

Economic Benefits of In-service Secondary School Teachers through ODL Mode of Learning: A Case Study

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Abstract: Since economics is regarded as an essential component of living, everyone in our society is impacted by it. Everybody wants to benefit from the educational system, whether it is traditional or Open and Distance Learning. This research discusses the economic returns experienced by in-service secondary school teachers who use the ODL form of learning. The main purpose of this study is to find out the financial benefits of B.Ed. ODL learners who access learning while earning. To improve secondary school students' education, the West Bengal Board of Secondary Education, in partnership with NCTE, organized a two-year B. Ed. program through the ODL mode for in-service secondary school teachers who need training. This program ran from 2013 to 2015. For this study, the researcher chose a qualitative research approach. In the qualitative research design, the case study method has been chosen. The case study was done on a selected group of trained in-service teachers from West Bengal's Burdwan District. The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with a selected group of trained teachers for data collection. The findings indicate that the ODL teacher training program provided financial benefits to the trained in-service secondary teachers. After finishing the B. Ed. degree with success, the trained teachers experienced three benefits. They completed their training while working as teachers, received monetary benefits at their current jobs, and became qualified teachers.

Keywords: B. Ed, Economic Benefits, Inservice,Learners,ODL.

I Introduction

Education is widely acknowledged as a powerful driver of economic progress and individual empowerment (1). In contemporary society, the aim of education has expanded to encompass advancing the values of a metropolitan, competitive, and consumer-driven culture (2). It plays a pivotal role in a nation's socio-economic development, particularly through the enhancement of human capital. Teacher education, in particular, significantly influences both human capital growth and economic progress. To navigate evolving political, social, and economic landscapes, teachers require strong reflexive skills. This adaptability fosters a culture of continuous learning, enabling educators to refine their teaching methods and enhance professional growth (3). For a nation to thrive economically, its workforce must possess sufficient and essential skills. However, many developing countries struggle with economic advancement due to skill and knowledge gaps in various sectors. (4) emphasizes that teacher training is crucial for preparing educators with the competencies and attitudes needed to integrate sustainable practices into their teaching. Similarly, (5)Hsieh et al. (2012) highlight challenges such as aligning teacher preparation with educational reforms and addressing the diverse needs of learners. Developing a robust education system that provides equitable opportunities for all is fundamental to national progress. Teachers form the backbone of this system, playing an indispensable role in shaping educational outcomes. The internationalization of teacher education is increasingly valued for its anticipated academic, economic, socio-cultural, and political benefits (6). A competent and well-prepared teacher is essential for students' holistic progress and development. Teacher learning

or training is an ongoing process of acquiring knowledge and refining teaching abilities. Teacher Education Programmes are structured courses designed to transform learners into effective education professionals.(7) Philip et al. (2023) demonstrate that access to high-quality, standardized education leads to substantial improvements in learning outcomes at a broader scale. These programs empower teachers to contribute to the national goal of Education for All, uphold traditional values while addressing contemporary needs, and prepare for future challenges. Education is a dynamic process that engages intellect, emotions, and conscience. It requires the guidance of skilled facilitators to inspire and mentor students. Teacher education equips future educators with advanced professional tools, enabling them to guide students in discovering, evaluating, and synthesizing educational experiences. By fostering these competencies, teacher education ensures that educators can navigate the complexities of modern education and lead the next generation toward success.

Open and Distance Learning (ODL) has profoundly influenced teacher education, particularly in areas such as accessibility, flexibility, professional development, and innovative teaching practices. By improving access, enhancing resource availability, and ensuring flexible learning opportunities, ODL has transformed teacher education, equipping educators to meet the challenges of modern teaching environments. (8) delve into the financial implications of integrating ODL and Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in education. Their analysis highlights key cost factors, including infrastructure, content development, teacher training, and ongoing support. They emphasize the importance of financial planning in making ODL a sustainable model for teacher education. (9)Harreveld (2010) presents a capability approach to ODL, particularly in the context of in-service teacher education. He argues that ODL should go beyond content delivery to develop teachers' practical skills and professional autonomy. This approach aims to empower educators, especially those in remote or underserved areas, by equipping them to apply their learning in context-specific ways, thereby improving their practices and addressing unique challenges.(10) Ghosh (2012) traces the evolution of ODL from traditional methods to technology-driven approaches, highlighting its transformation over time. The study explores the benefits of ODL, such as accessibility, flexibility, and cost-effectiveness, while also addressing challenges like quality assurance and learner engagement. These insights underscore the importance of maintaining high standards in ODL to ensure its continued success. (11) examines the determinants of ICT-based ODL programs and their impact on national economic growth. The study underscores the role of technology in improving accessibility and effectiveness in education, ultimately enhancing the quality of teacher training. By integrating ICTs, ODL can serve as a powerful tool for fostering professional development and supporting broader economic progress. ODL has emerged as a dynamic and transformative model for teacher education, combining technology with innovative practices to create accessible, flexible, and effective learning environments. By addressing challenges and leveraging its potential, ODL continues to shape the future of teacher training. There are two categories of teacher education programmes.

