

# TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE QUALITIES OF A GOOD DISTANCE EDUCATION TUTOR

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## ABSTRACT

Distance education has perfectly adopted individual and experiential learning. However, distance learners are faced with numerous problems that if not properly handled can cause many of them to drop out of the programme. This calls for training tutors who can effectively handle such learners to minimize their problems. At one of such training workshops participants' perceptions about the qualities of good distance education tutors were assessed. The thirty one respondents

were made to respond to a pre-training questionnaire containing sixteen items on the qualities of a good distance education tutor. The results showed that respondents generally agreed on almost all the stated qualities of a good distance education tutor. The quality of "having good knowledge of the subject / course" received the highest rating of 4.58 followed by "stimulating and challenging learners to put in further efforts and encouraging students who want to give up (4.55)". Some specific comments to support their answers include "experience is needed in whatever one does, failing to plan is planning to fail, anyone who wants to help others must be welcoming, and prompt submission of marked assignment scripts helps students to identify their weaknesses for correction purposes". The conclusion is that respondents already had a broad range of knowledge of the characteristics of a good distance education tutor probably due to the fact that they are professional teachers.

**Key words:** Technical, vocational, distance education, open learning, counselling.

## RÉSUMÉ

*L'éducation à distance a parfaitement embrassé l'étude basée sur l'expérience et l'étude individuelle. Néanmoins, les apprenants qui poursuivent des cours à distance rencontrent un tas de problèmes qui doivent être bien adreessés, sinon beaucoup d'apprenants risquent abandonner le programme. Il faut donc former des instructeurs capables d'effectivement enseigner aux apprenants de façon à minimiser leurs problèmes. Au cours d'un atelier destiné à la formation des instructeurs, la perception des participants à l'égard des qualités qui font un bon instructeur à distance était évaluée. Trente-et-une personnes sondées ont répondu à un questionnaire pré-atelier comprenant seize questions portant sur les qualités d'un bon instructeur à distance. Les réponses obtenues indiquent que les personnes sondées étaient généralement d'accord avec presque tous les qualités d'un bon instructeur à distance mentionnées. La qualité d' "avoir une maîtrise en la matière" a reçu 4.58 qui est le plus haut point, suivi par la qualité de "motiver les apprenant à travailler plus fort tout en les encourageant à ne pas abandonner le programme (4.55). Certains des remarques en support de leurs réponses étaient: "l'expérience compte dans quoique l'on fait, refuser de plannifier c'est refuser de réussir, celui qui veut assister les autres doit être accueillant et le prompt présentation des notes des devoirs corrigés permet aux apprenant d'identifier leurs forces et faiblesses et les corriger, etc." La conclusion tirée est que les personnes sondées avaient déjà une bonne connaissance de différentes qualités d'un bon instructeur à distance peut-être à cause du fait qu'ils sont des enseignants professionnels.*

**Mots-clés:** technique, "vocational," l'éducation à distance, l'étude ouverte, l'orientation professionnelle

## INTRODUCTION

Teaching and learning are opposite sides of the same coin since a lesson is not taught until it has been learned. Teaching therefore can be thought of as a process that facilitates learning. In the teaching process the teacher has an important role to play because he/she acts as a catalyst, actively stimulating learning (Farrant, 1980). This implies that the role of the teacher is very important in any teaching strategy, especially as his/her direct participation can range very widely from complete control over what is learned to minimal intervention (Farrant, 1980). For example in schools which use formal teaching methods, the teacher is the source of almost all the knowledge that children acquire in class, whereas in those that use informal teaching methods, the teacher simply helps his/her pupils to make efficient use of learning resources that are available (Farrant, 1980).

According to Farrant (1980) a good teacher is the one who has a good understanding of what his pupils need to learn and also of their capabilities for learning. The teacher is able to judge how much he/she is able to intervene in each pupil's learning and knows the most effective way of providing this assistance. Thus, the skills of teaching lie in knowing who, what and how to teach and also being able to judge when. Efficient teaching in a school demands of the teacher a sound knowledge of all the pupils, together with the ability to relate the content, methods, sequences and pace of his/her work to the individual needs of his/her pupils, using the environment and appropriate media to support him/her. By giving careful consideration to such issues, and by supplementing direct teaching with indirect support,