CHAPTER 6

Interpretation of Data: Implications of effectiveness of course delivery

6.1 Introduction

This chapter analyses and interprets the data presented in the previous chapter within a framework in order to identify factors relating to the effectiveness of the course delivery of the selected programmes. As discussed in Chapter 4 (Section 4.9), the framework used for analyzing data in this study is based on the reflective model of professional educational development proposed by Michael J Wallace (1991).

In the programmes selected for this study, the motivation of the learners in the programmes was to develop professional competence (skill development in terms of language proficiency and teaching). Development of professional competence can be of two kinds – getting a pass certificate at the end of a programme and continuous professional development to develop expertise in the profession. Both are important, but not necessarily complementary. While getting a professional certification is a priority relating to extrinsic motivation, most of the learners in the selected programmes were intrinsically motivated to attain the second type of professional competence as well. Developing professional competence in the second sense is a more complex process which requires enabling learners to develop their critical thinking and reflective skills. As mentioned in Section 4.9 above, keeping in mind the specific context of distance language teacher education context, the following framework based on Wallace’s (1991) Reflective model was prepared to analyze data in the present study by incorporating elements from the reflective model. For ease of reference, the model is reproduced on the next page:
The following sections discuss how the selected programmes inform and teach learners the knowledge required for gaining professional competence through various course delivery mechanisms. ‘Knowledge’ in this context is considered in terms of ‘received knowledge’ and ‘experiential knowledge’ (Wallace, 1991: 12-13), the first term referring to input of facts, ideas and theories, and the second referring to learners’ experience of professional action in the programme. The chapter analyses how far the course delivery mechanisms (print materials, assignments, and contact programme) facilitate the learning of each kind of knowledge, and how each type of knowledge influences the other in the context of the selected programmes.

6.2 Received knowledge as reflected in print materials

Analysis of the print materials of the six selected programmes revealed that they contribute to the received knowledge of the learners in varying degrees, giving learners inputs on theories and other insights relating to the professional practice of teaching. The following discussion will reflect the nature of received knowledge intended to be conveyed through the course contents.
6.2.1 The knowledge base

The knowledge base represented by the syllabi of the selected programmes was found to be both disciplinary (subject) knowledge and pedagogical knowledge which were transacted by the course materials in varying proportions. The course contents in all the programmes consist of more than 50 per cent disciplinary knowledge, but there is one programme (MAELT PSTU) which offers more than 80 per cent disciplinary knowledge through the print materials. In terms of pedagogy focussed programmes, this negatively affects efficacy, as the amount of disciplinary knowledge is not balanced by proportionate focus on pedagogy enhancement. For example, in the MAELT (PSTU) programme, there are disciplinary courses such as English Literature and Thought, Literary Criticism and Theory that do not clearly establish their contribution towards enhancement of pedagogical knowledge. More studies are needed to find out how this proportion of knowledge base influences learners’ classroom teaching in terms of how far it relates to their professional activity.

Besides these two kinds of knowledge, two of the programmes also include components on research knowledge. The presence of this component is a desirable part of teacher education programmes as it reflects the increasing emphasis on knowledge and skills of research as an important part of professional development of language teachers (Borg 2009, 2010).

6.2.2 Delivery of knowledge

This section will analyse what elements the print materials have incorporated to transform the knowledge base (disciplinary or pedagogical content knowledge) to received knowledge for learners. Richards (1991) states that a range of teaching and learning techniques, implemented with a diverse and flexible approach, needs to be used to transform the knowledge base into received knowledge. These techniques should feature in the key aspects of the academic process – acquisition (knowledge created by books, lectures, handbooks, etc. and also by discussion, brainstorming elicitation etc.), reflection (deep processing and active...
processing), *application* (applying new knowledge to the solution of practical problems) and *evaluation* (trainee evaluation of content and process, and assessment of course objectives).