- **Pre-Service Teacher Education Programmes.**

- **In-Service Teacher Education Programmes.**

In our present study, we talked about in-service teacher education. Through in-service programmes, educators can expand or deepen their understanding of the subject matter, instructional strategies, and evaluation techniques needed to execute a new or current curriculum. They can also get support in effectively collaborating with parents and other community members. A wide range of programmes is included in in-service teacher professional development, which is intended to encourage and assist teachers who are currently employed and working in classrooms in their professional growth. Enhancing teachers' knowledge, abilities, and dedication to become more proficient in lesson planning, teaching, evaluating students' learning, and carrying out other duties within the school community is the aim of in-service professional development. Reaching this objective is crucial since one of the key elements influencing successful student learning and high-quality education is the role of the instructor.

II Modes of in-service teacher education

Here are some common modes of in-service teacher education:

II.a Face-to-Face Mode

The traditional, in-person training and professional development sessions are referred to as the "face-to-face" style of in-service teacher education. These meetings take place in real places, like conference halls, training facilities, and schools. Instructors directly communicate with facilitators, subject matter experts, and other attendees when they attend workshops, seminars, conferences, or training sessions. Face-to-face communication offers chances for quick feedback, networking, teamwork, and practical learning exercises. It promotes involvement and a sense of community among participants by enabling one-on-one communication, Q and A sessions, and live debates.

II.b Distance Mode

Teachers who are physically distant from the training provider are given opportunities for professional development as part of the distance form of in-service teacher education. Under this approach, teachers receive instructional help, resources, and educational materials via mail, phone calls, or broadcasts. Teachers can receive educational videos, lecture recordings, or printed materials via distance learning, which they can access and review whenever it's convenient for them. Due to scheduling conflicts or geographic restrictions, distance learning can accommodate teachers who may not be able to attend in-person courses.

II.c Online Mode

Teachers can access professional development opportunities through internet-based platforms and resources while enrolled in an online in-service teacher education programme. In this approach, online platforms are used to access webinars, interactive modules, training resources, and virtual classrooms. Teachers can work at their own pace, participate in online forums, hold discussions, do assignments, and access materials at any time and from any location. Teachers can combine their professional development with their current obligations by using the flexible online mode. Additionally, it makes it easier to communicate via online chat rooms, video conferences, and forums with academics and specialists from around the globe.

II.d Mixed Mode (Blended Learning)

In-service teacher education that incorporates components of both in-person and online formats is referred to as blended learning or mixed mode. Teachers engage in both online and in-person activities when using this mode. For instance, a workshop or seminar may consist of follow-up online components where teachers participate in additional conversations, finish assignments, or access additional resources, in addition to on-site sessions when educators come together for lectures, group discussions, and hands-on activities. Mixed mode combines the flexibility and accessibility of online learning with the advantages of in-person interaction, instant feedback, and networking.

Every in-service teacher education mode has advantages and disadvantages of its own, and the choice of a mode depends on several factors, including the professional development program's objectives, the availability of technology and resources, the needs and preferences of the teachers, and geographical and temporal constraints. Today, a lot of teacher training programmes use a mixed-mode approach, incorporating online and in-person instruction to give teachers a flexible and comprehensive learning environment.

III Important guidelines for creating professional development programmes for in-service teachers.

III.a Consider in-service programmes as part of a continuum of professional development

A learning continuum that starts with preservice education and progresses through times of practice teaching and the school-based inquiry ends with an instruction or mentoring period that introduces new teachers to full-time teaching, and is followed by an ongoing programme of continuous professional development over a lifetime, supports, and supervision, is how preservice teacher education and in-service teacher professional development programmes should be designed. Each level should ideally build on previously learned material and abilities and be guided by data regarding the abilities of teachers and the academic success of their pupils, in addition to teacher performance requirements.

