Students' views on the advantages and disadvantages
of Open Distance Learning versus traditional On-Campus Learning
in a Master's degree course for language teachers in a British university

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【Abstract】 Open Distance Learning（ODL）is a growing force in the academic world. Both within and across national borders there is a demand from students to be able to improve their education without having to relocate and give up work. Especially for higher level qualifications it is not practical for married people, or people living overseas to abandon their careers, salaries and families to become a full-time On-Campus（OC）student. Whilst educational outcomes can be monitored to ensure there is no discrepancy between the standards achieved between the two modes of delivery, there remain lingering doubts as to whether the experience of ODL students is inferior to that of OC students.

This research seeks to compare the experiences of ODL and OC students who have completed what is essentially the same Master's degree programme in Teaching English as a Foreign Language at a British university. The research was conducted by a self-administered questionnaire which combined Likert style questions with open-ended sections. Although the population sample sizes are small（14 ODL students, 10 OC students）, there are still some statistically significant differences revealed by a one-way ANOVA on SPSS. The results show that ODL students are as, if not more, satisfied than OC students with their mode of study. That is not to say that problems with ODL did not emerge, but that they were not significant barriers to studying in this way. The implication of this research is that especially in the case of mature students seeking higher qualifications; ODL is a viable way of course delivery.

【Keywords】 Open Distance Learning, On Campus Learning, Learner autonomy

Aim

Much has been written on the relative advantages and disadvantages of Open Distance Learning（ODL）and On-Campus（OC）Learning（e.g., McGrath, 1995; Broady, 1995; Cowan, 1995）from the perspective of academics in the field, but relatively little from that of students. ODL is becoming more and more necessary in providing education to those who cannot study in the traditional manner, so the experiences of those who participate in ODL are vital in improving later courses as continuing education becomes more main-stream.

The aim of this study is to compare the advantages and disadvantages of ODL and OC learning as perceived by students on the same Master's degree programme in Teaching English as a Foreign Language（TEFL）. Do ODL students feel they are being disadvantaged?

Introduction

Work and residence

McGrath（1995, p.5）notes that "distance learners have greater freedom to choose what, when, where, and how to learn". For language teachers, lack of mobility may be a key issue. Often, teachers who have established roots in the country which they have moved to will be unable to take time off work for full-time study, or will be unable to study in other countries, because of family commitments, for example, and see distance education as a viable option for upgrading their knowledge base and qualifications. For the students in this study, i.e., language teachers, a Master's is imperative if the students harbour ambitions of working in higher education.

From theory to practice

One of the difficulties for teachers studying full-time is that they sometimes return to their classrooms and use the same

methods they had used before going away to study, often because they have had no opportunity to teach whilst on campus. ODL students, on the other hand, remain in post and have greater opportunities to put theory into practice as they are "presented with opportunities to shape their learning so that it is relevant to who they are and where they are at any given time" (Aldred, 1996, p.65).

Learner autonomy

Cowan (1995) notes the importance of autonomy, emphasising how students can concentrate on aspects of courses that are interesting and skip those sections that are not. Students can also progress at a pace they choose. However, Broady (1995) notes that there are difficulties in developing learner autonomy in isolated ODL situations, and that theory in particular is daunting when tackled alone, as is analysing one's own teaching.

Despite Broady's concerns, there is every reason to believe that modern ODL can encourage learner autonomy. The new technologies are a key influence in this, as they allow learners to carry out sophisticated worldwide online searches for learning material; in addition, the ease of communication by email allows for learners to consult quickly if they are having confidence problems.

Isolation, insecurity, and lack of communication

Cowan (1995) feels that communication in the ODL environment is a poor second to the classroom when it comes to communication. Bolton and Unwin, (1996, p.40) agree, saying that ODL students "cannot benefit from learning directly from others through discussion". Aldred says ODL learners often report "feelings of insecurity, lack of self-belief, and difficulty in assessing their own progress" (1996, p.68). At the same time, there are indications that this problem is not as widespread as suggested. In a survey of 100 ODL students Rangecroft et al. (1999) found that opportunity for contact with other students was something students did not value as highly as the academics.