The available literature in distance education shows that printed materials need to be self-contained and self-explanatory. The examination of the selected materials and experience of the learners revealed the difficulty that learners faced in understanding the materials (acquisition) which is the pre-requisite for being able to apply higher levels of cognitive skills like reflection. Most of the learners found the selected materials difficult in terms of packaging of ideas. Moreover, almost seventy per cent of the total number of learners needed to take help of other resources besides the materials to understand concepts.

In distance learning materials, problems of understanding arise due to the inadequate use of **access devices** such as introduction, content list, verbal signposts, etc. as such devices help learners navigate through the materials. In the course materials studied, it was found that some of the materials

- did not clearly state explicit objectives (MA ELT, PSTU)
- did not show the structure of the units clearly in the content list (MAELT, PSTU)
- lacked consistency in the style of presenting the objectives, where objectives are stated (PGDELT, OU)
- reflected mismatch between objectives and section headings (PGDELT, NSOU)
- did not differentiate course objectives from unit objectives (all materials except PGCTE, EFLU)
- had too general section headings (MAELT, PSTU)
- did not use icons to indicate the nature of the texts or activities (ALL)
• had little or no space for learners to make notes (MAELT NSOU; PGDELT, NSOU; MAELT, PSTU; PGDELT, OU)

• used very few verbal signposts and personal pronouns in some materials (MAELT, PSTU):

• used activities with very limited scope for using reflective or analytical skills (ALL except PGCTE, EFLU)

These limitations might lead to difficulty in comprehension and dependence on the other resources, because all these features or access devices promote self-learning among distance learners according to many studies available in the distance education context. Not exploiting these devices or not using these features sufficiently might lead to difficulty in learners’ comprehension which will ultimately result in dependence on other materials for comprehension.

The process of acquisition might be affected by the fact that learners’ reading strategies were not often taken into account. Whereas most of the learners who participated in this study took help of dictionaries or looked for contextual clues to negotiate difficult vocabulary, only three of the programmes include glossaries and incorporate contextual clues to explain difficult vocabulary in the texts.

The second aspect of the academic process, i.e. reflection has been encouraged in different degrees in the selected materials. Reflection involves two aspects in understanding and internalization of new knowledge – deep processing (developing an understanding of the underlying meaning of the new knowledge) and active processing (relating new knowledge to previous knowledge and experience). The examination of ‘access devices’ like advance organizers (described in Chapter 5) show that the materials of two programmes provide opportunities for reflection. The EFLU materials help learners build their knowledge on what
they already know by giving them opportunities to do activities on the basis of their own experience before they learn something new. The learners first try the activity, and then move on to the discussion of the new content. The NSOU materials help students to link new knowledge by giving examples from their familiar contexts. Moreover, review activities in the form of reflective questions (as in PGCTE EFLU materials) provide more opportunities for critical thinking as opposed to comprehension questions in the rest of the materials. Such activities can also help learners apply what they learn to solve practical problems.

The different delivery mechanisms in the course design described above might be attributed to the different perceptions that the course writers held about the materials writing process. It was found that a few course writers considered it not important to incorporate, in the materials, explanations and activities that are based on learners’ home situations and experience. One course writer even questioned how one could achieve it since distance learners’ came from diverse backgrounds. Another course writer felt that all the materials could never be relevant for learners since learners’ needs are diverse and they keep changing. These varied perceptions along with the lack of training in writing distance materials (only one course writer was trained) might have led to the lack of uniformity in the presentation of contents in the materials.

The following section deliberates on how the provision of assignments has contributed to the received knowledge of the learners in the programmes.

6.3 Contribution of assignments to received knowledge

Assignments, one of the limited tools for two-way interaction in a print-dominated distance programme, provide the scope for reflection, application and evaluation of what the learners learn. The knowledge received from the print materials becomes more purposeful when it is combined with interaction with teachers through assignments. The assignment feedback
system gives learners an opportunity to take part in discussions with the teachers about the course contents, which results in a two-way interaction as opposed to the one-sided input presented through print materials.

