaching-learning and for research to all public and those private sector universities which have subscribed to it. These tools and services also include communication software and services for improving research-based write-up. The teachers and students can use these software and services for real time interaction which helps to focus on the course content. Teachers can teach maximum 250 students at a time and students can access lot of academic and research resources of the renowned organizations of different disciplines through PERN. The Universities should hold regular training and capacity building workshops for faculty and students to equip them with latest developments in the educational technologies.

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