Lyall and McNamara (2000, p.107), in an investigation of Australian students, noted that ODL students "accepted isolation as a part of this choice, and had devised strategies to overcome this", that "[i]solation from the university due to geographical distance and issues of time had made these students independent learners" (Lyall & McNamara, 2000, p.109), and that "lack of support from other students and teachers did not seem to be a great concern for interviewees, although they all felt that on-campus students 'had it easy'" (Lyall & McNamara, 2000, p.113).

Probably the greatest sense of isolation is in academic terms: ODL students simply do not have access to the range of publications that an OC student can find on campus, although this situation is now improved by the ability of university libraries to make core readings available online, and to provide borrowing facilities for ODL students.

Structure of the OC and ODL Master's course in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (*TEFL courses*)

Although the course content for the OC and ODL versions of the MA TEFL are quite similar, the study and assessment systems are quite different. The most important differences relate to length of courses, degree of choice in both course selection and assignment topics, and assessment deadlines.

Course duration

Both courses involve completing six 20-credit course modules and a 60-credit dissertation. The OC course is taken full-time in one year, with two semesters for coursework, and one semester for the dissertation. The ODL courses takes a minimum of 30 months and a maximum of five years, with four months usually allowed for each of the six modules, and six months for the dissertation.

Assessment

ODL students receive assignment questions at the beginning of each 4-month module, and are expected to submit their assignments at the end of each module. OC students have tighter assignment deadlines for different modules, with some assignments having to be completed in four days. OC students can negotiate assignment questions for some modules whereas ODL students cannot, however they can choose from a list of pre-set questions that usually involve classroom research.

Tutorial support

ODL students are assigned a personal tutor. The tutor monitors their progress at least once a month, and comments on draft essays when students want this. Groups of up to 10 OC students have meetings with a tutor on campus, but the tutor is not allowed to comment on draft work.

Course variety

For modules 4-6, OC students can choose five courses from a list of thirteen (only three of these are assessed); ODL have no such choice and must follow the set three modules.

Feedback

Feedback on assignment for both OC and ODL courses comes in the forms of typed notes. The feedback for the ODL students is roughly three times as extensive as that for OC students; this is because the university believes that ODL students need more feedback as they cannot visit or talk with the lecturers.

ODL students receive feedback within six weeks of submitting an assignment; OC students receive it any time from one week to one month after submission. ODL students always receive feedback at least two months before the next submission is due; OC students often submit assignments before receiving feedback on previous assignments.

Method

The first draft of the questionnaire was drawn up by the authors, choosing areas that both courses had in common, issues that the literature had highlighted as being problematic in some way, or from conversations with students. It was then amended after consultation with a professor from the university who was involved in both the ODL and OC programmes, so that the content was relevant and the format easily understandable. It was then shown to the head of the English program who approved its suitability. The draft questionnaire was then piloted with two students. A few minor changes were made as a result and neither student was asked to fill in the final version.

For the Likert scale questions a value from 1-5 was given to the answers, 'Strongly Disagree' receiving a value of 1 and 'Strongly Agree' a value of 5. The scores for rating the course content were already in numerical value so did not need to be changed. The results for these parts of the questionnaire were then entered into an SPSS (10.1) database and a One-way ANOVA run, to see if the difference in scores were significant. All tables are the result of a One-way ANOVA. Significance is marked at the 0.05 threshold.

The Likert scale statements were supplemented with an 'any other comments' section, as recommended by Stevenson (1998) as student feedback is more useful when open-ended.

The self-administered questionnaire was handed to OC students once the course work had been completed but before the dissertation was due to be submitted. Students were under no obligation to return the questionnaire; 10 out of 15 students returned it; a response rate of 67%. The questionnaire was completed once all courses had been taught, but not before all grading and feedback was received for modules 5 and 6. The dissertation had not been submitted. The OC students in this study were full-time Master's students at a British university. The students on the OC program all graduated in 2000.

The ODL students, who graduated in 1999 or 2000, were all resident in Japan, as this was the first country in which the ODL programme was run. Subsequently, the programme has become world-wide, but it was not at this time. It was sent as an attachment to 24 students, all of whom had completed the programme in its entirety; 14 students responded, a response rate of 58%. The ODL students were comprised of eight women and six men.