The programmes without the provision of assignments (MAELT PSTU and PGDELT OU) deprive learners of a vital tool of interaction, learning and reflection in the distance English language teacher education context, because the implications of effective assignments in a distance education programme are two-fold. The first implication is that assignments encourage learners to (i) negotiate the meaning of the contents of the course materials in the process of finding out answers to the assignment questions, and (ii) to relate the contents to their own teaching contexts through the given tasks. The other is that assignments provide an opportunity for interaction between learners and teachers through feedback. The first implication is related to the design of the assignments and the second to teacher feedback. Thus the provision of assignments allows learners to reflect on the received knowledge that the print materials offer and to review and construct their knowledge through interaction with their teachers.

The analysis of the assignments in the programmes which have the provision for assignments (NSOU and EFLU programmes) showed that the assignments were designed well, because besides encouraging learners to go through the contents, they encouraged learners to use higher order thinking skills and relate the contents to their own contexts.

However, assignments can be really effective only if the learners are given feedback on their responses to the assignments. If the learners do not receive any feedback on their assignments as has happened in case of 40 per cent learners in this study, learners are deprived of an opportunity to reshape their own ideas in the light of the academic inputs from the teachers.
Where the learners do receive feedback, the quality of feedback affects the quality of interaction. As discussed in the last chapter, some learners find the comments vague as they do not give them any concrete direction to improve their performance. A comment like ‘Fair’ does not give them any clue for what and how to improve their performance or develop their skills. One of the reasons behind this problem is the lack of orientation among the teachers regarding the role of assignment feedback in distance education contexts and their lack of familiarity with the practice of giving clear and constructive feedback. Besides revealing that not all teachers receive training on assignment evaluation, the questionnaire responses reflected some perceptions of the teachers, which contradict the principles of distance education course delivery. For example, the teachers commented that it was not necessary to offer moral and personal support through assignments. This hints at the need for more orientation to the teachers on assignment checking.

The timing of return of assignment with teacher feedback as found in the programmes can also affect the interaction. Learners often receive feedback just before the final examinations, which does not help them incorporate the feedback into their own learning, as their priority becomes the examination. In such situations, assignments do not serve much beyond the purpose of making learners go through the course materials, and do not contribute any further to their received knowledge.

Another issue relating to assignments in the context of the programmes in this study is the level of anxiety associated with assignment submission. More than any other academic discussions through the blogs, the blog interactions in the PGCTE EFLU programme reflect the anxiety the learners face while answering the assignment questions, and the need for more support for doing the tasks. Such negative emotions might affect the reflective skills of the learners. To emphasize the importance of emotion in reflection, Day (1999) states, ‘To ignore the place of emotion in reflection, in, on, and about teaching and learning is to fail to
appreciate its potential for positively or negatively affecting the quality of the classroom experience for both teachers and learners’ (p. 33). In the context of this study, though this is a virtual learning experience, negative emotional traits like anxiety can hinder learners’ ability to use their reflective skills while writing assignments. Such anxiety might discourage the application of higher cognitive skills like application and evaluation while learning received knowledge.

6.4 The role of contact programmes in delivery of received knowledge

Contact programmes provide another platform for offering and reinforcing knowledge and skills by catering to varieties of learning styles through discussion and practice. Though the contact programme in a general distance education programme is conducted mainly to clarify doubts, multi-directional interaction (learner to learner, teacher to learner, learner to teacher) offers positive conditions for higher levels of thinking, because it allays learners’ fear of isolation by allowing them to share their common academic problems and interests through interaction, and to work with each other to negotiate the tasks. Moreover, the contact programme can contribute to skills development of the learners of an English language teacher education programme directly by facilitating the practice of skills (practice teaching, lesson planning, language proficiency skills practice, etc.) during the sessions, with support of peers and teachers.

