ABSTRACT

This thesis aims to study the role of Information Communication Technology (ICT) in Distance Education context. It also aims at identifying the need for changes in Distance Education and institutes for implementing ICT. Another objective of the study is to evolve a model for ICT outcomes, which can serve as a guiding framework of learning for implementing ICT within the institutes.

Review of literature has identified important dimensions characterizing supportive environment for ICT. Information and communication technologies (ICT) have become common place entities in all aspects of life. Across the past twenty years the use of ICT has fundamentally changed the practices and procedures of nearly all forms of endeavor within business and governance. Within education, ICT has begun to have a presence but the impact has not been as extensive as in other fields. Education is a very socially oriented activity and quality education has traditionally been associated with strong teachers having high degrees of personal contact with learners. The use of ICT in education lends itself to more student-centered learning settings and often this creates some tensions for some teachers and students. But with the world moving rapidly into digital media and information, the role of ICT in education is becoming more and more important and this importance will continue to grow and develop in the 21st century. This paper highlights the various impacts of ICT on contemporary teacher training institutions of education and explores potential future developments. The thesis argues the role of ICT in transforming teaching and learning in distance education and seeks to explore the awareness of teacher educators about use of information and communication technology for effective teaching learning process and how this will impact on the way programs will be offered and delivered in the teacher training institutions in distance learning mode.

Based on the literature survey, a conceptual model for ICT Outcomes has been evolved. The study variables have been identified and relevant constructs have also been defined. Research hypotheses have been framed for each of these areas for the study.

The questionnaire-based survey has been carried out for institutes in education sector. The unit of analysis is the institute and teaching initiatives undertaken by the institutes in India.
(this also includes the multinational institutes which have offices in India). The questionnaire was developed through the inputs from the literature survey and the empirical case studies. After establishing the reliability of the questionnaire, it was mailed to various institutes selected through snowball sampling technique. About 381 responses were obtained from 29 institutes all over India, with some of the institutes responding for more than one questionnaire. The qualitative data collected through questionnaire survey has been validated for its constructs. Statistical analysis has been carried out for testing the research hypotheses. The conceptual model of ICT outcomes, evolved on the basis of literature survey has been empirically tested through vicariate and multivariate analysis of the responses received through the survey study.

The limitations of the study are outlined and specific suggestions have been made regarding possible future extensions of research learning study materialized in this thesis. It is hoped that this research may guide the institutes in implementation of ICT in a more efficient manner and new frontiers for distance learning may be opened up.