There were some interesting differences between the two populations. In the OC population there were six students under 30 years of age (60%) compared with only one (7%) on the ODL course. There were no students aged 40 or over on the OC course, compared with six (29%) on the ODL course. In terms of teaching experience, none of the OC students had more than 10 years experience, and only one (10%) had more than six, whereas eight out of fourteen (57%) on the ODL course had more than 10 years experience and 29% had more than six years experience. In terms of place of work, only one of the OC students worked at university or college (10%), whereas five (36%) did so on the ODL course. A similar percentage worked at high school (50% OC, 43%, ODL). Six of the ten OC students (60%) were non-native speakers, but only four (29%) of the ODL students were. For a more detailed discussion of the populations of typical OC and ODL students and the impact this has on course design, see Shortall and Evans (2005). Generally speaking, the ODL populations on these two programmes over a 10 year period show that the OC population is younger, less experienced, more likely to be female and to be non-native speakers. The ODL population is older, more experienced, more likely to be male and more likely to be native speakers.

Ethical Considerations

The researcher asked the students to participate in this research. The questionnaire was anonymous and participation was voluntary. The research was approved by the head of the English programme at the British university.

Results and Discussion

Significant differences are marked with an asterisk in each table, and p values are indicated for each significant difference. Although the populations are small, some significant differences did emerge.

Despite having tighter deadlines, OC students were generally more satisfied than their ODL counterparts, although there were no significant differences between the two groups on this question (Table 1). This may be in part due to a 'halo' effect: OC students know their lecturers personally; ODL students often do not. OC students were unhappy with the tight deadline only for the Module 1 assignment, the following student comments being typical:

Four days is too short a period to produce a quality essay. (Native speaker –NS)

Table 1: Student evaluation of assignments for modules 1-6

Statement	Mode	1	2	3	4	5	6	Mean
I've had enough time to complete assignments	OC[a]	2.5	3.8	4.1	3.56	4.11	3.89	3.66
	ODL[b]	3.43	3.43	3.36	3.36	3.86	3.5	3.49
I've had sufficient choice of essay topics	OC	3.7	3.9	3.9	4.11	4.22	4.11	3.99
	ODL	3.86	3.71	3.79	3.86	3.71	3.62	3.76
The assignments are relevant to my teaching	OC	3.7	3.7	3.9	4.22	4.11*	4.11*	3.96
	ODL	3.64	3.58	3.71	3.71	3.42*	3.23*	3.55
Mean	OC	3.3	3.8	3.97	3.96	4.15	4.04	
	ODL	3.64	3.57	3.62	3.64	3.67	3.45	

[a] n=10 for all OC statements and modules
[b] n=14 for all ODL statements and modules
ANOVA* $p < 0.05$

Stop the one-week exam essay. The assignments would be quite enough for us. (Non-native speaker-NNS)

As ODL subjects are in full-time employment, there are added time pressures:

Here the phrase 'I've had enough time' implies 'I managed to spare enough time by grossly cutting down my leisure activities. (NNS)

I think it is very difficult for Japanese full-time workers to complete the course. (NNS)

In terms of topic choice, OC students were often more satisfied than their ODL counterparts, particularly for modules 4-6, which allow for assignment questions to be negotiated. Aldred (1996, p.68) points out that negotiation is an advantage of traditional on-campus learning as it provides "more opportunities for individualisation and negotiation of content relevance than distance education". The popularity of assignment negotiation with OC students is evident in the following comment:

The work I instigated was my favourite part. (NS)

ODL subjects showed both positive and negative responses to the question of topic choice:

I could always find one or two topics which I was really interested in and could relate to my teaching. So I really didn't have difficulties in deciding which topic to choose, and could always enjoy working on the assignments. (NNS)

I found it difficult to decide on the topics in the first year. Some seemed very interesting but in my case those topics turned out to be too theoretical and too broad to focus on, which resulted in the low points. (NNS)

OC students rated assignments more relevant to their teaching than their ODL counterparts, perhaps not only because they can negotiate assignment questions, but also because they have a wider range of courses to choose from. This difference is significant for modules 5 and 6. This is probably due to the fact that OC students can choose a course which is most relevant to their teaching and to their interests, while ODL students had no choice.

