

EVALUATION OF THE QUALITY OF DISTANCE EDUCATION: METHODS AND APPROACHES

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The work analyzes methods for assessing the quality of distance education and the key factors that influence it. Methods such as surveys, performance analysis, and accreditation are examined. Factors including infrastructure, instructor preparation, and student motivation are highlighted. Recommendations for improving distance education are proposed, including course updates and involving students in quality assessment.

INTRODUCTION

Distance education (DE) has become a significant tool in the education system, particularly in recent years. With its expansion, the necessity for evaluating the quality of educational services has emerged. The objective of this paper is to analyze the primary methods and approaches for assessing the quality of distance education, as well as to highlight the key factors that influence this evaluation. In the context of globalization and rapid technological advancement, the evaluation of DE quality becomes not only relevant but also essential for ensuring the competitiveness of educational institutions.

I. CONCEPT OF QUALITY IN DISTANCE EDUCATION

The quality of distance education can be defined as the degree to which the educational process aligns with established standards, student expectations, and labor market requirements. Quality assessment encompasses various aspects, including course content, which must be relevant and comprehensive, conforming to contemporary standards. The effectiveness of teaching methods—utilizing technologies and methodologies that incorporate interactive elements such as forums, video lectures, and assessments—also plays a crucial role. Student support, including the availability of consultations and assistance from instructors, as well as access to additional self-study resources, is vital. Additionally, learning outcomes, which reflect the level of achievement of educational goals by students, including both academic success and the development of practical skills, are fundamental components of quality.

II. METHODS FOR EVALUATING THE QUALITY OF DISTANCE EDUCATION

1. Surveys of Students: One of the most common methods is surveying students and instructors. Surveys can be both quantitative and qualitative, enabling the collection of data regarding the opinions and satisfaction levels of participants in the educational process [2]. Advantages include ease of data collection and the potential for obtaining feedback from a large number of participants, with anonymity promoting more honest and candid responses. However, disadvantages include potential biases in responses, as students may seek to provide "correct" answers, and limitations in the depth of analysis due to the time required for processing open-ended questions;
2. Performance Analysis: Evaluating student performance—through test results, exams, and other forms of assessment—allows for judgments regarding the quality of education. It is essential to consider not only average grades but also performance trends [3]. Advantages include objectivity and the availability of quantitative data that can be easily analyzed and compared, as well as the ability to identify problematic areas and students requiring additional support. However, this method may not always reflect the depth of material comprehension and can be influenced by the complexity of assignments, while varying assessment formats may complicate result comparability;
3. Observation of the Learning Process: Observing classes and the interactions between students and instructors provides qualitative data about the learning process. This can include direct observation and video recordings [3]. It allows for a detailed examination of interactions and the identification of strengths and weaknesses in the educational process, as well as the possibility of analyzing non-verbal communications and the overall atmosphere within the group. However, this method involves significant time investment and labor-intensive data analysis, as well as the potential for subjective researcher perceptions to influence conclusions;
4. Professional Accreditation: Accreditation of educational programs by independent organizations can serve as an indicator of quality. The accreditation process involves evaluating course content, teaching methodologies, and learning outcomes [3].

Positive aspects include objective assessments that align with international standards and increased trust from students and employers towards accredited programs. However, high accreditation costs and the lengthy nature of the process, along with potential bureaucratic challenges, can be drawbacks;

5. **Analysis of Feedback and Recommendations:** The collection and analysis of feedback from students, graduates, and employers can also be an important method for assessing the quality of DE. This can encompass both formal and informal feedback [1]. The advantages include direct access to information regarding students' real experiences and impressions of their education, as well as the opportunity to identify long-term educational outcomes such as employment. Disadvantages include the complexity of quantitatively analyzing informal feedback and the risk of obtaining distorted information due to sampling limitations.

III. KEY FACTORS INFLUENCING THE QUALITY OF DISTANCE EDUCATION

1. **Technological Infrastructure:** Access to modern educational platforms and tools, such as Learning Management Systems (LMS), provides convenience and effectiveness in the educational process. The quality of internet connectivity and the availability of necessary devices also play a significant role [2];
2. **Instructor Preparation:** The competencies and experience of instructors in the field of distance education are critically important. Instructors must be prepared to utilize modern technologies and develop interactive and engaging courses [3];
3. **Student Motivation:** The readiness and ability of students to self-organize and maintain self-discipline affect learning outcomes. It is important to implement strategies that foster motivation, such as rewards for achievements and the creation of a competitive atmosphere [1];
4. **Support and Feedback:** The presence of support systems, mentorship opportunities, and the ability to receive feedback from instructors and mentors facilitate deeper material comprehension. Regular consultations and discussions assist students not only in

addressing current issues but also in developing critical thinking skills [2];

5. **Course Adaptation to Student Needs:** Individualizing the educational process and allowing for choices in topics and formats enhances student engagement and better meets their needs [3].

IV. CONCLUSION

The evaluation of the quality of distance education is a multifaceted process that requires the application of various methods and approaches. It is essential to consider both quantitative and qualitative aspects to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the state of the educational process. Given the rapidly changing technologies and student needs, the continuous improvement of quality assessment methods will be a key factor for the successful implementation of distance education in the future.

Recommendations for Organizing Distance Education:

- educational institutions should periodically review and update course content to ensure alignment with contemporary requirements and trends;
- investments in training and professional development for instructors can significantly enhance the quality of distance education;
- involving students in the quality assessment and feedback processes can contribute to improving the educational experience and increasing satisfaction.

V. REFERENCES

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