III.b Involve teachers in planning programmes

Policy and curriculum change typically serve as the driving forces behind the planning of in-service teacher professional development. National, regional, and local education authorities oversee this planning, sometimes with the help of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and foreign funders. To make sure that their needs and the needs of their students are met, educators must participate in the creation of the format and subject matter of in-service training. Teachers will feel more invested in and supportive of the programmes if they are involved in the planning process and have their reality taken into account. Planning and delivering in-service programmes should involve staff from institutions that offer preservice programmes as well. This will improve continuity between professional development phases and promote cooperation and coordination between college and school staff. In addition to participating in programme planning and execution, school heads and district or regional officers in charge of observing, assisting, and grading teachers should also have a thorough understanding of the reforms. It is crucial to remember that each nation handles programme planning and execution differently; therefore, there will probably be some variation between nations and programmes.

IV Objectives

IV.a Objectives of the current study are as follows

1. To discover the benefits of in-service ODL learners.
2. To describe the economic benefits of in-service ODL learners.
3. To investigate the types of economic benefits that in-service ODL learners receive.

IV.b Research Questions

1. What is the perception of economic benefits among the in-service school teachers?
2. What are the economic benefits derived by in-service school teachers?
3. What is the contribution of economic benefits among the in-service school teachers?

IV.c Delimitation of the Study

The current study only focuses on the Open Distance Learning System in the Purba Bardhaman district of West Bengal during the in-service secondary school teachers' B. Ed. degree program, which Netaji Subhas Open University, in partnership with NCTE and the West Bengal Government, hosted in the academic year 2013–2015.

V Literature Review

It is difficult to keep the professional standards of school teachers in the current educational system. The central figure in any educational system is the teacher. According to the National Knowledge Commission of India (12), improving teachers' professional capacities is crucial to raising the standard of education overall (13). Through interactions in both workshop and classroom settings, in-service education is a process that involves the acquisition of knowledge as well as modifications to attitudes, skills, dispositions, and practices (14). Education is one of the main factors that contribute to human capital. Numerous studies have demonstrated that the development of human capital is a prerequisite for economic growth in industrialised nations (15). The expansion of information has produced compelling new motivations for people to pursue higher education to develop their skills and capacities (16). Due to the shortage of qualified teachers' quality education has been hampered in Pakistan (17). That is why high-quality teacher education is needed for national development. Occupational education and planning are much more essential for teacher education for the betterment of the learners (18). Government education policies can improve educational outcomes at school levels (19).

VI Benefits of In-Service Teacher Education

Without a doubt, in-service education will continue to fall short of meeting society's changing needs for pre-service education and teachers' effectiveness in the workplace. The National Policy on Education (NEP 2020) placed a strong emphasis on the value of teacher in-service training, allowing education to be effectively used to further national goals. As a result, the policy declares that teacher education will continue to consider modifications to curriculum and methods. Teachers will encounter advancements in their field daily. The development of in-service training will be a crucial component of teacher education that never ends. There will inevitably be some gaps in the pre-service training we provide for teachers, regardless of how effective it is. Teachers' in-service education will keep filling up these gaps, such as those in assessment methods and library services education, guidance, and counselling, among other things, and will be methodically scheduled so that completing several of these courses successfully will result in additional credits and/or count towards future progress.

VI.a Research Methodology

For the present study, a qualitative research design was deployed, and a case study method was chosen. For the sample, a group of in-service teachers were selected. A tool interview was taken for gathering data.

VI.b Population and Sample

The population for the present study considered all the in-service secondary school teachers who completed B.Ed. degree programme through the ODL mode in the year 2013-2015 in West Bengal State. The sample was drawn with the help of a lottery method under the probability sampling technique. First one district was chosen, then the Kalna sub-division was selected. In Kalna subdivision there are Kalna 1 and Kalna 2 Block. From each block, five Gram panchayet were chosen. From ten Gram panchayet ten secondary school teachers were selected through a lottery method and a teachers group was created. A group of teachers included male and female teachers have been considered for the study.

VI.c Data Collection and Interpretation

For the data collection from the above-mentioned group, the self-made questionnaire has been standardised through a validity and reliability process and piloting on the different groups before final

data collection. Semi-structured interviews were done with the help of a standardized questionnaire including open-ended and close-ended questions. For validity questionnaire has been sent to a group of experts and modification done as per their suggestion. Questionnaire reliability was established through the test-retest method of and this value was estimated as $r = .70$. Face-to-face interviews were done individually and in groups. All the opinions and suggestions of the participants were noted down and preserved.