Hyland (2001, p.222) notes that feedback is very important to distance learners as it may be 'their only opportunity to get information on their performance'. OC students found feedback to be more helpful than did ODL subjects, although differences were not significant (Table 2). The more positive OC attitudes may again be due to a 'halo' effect, and also due to the face-to-face access they have to the lecturers who mark their work.

Only one OC student made an open-ended comment about the helpfulness of feedback:

Again, varied and highly individualistic, though generally the comments were insightful and are a result of detailed analysis of the essays. (NS)

Another OC student was critical of feedback:

Most comments were too general and tutors didn't clarify much when asked to do so. (NS)

There were twice as many positive comments than negative comments on the feedback for ODL students.

Generally, I think I received useful and detailed comments which could improve my work. (NNS)

All the feedback was detailed and very helpful. (NNS)

In terms of promptness of feedback, both groups gave relatively low ratings, with significant differences for modules 2 and 3. For ODL students, delays in receiving feedback are particularly problematic as "Failure to ensure rapid turn-around time in marking and feedback is one of the most common complaints made by open and distance learners" (Morgan & O'Reilly, 1999, p.55). Typically, it takes about six weeks for

ODL students on this programme to receive feedback, a problem identified by a number of ODL subjects:

Very helpful feedback on all the assignments, but at the same time, late. (NNS)

For OC students the turnaround time is faster, although they sometimes do not receive feedback on one module before having to submit another, a problem noted by one OC student:

The marking system, where you do not get feedback on an essay, until you get three back together. (NNS)

For detail of feedback, there is very little difference between ODL and OC students, with one positive OC comment:

Feedback usually reflects content but not much about academic style. (NS)

A number of ODL subjects emphasised the usefulness of the detailed comments:

Feedback was good and thorough. (NNS)

All the feedback was detailed and very helpful. (NNS)

As discussed earlier, much of the literature on ODL warns of the dangers of isolation. For this reason, the importance of tutorial support is seen as critical（Morgan & Morris; 1994, Stevenson, Sander & Naylor 1996）. The difference in ratings for tutorial support was very nearly significant（$p=0.08$）, indicating that ODL students are more satisfied with their tutorial support

than OC students（Table 3）. One OC student lamented receiving tutorials in groups, while two others questioned the dedication of some of the lecturers:

I expected to receive personal tutorials but this was done in groups; therefore I don't feel my personal needs were catered for. (NS)

General feeling that teaching was, to some lecturers, not a priority. (NS)

ODL students have a clearly more positive attitude to tutorial support:

I think the success in the distance-learning mode depends on tutors very much. I was very lucky and happy since I had a very good relationship with my tutor. （NNS）

I received informative and useful advice from my local tutor. The [university] system, which has local tutors to support distance students, has worked excellently for me. (NNS)

As mentioned in the introduction, some studies found that ODL students did not feel at a disadvantage, and this is borne out with these students. For ODL students, contact with their peers can be made by e-mail, and the university has set up an automatic e-mail list that allows students to exchange ideas about academic matters and to aid one another in finding references（e.g., Ng, 2001）. These relatively recent developments

Table 2: Student evaluation of feedback for modules 1-6

Statement	Mode	1	2	3	4	5	6	Mean
Feedback has been generally helpful	OC[a]	3.8	4.2	4.1	4.25	4.4	4.0	4.13
	ODL[b]	4.0	3.9	3.86	4.0	3.7	3.7	3.86
Feedback has been prompt	OC	3.3	3.9*	3.9*	3.25	3.8	3.25	3.57
	ODL	2.9	2.42*	2.86*	2.86	2.53	2.53	2.68
Feedback has been detailed	OC	3.7	4.2	4.0	4.0	4.2	3.76	3.98
	ODL	4.21	3.79	4.0	4.21	3.7	3.77	3.95
Mean	OC	3.6	4.1	4.0	3.83	4.13	3.67	
	ODL	3.7	3.37	3.57	3.62	3.31	3.33	