In this study, a mismatch of expectations from the contact programmes was noticed particularly in the EFLU programmes. While teachers regarded the contact programme as a platform for clarifying learners’ doubts, they felt that learners attended the programme to ‘learn’ the contents of the course materials from the teachers. On the other hand, many learners claimed that they read the materials before the contact programme and came to the contact programme for clarification. From these two contradictory perspectives, it can be inferred that learners are probably aware that they should ideally study course materials before
attending the contact programmes and this awareness gets reflected in their responses in the questionnaire. However, according to what the teachers experience during interaction, the learners do not prepare themselves before attending the contact programmes, and this results in the disappointment among the teachers. This mismatch might be attributed to the learners’ lack of realisation that distance programme expects learners to be autonomous. Because the learners were not autonomous learners, they did not realise the need for their contribution to the learning process, to enable a two-way interaction in the contact programme, and rather, expected to be directed by the teachers. Such a mismatch of expectations might lead to confusion among the learners leading to negative effect on learning through interaction with teachers.

The experience of the learners and teachers also reflected the use of a variety of teaching modes like lectures, group discussions and practical sessions in the contact programmes, though the primary mode was lecture. It was also noticed that learners in the programmes which were more pedagogy-oriented (PGCTE and PGDTE, EFLU) expressed the preference for practical sessions on concepts relating to methodology, while the learners in the content-heavy programmes (MAELT, PSTU) did not express any such dissatisfaction about the mode of teaching in the contact programme (though it was primarily lecture-based). A possible explanation for this might be that the greater exposure to varieties of teaching modes through pedagogical content knowledge leads learners to look for better methodology in their own training, whereas a high demand for learning disciplinary knowledge leads learners to be contented with receiving information through traditional teacher-fronted modes like lectures. A variety of learning experiences is a positive aspect of distance pedagogy programmes, as they facilitate meaningful interaction (dialogue) by helping learners to acquire knowledge, reflect on what they learn, apply knowledge through problem solving and evaluate their own knowledge.
The other type of knowledge that needs to be offered by a teacher education programme is experiential knowledge. The following is an analysis of how far the selected programmes give opportunities for learning experiential knowledge through the course delivery mechanisms.

### 6.5 Experiential knowledge as reflected in the practicum component

Experiential knowledge draws from the experience of professional action. ‘Professional action is that part of practical experience in which the trainees have to demonstrate their capabilities as classroom practitioners.’ (Wallace, 1991: 130)

Three of the selected programmes (MAELT, NSOU; PGDELT, OU; MAELT, PSTU) do not have any practice teaching component which implies that they operate entirely on received knowledge. As all the selected programmes are for both in-service and aspiring teachers, it is doubtful how the programmes will do justice to the development of professional practice of aspiring teachers with no or little experience of teaching. The absence of experiential learning opportunities hinders the development of their professional knowledge, since received knowledge and experiential knowledge are complementary to each other, and are both necessary for professional development. Analysis of the participant responses has shown that the teachers in such programmes are deprived of the reflective dialogue following their teaching. As such programmes operated entirely on the received knowledge, Wallace (1991) says that the effectiveness of such programmes for in-service teachers depends on how well they relate to trainee’s own reflection and practice. One way the programmes attempted to do it was by designing assignment tasks which encouraged learners to relate the contents to their teaching contexts (though MAELT, PSTU and PGDELT, OU had provision for neither assignments nor practice teaching). But the reduced or no dialogue through assignment feedback or lack of quality feedback did not help learners to reinforce or reflect on their received knowledge gained from the print materials.
Two of the selected programmes (considering PGCTE and PGDTE of EFLU as one programme since PGDTE is a continuation of PGCTE) have a practicum component as part of their syllabus where they conduct practice teaching or peer teaching. The programmes use sessions of the contact programme for practice teaching or peer teaching.

Learners and teachers of the programmes where practice teaching was a part of the curricula unanimously expressed how useful these teaching sessions and post-teaching dialogues were for pedagogical skills development. They also reported how the sessions brought a change to their teaching practice and attitude through practice and feedback. The knowledge and skills gained through such activities added to the pedagogical content knowledge of the learners.

However, some learners expressed disappointment over the feedback that they received from the teachers. The fact that learners in PGCTE (EFLU) considered the comments as ‘harsh’ implies that a more open-ended approach is needed where learners can participate more in the process of constructing knowledge about teaching principles. Probably ‘the balance between prescription and freedom’ (Wallace, 1991: 95) was not appropriate in such programmes.