After collecting the data following interpretations were made which are – Many in-service teachers appreciate the flexibility offered by ODL programs. These programs often allow teachers to continue working while pursuing their degree, which can be a significant advantage for those balancing work and family responsibilities. One participant said that –

'The completion of a professional degree can be achieved by him due to the ODL B.Ed programme.'

For some, ODL B.Ed programs represent an opportunity for professional development and career advancement. These programs may offer teachers the chance to deepen their subject knowledge, develop new teaching strategies, and enhance their credentials. Some participants said that –

'Professional development can be facilitated by the ODL B.Ed degree.'

On the other hand, some teachers may find it challenging to balance the demands of teaching with the requirements of an ODL program. Managing coursework alongside full-time teaching responsibilities can be demanding, and some may struggle to find the time and energy needed to excel in both areas. One of respondents described that –

'Maintaining both school and training simultaneously is found to be very difficult.'

The quality of instruction in ODL B.Ed. programs can vary depending on the institution and the resources available. Some teachers may feel that they receive excellent support and guidance from their instructors, while others may encounter issues such as limited interaction with faculty or insufficient learning materials. Many teachers expressed that-

'Financial benefits are enjoyed after obtaining an ODL B.Ed degree.'

One teacher said that –

'Respect from other teachers and students was received after the B.Ed degree was obtained.'

VI.d Limitations and Recommendations

The study was limited by a small sample size group of in-service secondary school teachers with the help of qualitative data analysis. Future research could be done from larger sample sizes and other measures of the economic benefits on in-service secondary school teachers.

VII Results and Discussion

ODL mode provides training opportunities for untrained teachers. Untrained teachers received knowledge-based teacher education and skills through ODL mode. Untrained teachers became trained

teachers. Trained teachers distribute their knowledge and skills to their learners, and learners improve their learning. They became trained teachers. They got an increment in their existing job. They have done their training while they are on the job. All the untrained secondary teachers benefited from the ODL mode teacher training programme while they were on the job in the years 2013–2015 in the state of West Bengal. The government of West Bengal arranges such a training programme for the betterment of the pupils at the secondary level without hampering the normal duty schedule of the teachers or the normal class schedule of the learners. The West Bengal government and untrained teachers both benefit through ODL mode of learning of In-service teachers.

VIII Concluding Remarks

Teacher education offers significant economic benefits by equipping individuals with the skills and knowledge necessary for stable, well-paying teaching positions, ensuring financial security. It plays a pivotal role in creating a skilled workforce, which drives national economic growth through enhanced education outcomes. Furthermore, teacher education programs generate employment opportunities in training institutions and related sectors. By raising educational standards, these programs also elevate the earning potential of future generations, fostering a cycle of economic progress. In many societies, teaching is a highly respected profession, enjoying considerable prestige due to cultural emphasis on education. For instance, in China, the traditional value placed on education, coupled with historical political, economic, and social influences, has resulted in stable, generous salaries and additional benefits for teachers (5). Similarly, in India, teachers—revered as gurus—hold a position of great honour, rooted in the cultural and historical traditions of the Guru-Shishya (teacher-student) model. This tradition elevates teachers to a status comparable to that of parents and even divine figures. The societal esteem for teaching in India, akin to China, underscores the critical role of education in personal and societal development. Festivals like **Guru Purnima** further celebrate the contributions of educators, highlighting their role as nation-builders. Teacher education benefits society both economically and socially. Economically, it enhances income potential and increases productivity, while socially, it upholds values of respect and prestige. For in-service secondary school teachers, particularly those using Open and Distance Learning (ODL) modes, there is an even greater potential for economic and professional growth. ODL minimizes financial burdens by reducing costs associated with accommodation, travel, classroom facilities, and staff absence. It also integrates learning into the workplace, alleviating travel stress and time wastage. ODL further enriches human capital by improving productivity and efficiency, retraining the workforce to adapt to new demands, and lowering educational costs through research and digital resources. Additionally, it creates pathways for career advancement, enabling vertical mobility and access to higher job opportunities, ensuring that teachers remain competitive in an evolving professional landscape. In this way, teacher education through ODL offers a sustainable model for individual and societal progress.

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