[a]n=10 for all OC statements in modules 1-4, n=5 for modules 5-6
[b]n=14 for all ODL statements in modules 1-6
ANOVA* $p< 0.05$

Table 3: Student evaluations of tutors/lecturers' helpfulness and the support of other students

Statement	OC[a]	ODL[b]
Tutors/lecturers have been helpful	3.8	4.42
Contact with other students has been helpful	4.1	4.21

[a]n=10
[b]n=14

have helped counteract what Tait（2000）refers to as the 'thinness' of ODL student experience, a point noted by some ODL students:

I thank my course mates very much. One of the students suggested starting e-mail correspondence. We were totally free to ask for comments, help, useful books and articles, exchange information and encourage each other when we felt down or nervous. This feeling of connecting with others prevented us from feeling isolated in distance learning mode.（NNS）

I had some very helpful e-mail contacts. We discussed a little and shared resources. I feel the amount of contact and what one gets out of it is completely determined by each individual.（NS）

The courses listed in Table 4 are the courses that both ODL and OC students take; there are other courses which only one mode might study. At first glance, results here seem a little confusing: three courses scored significantly higher on presentation than their ODL counterparts, while one ODL module scored significantly better; for clarity of explanation, ODL significantly outperformed OC on three modules, while

Table 4: Student rating of shared courses by presentation, clarity of explanation, relevance to their own teaching and level of interest

Course title	Mode	N	Presentation of material	Clarity of explanation	Relevance to teaching	Level of interest
[1]LTM	OC	10	3.1	3.2*	3.8	3.6*
	ODL	11	3.9	4.36*	4.63	4.5*
[2]SLA	OC	10	4.8*	4.7*	4.3	4.7
	ODL	11	3.8*	3.91*	4.54	4.37
Pedagogic Grammar	OC	10	4.5*	4.4*	4.1	4.0
	ODL	11	3.5*	3.6*	4.18	3.81
Written Discourse	OC	10	4.4*	4.5	4.4	4.1
	ODL	11	3.63*	4.0	3.9	4.37
Socio-linguistics	OC	10	2.7	3.0	2.9	3.1
	ODL	9	3.56	4.11	3.67	4.11
Spoken Discourse	OC	10	4.1	4.1	2.9	3.1
	ODL	11	3.8	4.28	3.67	4.11
Lexis	OC	10	3.2*	3.1*	3.6	3.7
	ODL	11	4.1*	4.37*	4.28	4.18
Testing	OC	7	3.0	3.0*	4.0	3.14
	ODL	11	3.45	3.9*	3.8	3.7
[3]ELT Management	OC	5	3.6	3.8	3.2	4.0
	ODL	9	3.4	3.7	3.3	3.67
Syllabus and Materials	OC	10	4.1	4.2	4.7	4.3
	ODL	11	3.63	4.0	4.0	4.0
Mean	OC	10	3.75	3.8	3.5	3.78
	ODL	11	3.68	4.02	3.98	4.08

[1] *Language Teaching Methodology*
[2] *Second Language Acquisition*
[3] *English Language Teaching*
ANOVA* $p < 0.05$

OC significantly outperformed ODL on two; and for level of interest, ODL significantly outperformed OD on one module. There were no significant differences for relevance to teaching.

There are a number of reasons for these differences. ODL students receive bound written materials for each course, and all of these materials follow a standardised format, whereas OC students receive face-to-face lectures. This means considerable consistency in the ODL materials, at least in terms of presentation. It also means that OC ratings should vary considerably in accordance with the ability of each lecturer to present and explain materials. In essence, then, when face-to-face lectures do not go well, they get lower ratings than the ODL materials. ODL students graded the courses within a narrow range, usually a three or a four with an occasional five, whereas the OC students used the whole spectrum from one to five and were far more emphatic in their grading.