The need for constructive feedback after class observation is more relevant in a distance teacher education programme where the learners are emotionally more vulnerable due to limited human contact with the teachers. Discouraging feedback can be considered as negative intervention which might lead to demotivation and low confidence, and result in a negative impact on learning and skill enhancement.

6.6 Structure of course delivery mechanisms and the reflective cycle

The selected programmes have very limited flexibility in the structure of the course delivery mechanisms in the sense that learners had little participation in the decisions taken with regard to the use of each course delivery mechanism. Learners had almost no other choice but to study course contents through print materials as no other media had been used for instructional
purposes. The timing and duration of contact programmes, the timing and manner of assignment submission and feedback, the timing of practice teaching were also pre-determined by the course providers according to administrative convenience which learners felt needed to be different to suit their needs. Below is a discussion of the perceptions of the learners in terms of these elements.

As mentioned earlier, the learner responses and behaviour reflected high level of anxiety associated with the assignments. The time of submission of assignments might have implications for the level of anxiety. The learners suggested that if they had been given an opportunity to discuss the course contents and assignments in the contact programme well before the submission of assignments, it would have helped them to be more confident in writing the assignments by reducing the level of anxiety and applying their critical thinking skills.

Learner feedback on the contact programmes showed that many learners were not happy with the way these were conducted. Almost everything relating to the contact programmes including frequency, duration and types of activities were pre-decided by the course providers. The learners’ responses revealed that this kind of predetermined and inflexible structure regarding the conducting of the contact programmes was not very helpful, as they could not meet individual students’ needs fully. Some learners reported that they would have benefitted with an increase in the number and duration of contact classes, while others felt that the schedule was hectic and sessions were too heavily packed with disciplinary knowledge. (in programmes with more than 20 days of contact programme). Some learners also commented that the contact programme was too short for adequate discussion (in 10-day or weekly contact programmes).

Many learners wanted a change in the timings of the contact programmes as well to facilitate learning. Many EFLU learners suggested that the contact programme should be held earlier
than the predetermined schedule to allow learners to avail face-to-face counselling while writing the assignment tasks and also to allow an interval between the contact programme and the term-end examinations. Some PGDELT-OU learners reported that it was not convenient for them to attend classes on weekdays, and that weekend classes throughout the year would be better for understanding and getting thorough knowledge, as is practised in the NSOU programmes where classes are held throughout the year on weekends. But the learners in NSOU programmes also feel the need for more human contact.

These perceptions of learners show that the majority of the learners feel the inadequacy of the face-to-face contact programme, which implies that the programmes needed to take more steps or measures to reduce the spatial gap between teachers and learners and between learners and learners. The fact that learners attending contact programmes of different durations (short or long or at different intervals) wanted more contact sessions implies that the amount of contact is not enough for the learners. If the programmes are unable to allow more face-to-face contacts with flexibility to meet learner needs, then this needs to be compensated by contact through other synchronous and asynchronous communication through technological interventions.

Besides printed course materials, contact programmes and assignments, use of technological advances for teacher-learner or learner-learner interface can help provide platforms for interaction for effective course delivery. The selected programmes used very few of such technology for instructional dialogue. Telephones and emails have long been used in distance education, primarily to collect or share information rather than for pedagogic purposes, and the selected programmes are not exceptions in this regard. Such contact with teachers helps learners stay motivated in a distance education programme, which indirectly contributes to effective course delivery. However, this support was not constantly available for learners due to interrupted connectivity and other reasons.
In the programme where blogs are used, the trend of interaction through the blogs shows that the blogs served more as a platform for interaction between the monitor and a learner than between a learner and a learner. Learners were seen using them for both academic and non-academic issues. The academic issues were mostly related to the assignments as discussed above. The non-academic issues were mostly related to logistic support that also has an important role to play in keeping learners motivated throughout the course.

Thus the other modes of interaction in the selected programmes are used for information and other logistical support rather creation of instructional dialogue. This implies that the programmes under study are mostly dependent on print materials for course delivery, and are yet to exploit the advantages of technology for minimizing learners’ sense of isolation and the gap between teachers and learners. This makes such programmes highly structured, providing little scope for accommodating learners’ contributions to the learning process and little control over the content of knowledge.

