PROBLEMS OF PART-TIME STUDENTS IN GHANA:
Implications For Distance Education

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ABSTRACT

Learning for self development and professional development has almost become a necessity in the face of rapid technological advancement, knowledge explosion and socio-economic change among others; and for most adults combining work with study may be the only way out for them to further their education. Part-time study is thus becoming trendy worldwide including Ghana. But it also comes with its challenges. This paper sought to find out what these problems are in Ghana. The survey design was used with the questionnaire being the principal instrument and data was analyzed using descriptive statistics. There were 160 students who were sampled from four institutions offering part-time study in Accra. Three of them were offering professional courses with City Campus of University of Ghana offering academic courses.

The findings revealed that part-time students have problems relating to family responsibilities, work, institutional commitments and finance among others. The findings indicated that course deliveries at the distance need to be flexible in terms of structure and time. Distance education provision must consider fee payments in instalments in order to retain the students in the learning activities.

Keywords: Distance education, part-time study, student support, barriers to learning

INTRODUCTION

Adult learners who are interested in improving upon their lot are usually confronted with problems that militate against their learning progress. Cross (1981) has identified some of these problems and has grouped them as follows: situational barriers, institutional barriers and dispositional barriers. These are ranked in order of importance in most studies. According to Van der Kamp (1996), Darkenwald and Valentine (1985) developed the "Deterrents to Participation Scale" which identified six obstacles to participation, namely lack of confidence, lack of relevance, time constraints, low personal priority, costs and personal problems.

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In as much as these problems were identified as inhibiting factors at the point of entry into organised education, they are also applicable to part-time study. This is because they are similar to problems which create a gap between part-time learners and the achievement of their goals. The problems are also to some extent due to the life stages of adults and the corresponding roles they have to play.

Part-time students face a number of problems as they try to cope with office work, school, family life and social activities. Some of the problems confronting part-time learners include the lack of confidence, location of institutions, either too far from home or office, inconvenient scheduling of lecture time, poor quality teaching and having to shuttle between work, school and family responsibilities.

As part of strategies to promote adult continuing education in the industrialised north, distance education is one of the modes of teaching employed by various institutions of higher learning. This could be attributed to the unique qualities of distance education, which among other things does not require students to be physically present at learning institutes. It thus caters for students who live far away from educational institutions. Also, as there is no fixed time to attend lectures, it allows flexibility in terms of place, time and pace of learning. Moreover, students can be assured of good tuition since experts write self-study materials. Again, study materials can reach the doorstep of isolated students in remote areas. It is not surprising that Brown (1996) contends that most students engage in distance education for convenience. He is of the view that distance education has become very popular among workers who have personal and family responsibilities. Holmberg (1995), supporting this view, goes on to say that distance education promotes recurrent education.

Despite these far reaching issues, efforts to determine the basic learning needs of part-time learners in Ghana are negligible. Most studies tend to dwell on institutional and environmental factors promoting part-time study. This study investigated the problems of part-time students who are combining work with study and the strategies through which distance education could be adopted to assist them.

Review of Related Literature
Cross (1981) has described situational barriers as obstacles which are the outcome of one's situation at a point in time. Lack of time is one of the barriers most often cited as a hindrance to participation (Cross 1981; Johnstone and Rivera, 1965; Van der Kamp, 1996). Cross (1981), has cited inadequate time for adults between 25 and 45 age group and attributed it to home and job responsibilities. She has also stated that inability of young parents to get child-minders is a hindrance to learning.

With specific reference to part-time learners, the competing demands on time have been cited as major obstacles to learning Kerka (1992); Evans and Nation (2000) have stated that the part-time learner is unable to reconcile home with work and study. In addition, Onumah (1997) has stated that increased responsibilities from both nuclear and extended families as well as other social responsibilities affect part-time learners. Further, a study by Blaxter (1994) has indicated that when part-time learners have to take care of elderly folks it impacts negatively on their participation even in late adulthood.