Juler（1990）also notes advantages for ODL, in that OC subjects in his study felt disadvantaged because they did not receive the ODL materials. The booklets can also provide interaction if well written. Subjects commented on how they could relate the materials to their own teaching, how they could interact with the materials, and the value of being able to study at any time they wanted:

Booklets written by tutors and lecturers have been very informative and I enjoyed relating what were written there to my classrooms. I had written a lot of my questions and opinions in the margins of the textbooks, so it was like discussing with the textbook writers, and I used the ideas when I worked on the assignments. (NNS)

OC students' comments reflect the wide ranges of opinions about the quality of face-to-face lecturing, and how this depends very much on the performance of individual lecturers:

Disappointed more than anything, with the highly abstract and theoretical content of a majority of lessons. A general feeling that what was taught was not really applicable to the realities of teaching TEFL. (NS)

Very good course. I found the lecturer to be a highly engaging, serious-minded, and challenging instructor. His classes were well-prepared, organised and structured. I also found his handouts, to be extremely helpful as they contained personal commentary. Not only were they highly readable but opinionated! (NS)

Access to books "is a problem at the heart of distance learning in the higher education context, and is acknowledged by many course providers and librarians"（Stephens, 1996, p.58）. This study reinforces that impression.

ODL subjects clearly see this as a problem, and many of the students in Japan, regarded this as the single biggest drawback to ODL study（Table 5）.

Table 5: Student rating of access to books and course practicality

Statement	OC[a]	ODL[b]
I've had enough access to books and materials	3.6	2.79
The course has been practical	3.2	3.9

[a]n=10　　[b]n=14

Access to books and other references for the first assessment task was very difficult for the first module. Access became easier as I proceeded with the course and made some contacts and learned where to look. (NS)

I would have dearly loved to have access to the library. I would have to say that no access to a 'real' library was the worst. (NS)

Some OC students did mention the facilities available to them as being one of the best aspects of OC learning, although the library facilities were not exempt from criticism:

The books in the library are not very up to date especially about CALL （Computer Assisted Language Learning）. They are nearly 10 years old. (NNS)

For ODL students, practicality is the greatest advantage of this mode of study. ODL students frequently commented on the fact that they could immediately put theory into classroom practice:

We can apply what we learn in the course for our daily teaching easily and get

feedback to what is written from the facts in the classroom directly. I think this is the strongest point to take from the course in distance mode. (NNS)

I could relate what I had learned to my classrooms very easily. I often tried some of the new ideas which arose from my learning in my classrooms. It was possible that I read something in the textbooks in the morning and tested it in the afternoon classroom. Also, it was easy to collect classroom data when I did assignments. (NNS)

For OC students the lack of a practical component is a serious drawback. Not having access to their own students they were unable to put into practice any of the theories they had studied:

A teaching practice section should be introduced. (NNS)

No access to students. This would have been very helpful if we'd wanted to try out some tasks or activities that we'd done on the course. And it would have been helpful for our dissertation in getting data for experiments or surveys. (NNS)

Table 6: Student satisfaction with the mode of study

Statement	OC[a]	ODL[b]
I'm glad I studied this way	3.7	4.36
I would recommend this course to others	3.7	4.36

[a]n=10
[b]n=14

Although the difference in student satisfaction between the courses was not significant（Table 6）, it does indicate that ODL students were content with their course, and that they would recommend it to others.

Conclusion

Despite expectations to the contrary, ODL students show overall contentment with their mode of study. Indeed, they generally value their studies more highly than do their OC counterparts. It is possible that this is because they began the programme with lower expectations than OC students, but the responses suggest that ODL is at least the equal of OC learning in terms of learning outcomes.

This questionnaire shows that most of the projected disadvantages of ODL can be overcome through careful planning, both by the course provider and the individual student. Isolation was not a huge problem, and the majority of students were able to form networks and get sufficient support from within their host country.

As far as academic support is concerned, the relationship between the ODL student and the tutor is perhaps an advantage of this mode of study. The tutor can become familiar with the work of an individual over all six modules of the course, so will be able to identify and correct weaknesses in an individual's work. In comparison, the OC student does not have one-to-one support, but the comments suggest that discussions with fellow students can fill this void.