The highly structured nature of the course delivery mechanisms combined with less amount of interaction through limited modes of course delivery increases the ‘transactional distance’ (Moore, 1993) between the teachers and learners. This negatively affects the reflective cycle in a distance language teacher education programme where learners need to be continually supported by the course delivery mechanisms to facilitate the continuous reflection on received and experiential knowledge.

The following section looks at another dimension of effectiveness of the selected programmes. The methodology of teacher education has two functions – to inform and teach learners both in terms of received and experiential knowledge; and to provide exemplification of good teaching practice (Wallace, 1991: 156). The discussion so far has thrown light on the effectiveness of course delivery in terms of the first function of teacher education methodology, i.e. informing and teaching learners in terms of received and experiential
knowledge. The following section attempts to explore how far the selected language teacher education programmes carried out the second function of teacher education methodology, i.e. providing exemplification of good teaching practice, in the context of the selected teacher training programmes. By good practice is meant the use of a variety of teaching modes like lectures, tutorials, seminars, workshops, practical work, microteaching and fieldwork (after Wallace, 1991), and in the case of distance education, the media used for teaching and learning that helps the demonstration of good practice in the absence of adequate face-to-face teaching or training.

6.7 Exemplification of good practice

The analysis shows that the programmes exhibit different types of practices in their training methodologies. The selected programmes do include more than one teaching modes in their methodology. For example, the programmes with a research component (MAELT NSOU and PGDTE EFLU) require the learners to involve in workshop and project report writing respectively. Moreover, the programmes with the practice teaching component (PGCTE EFLU and PGDELT NSOU) require learners to do microteaching. However, the individual programmes do not incorporate a variety of teaching modes, probably due to limited provision for two-way interaction. There are very limited opportunities for contact between teachers and learners which can accommodate varieties of teaching modes and learning styles.

The methodology followed in the sessions of the contact programme also often reflects the traditional classroom environment of giving lectures and taking notes, which contradicts the pedagogy advocated by the programmes. The classroom methodology advocated by the materials in almost all the programmes reflects the recent ELT methodology which involves collaborative and communicative strategies. But heavy reliance on lecture method in the contact sessions contradicts these principles.
Some learners also express the need for more task-oriented and activity based sessions probably because they feel that that would help them more to develop their skills. Though many learners utilize the sessions for clarifying doubts, the contact sessions in the selected programmes can provide more support to the learners to enhance their language proficiency as well as teaching skills by engaging them in collaborative tasks (good practice).

As discussed earlier, the main instructional medium in each case was the print materials. It is argued that distance print materials are different from regular materials in that they try to simulate real teaching by making the teacher in-built in the materials. From this point of view, the materials can be judged to see how far they demonstrate good practice of teaching. To illustrate, the syllabi presented in Chapter 3 show that all the materials present components on methods and principles of English language teaching, none of which advocates teaching concepts deductively. The examination of the access devices in the last chapter showed that the various programmes reflect varying degrees of conformity to what they themselves advocate. The EFLU materials adopted an inductive method to present learning points (from activity to discussion), but the rest of the materials are hardly different from regular textbooks except the fact that they include the structural parts of the units like a content list, introduction and/or objectives, summary, etc. Their presentation of materials remains almost the same (explanation of concepts) as any other textbook.

But however well-designed the materials are in the programmes, they only provided scope for silent one-way interaction, which has limited roles in the practice of good teaching. They have not provided any scope for two-way meaningful dialogue, collaborative activities and tasks to enable learners to construct knowledge together with the teachers as part of a good teaching practice. For this to happen, besides print materials, other media are necessary in distance language teacher education context for demonstration/exemplification of good practice which will be discussed in more detail in the final chapter.
6.8 Conclusion

The discussions in this chapter identified the factors relating to the effectiveness of course delivery in distance English language teacher education in India (as stated in the objectives of this study) in terms of the reflective cycle (Wallace’s Reflective model, 1991). It analyses how far the course delivery mechanisms (print materials, assignments, and contact programme) facilitate the learning of each kind of knowledge, and how each type of knowledge influences the other in the context of the selected programmes.