All these plus pressure of work and tiredness (Waniewicz, 1975) could be responsible for part-time students' inability to meet deadlines for turning in course assignments. These problems could also be the cause of part-time students' inability to organise study time and manage them effectively (Croft, 1991). The fact that part-time students are unable to access campus services may be attributed to inadequate time to do so (Schlossberg et al, 1990 cited in Kerka, 1992)

Lack of financial support is another major obstacle that faces part-time learners (Waniewicz, 1975; Cross, 1981; Johnstone and Rivera, 1965; Schlossberg et al, 1990 as cited in Kerka, 1992). According to Van der Kamp (1996), usually lack of finances and time are ranked high as major obstacles to learning by respondents. According to him, a study by Cross (1984) indicated that participation in adult education programmes fell when financial support was withdrawn or when financial benefits were lost. Van der Kamp (1996) also cited another study by De Groot (1984). De Groot's study indicated that a very high increase in prices at a Dutch evening school reduced the level of participation. In addition, Cross (1981) has stated that one of the problems of part-time students is the fact that they are made to pay fees meant for full-time students. Perraton (2000) on the other hand, submits that part-time students in several countries pay fees which full-time students are exempted from paying. She cites the British Open University and part-time students pursuing degree courses in Kenya as examples. In Kenya, the rationale for this practice has been attributed to the fact that part-time students are paid salaries.

Another major obstacle to part-time study is the geographical location of students (Lowe, 1982; Cross, 1981; Croft, 1991; Waniewicz, 1975). In his study, Waniewicz found that most part-time learners cited long distance to schools as an obstacle to learning. Some other students cited geographical remoteness and isolation as barriers to learning (Croft, 1991).

Another area of concern is the lack of effective study skills (Bourner et al 1992; Onumah 1997). This could probably explain why some learners are unable to express their thoughts on paper and lack the requisite reading skills that would enable them to read large volumes of material (Croft, 1991). Croft (1991) concedes that the problems mentioned are faced by adult learners in general but they are heightened for the distance learner who has other demands to contend with. Entwistle (1996) holds that the application of appropriate study skills and acquisition of a range of effective strategies are essentials for studying. He writes that:

> To fully understand the reasons why students study in the ways they do, it is essential to consider learning and study strategies in relation to the whole learning environment that they experience. Their ways of studying depend on their perceptions of what they are required to do or of what "pays off" in assessment terms (Becker et al 1968). It has been the lack of this component in the study equation, which has left those forms of advice unrealistic and often inapplicable (p. 439).

In other words, students learning depend on teaching methods and the type of examinations they take. Depending on what their instructors may require of them, they may either learn to understand or learn by rote. These must therefore be considered when developing study skills manuals for students.

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Cross (1981:98) defines institutional barriers as "all those practices and procedures that exclude or discourage working adults from participating in educational activities". Institutional barriers may include problems associated with course schedules (Cross, 1981; Waniewicz, 1975; Clark, Morgan-Klein, Raffe and Schuller, 1997). Clark et al (1997) have observed that part-time learners feel marginalised because their course schedules made it impossible for them to participate fully in campus life. Some characteristics of adult learners include the fact that they like to learn things which are interesting, practical and relevant to them (Brookfield, 1986; Cross, 1981; Naylor, 1996). Also Waniewicz (1975) found that lack of relevant courses was an obstacle to part-time study for both learners and potential learners.

The Chartered Institute of Bankers, (1997) and Onumah (1997) identified inadequate textbooks, and tuition as major institutional problems. Other concerns include poor library facilities (Ghartey, 1991). On the issue of library facilities Blagden (1984) argues that since part-time students have diverse backgrounds, libraries have to be sensitive to their information needs. Meanwhile, poor human relations, unavailability of students' newsletters and journals, poor organisation of classes and examinations which are conducted in poor environments as reported in the Daily Graphic, of January 4, 1999 also restrict effective learning.

Issues associated with examinations also affect part-time learners. Onumah (1997) declares that when examination syllabi are too wide and both students and examiners are not known to each other, it affects learners. Ghartey (1991) also mentions inappropriate questions, inadequate statistical controls and administration of examinations as obstacles to part-time study. All these problems were identified in relation to students preparing for professional examinations. Another obstacle worth noting is lack of information (Cross, 1981; Thompson and Devlin, 1992). Thompson and Devlin (1992) submit that information prepared exclusively for part-time students is very scanty. They also state that studies by Ruyle and Geiselman (1974) indicated that while three out of four American Colleges offered undergraduate degree courses on part-time basis, only a little over one and half of the institutions publicised it. Thompson and Devlin (1992) also state that Cross (1982) reported that

> *About one-fourth of potential learners confess that they do not know where to go or whom to ask to get information about specific learning opportunities… The lack of specific information about educational opportunities presents an obstacle to learning participation for perhaps 15 to 30 percent of potential learners (p. 126)*

The key to popularising part-time study for development in Ghana therefore lies in providers publicising it as widely as possible.