As predicted in the literature, distance can be alienating when it means waiting for communication from the centre or from tutors. Any form of helplessness is frustrating and this shows how important it is that course providers respond promptly, be it to questions, sending materials or providing feedback to students. In developments on this program since this research was conducted, students are able to attach work to emails, so any delays are not attributable to the mode of study itself.

The human domain can be seen also in how students regarded the individual component courses. Whereas ODL students rated the individual courses quite consistently, there was great variation in the OC section due to how the class was taught. This is both an advantage and disadvantage of ODL. Text can be examined and enhanced by many academics, so the end product is predictably high. However, in the classroom, there is a dynamic between one teacher and one class. The results showed clearly that when a teacher connects well with a class, the experience is better for a student than the written word, but if there is any problem with the teaching, then a text is preferable.

For the students, the most important aspect of ODL is that without it, they would simply not be able to pursue an MA. Married, older individuals in particular, can simply not quit work and study full-time. Access to literature remains a frustration. It is now possible to get almost anything that the OC student can access, but not with the same immediacy. Having to order or request someone to scan something for you is different to being able to browse a well-stocked university library. Therefore, although the problem is shrinking, it is still true that OC students are more content.

OC students were keen on having a practical component introduced to their Masters. Although it is not the fashion for an MA to have a practical component, it should be possible for a university in an international environment to organise such a component if there is a demand for it. Certainly, it would provide a focus for OC students, and the ODL students experience shows how valued the ability to turn theory into practice is.

The size of this survey of student views was small, so one should be careful not to extrapolate its findings too broadly. It should be noted that this research was on a Master's level course, so the population is older and perhaps more capable of meeting the challenges of ODL than a younger population might be. Indeed, Simpson（2006）sees older students and the pursuit of a higher level qualification as important predictors in a student's chance of successfully completing an ODL course.

Continuing education is a necessity of modern life, but as has been discussed, it is increasingly unfeasible to expect older workers with families to stop work while they update knowledge and skills. Within nursing, Schweitzer and Krassa（2010）find that cost, inability to get time off and childcare and family

responsibilities are the main barriers to continuing education. However, Jones et al.（2010）report on an off-campus international Master's program run out of California, USA, in which participants met for one month a year either in Thailand or Argentina. They experienced problems with poor internet connections, and differences in expectation of how to study（passive versus active）but they found that it was possible to deliver such a program to the satisfaction of both educators and students. In developed monolingual countries such as Japan, with reliable access to the internet, the greater problems facing ODL are more likely to come from changing the notion of how education is delivered. ODL is change and, therefore, is naturally resisted. A survey of the attitudes of academic staff towards ODL would be enlightening. Apart from key advocates who direct such courses, research on the attitudes of related faculty would be very helpful in understanding resistance to ODL.

In general, the results of this research support the notion that ODL is not an inferior form of study, and in no way should be seen as a second-rate option. Indeed, with the constant and ongoing growth in communication systems and means of access, the capacity of ODL courses provide valuable and worthwhile learning outcomes for those unable to be relocate. Research of this kind is important as it helps overcome commonly held beliefs and prejudices against ODL as a mode of study and it is to be hoped that research in this area will continue to shed light on the benefits and advantages of ODL as an important and invaluable tool of learning.

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【要旨】　オープン・ディスタンスラーニング（ODL）は，国内外を問わず移動や仕事の中断といったことをせずに学歴を高めることができるため，教育界で広範囲に行われるようになっている。特に既婚者の場合など退職して正規のオンキャンパス（OC）の学生になるのは現実的ではない。学術レベルに関しては，ODL と OC に大きな差異は見られないが，ODL が OC に劣る点があるのではないかが問題になっている。

　本研究では，実質的には同等の内容であるが，イギリスの大学で英語教授法の修士号を ODL と OC で習得した学生の経験について，自由記載を含めたリカードスケールの質問紙を用いて比較検討する。研究参加者の数は ODL の学生が 14 名，OC の学生が 10 名と少ないが，SPSS を用いた一元分散分析で統計的有意差を示した。参加者の満足度に関しては，ODL の学生が OC の学生と比較して劣ることはなく，特に成人学生が更なる学歴の向上を求める場合，OC に代わるものとして，ODL が有効な手段であることが示唆された。