The print materials, the primary instructional tool in the programmes, carry received knowledge in the form of both subject knowledge and pedagogical knowledge base with varying weightage to each type of knowledge. The proportion of the two types of knowledge can be a factor influencing the effectiveness of course delivery since a language teacher education programme is expected to be pedagogy-oriented with good proportion of pedagogical knowledge.

Another factor influencing the effectiveness of course delivery through print materials is the way the print materials incorporate techniques to handle the received knowledge by facilitating acquisition and reflection on the knowledge. The challenges that learners face in applying these two processes might be attributed to the inadequate use of access devices and varied perceptions of the course writers along with the lack of training.

A variable relating to effectiveness of course delivery through assignments is how far the provision of assignments allows learners to reflect on the received knowledge that the print materials offer, and to review and construct their knowledge through interaction with their teachers with the help of feedback system. The analysis showed that while the assignments were designed well encouraging learners to use higher order thinking and relate the contents to their own contexts, the feedback system was not robust enough to facilitate regular and
timely feedback with quality, and proper emotional environment (free of anxiety) for
knowledge construction.

The existing mismatch of expectations of learners and those of teachers during the contact
programmes might lead to confusions among the learners leading to a negative effect on
learning through interaction with teachers.

Moreover, heavy reliance on lecture method and lack of other modes of learning during the
contact programmes influence the gaining of received knowledge negatively in the
programmes, since learners miss opportunities to acquire knowledge, reflect on what they
learn, apply knowledge through problem solving and evaluate own knowledge through
varieties of activities in the presence of teachers. Thus the varieties of teaching modes and
learning experiences can be considered to be another factor contributing towards the
effectiveness of course delivery of the programmes.

Another important factor relating to the effectiveness of course delivery of the programmes is
the complementary role played by the received knowledge and experiential knowledge. The
absence of practicum component in three of the programmes suggests that they operate
entirely on received knowledge, and thus provide a weak support to learners for their
professional development.

The effectiveness of experiential knowledge gained through the practicum component is
affected by the approach taken while giving the tutor feedback. Evidence gathered through
learner comments in one of the programmes showed the inadequate balance between freedom
and prescription affecting the learners’ construction of knowledge negatively. This is
particularly relevant for distance language teacher education programmes where learners
have a higher tendency to get demotivated due to reduced contact with teachers.
Another factor relating to the effectiveness of the course delivery of the programmes is the **flexibility of rigidity of the structure of the course delivery mechanisms** in the programmes. The selected programmes have very limited flexibility in the structure of the course delivery mechanisms in the sense that learners had little participation in the decisions taken with regard to the use of each course delivery mechanism. Learners had almost no other choice but to study course contents through print materials as no other media had been used for instructional purposes. The timing and duration of contact programmes, the timing and manner of assignment submission and feedback, and the timing of practice teaching were also determined by the course providers according to administrative convenience which learners felt needed to be flexible to suit their needs. This might negatively affect the reflective cycle in a distance language teacher education programme since learners need to be continually supported by the course delivery mechanisms to facilitate the continuous reflection on received and experiential knowledge.

Finally, the inadequate **exemplification of good teaching practice** by the programmes is a negative factor relating to the effectiveness of course delivery of the programmes. The presentation of contents in most of the print materials was deductive as opposed to the principles advocated by the programmes. Moreover, the face-to-face contact was not fully utilized to accommodate varieties of teaching modes and learning styles since most of the sessions were lecture-based. Though the programmes included some other modes besides lecture like workshop, micro-teaching etc., a single programme did not offer many such varieties to the learners. Such insufficient exemplification of good teaching practice deprives learners of an opportunity to reflect on their professional experience to become reflective practitioners.
The next and final chapter will locate the selected programmes in the context of distance education pedagogy generations and then articulate the recommendations for effective course delivery, limitations of the study and directions for future research in the area.