Dispositional factors which hinder adult learning have to do with their psychological characteristics (Van der Kamp,1996); or learners' attitudes and self-perceptions (Cross, 1981). Some of these factors are mixed feelings about going back to school, lack of self-confidence and fear of failure (Carbone, 1988 cited in Kerka, 1992; Onumah, 1997; Ghartey, 1991). Other factors include old age, poor qualifications (Cross, 1981) anxiety and stress (Mackeracher and Tuijnman 1996).

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The last two writers believe that stress and anxiety act as personal blocks to learning. They also note that learners may not learn effectively or they may show a lack of initiative out of a fear of failing in front of other learners. Also, older adults who learn part-time may have more anxieties and pressures than younger ones (Conrad 1993). Such anxieties may be due to fear of ability to learn after a long absence from the classroom (Healy and Martin 1996)

According to Cross (1981), only five to 15 percent of learners surveyed, acknowledged dispositional factors as being responsible for their lack of participation. She attributes this rather low respondent rate to the "social desirability issue" concept. This concept makes the reasons like financial difficulties and lack of time a more socially desirable excuse to cite for non-participation than the real issues which may be old age and the fear of one's inability to learn. She confirms this by citing an example from Wilcox, Saltford and Veres (1975). Their study found out that when respondents were asked to give reasons why other adults they knew did not participate in educational activities, lack of interest ranked high.

To overcome obstacles arising out of dispositional factors, Mackeracher and Tuijnman (1996) supported the following:

> *Educators should attempt to maintain a learning environment, which is free from threat, and assist learners to identify unlabeled fears and anxieties. Correspondingly, educators can work to enhance self-confidence in learners by diminishing the possibility to fail or to make grave errors and by reducing time pressure. Self-pacing may be a desirable method especially in instructing older adults because it usually guarantees that the allocation of time for learning is adequate (p. 447).*

Looking at obstacles to learning as a whole, Waniewicz (1975) reports that findings on what people learn and what would-be learners would like to learn indicate some gaps in learning which ought to be filled. To this end, he advocates more flexible educational opportunities, professional, vocational and formal education for adults between the ages of 18 and 24; 45 and 55, with particular emphasis on women and executives in the latter set of age groups.

In addition, Clark, Morgan-Klein et al (1997) opine that the implication of data collected suggests flexibility in terms of methods, content and context of learning for part-time learners. Cross (1981) on her part is of the view that data on obstacles to learning should serve as a guide to course and programme planners to enable them to identify various groups which would be affected by specific barriers. Lowe (1982) also advocates the need for local and national governments to try and satisfy learning needs equitably. This goes to buttress the fact that adult learners come from different backgrounds and have specific needs and preferences (Brookfield, 1986; Knox, 1977).

The implication of all these issues raised on part-time students shows that participants to part-time study are from all walks of life and groups. Therefore the specific needs of these people must be identified and satisfied for effective learning.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Data were collected from adult part-time students in four institutions in Accra namely, Accra Workers' College where students were pursuing "academic" courses; SAS Accountancy Centre, Centre for Business Studies, and the Certified Chartered Accountants Students Society in Ghana whose students were pursuing professional courses. A population of 612, comprising 419 from Accra Workers' College, 103 from SAS Accountancy Centre, 40 from the Centre for Business Studies and 50 from the Chartered Accountants Students Society in Ghana was surveyed. A total of 240 questionnaires was sent to respondents and 161 representing a response rate of 67% was obtained. Four uncompleted questionnaires were rejected.

The survey research design using the questionnaire was used to solicit responses from students. This contained both open ended and close ended questions. The survey looked at problems of part-time students. All the students were studying part-time at the centres selected.

RESULTS

Part-time learners have various problems that impede effective learning. Some of the problems arise from the family, workplace and institutions of learning. These results are presented in tables 1-7.

Table: 1
Problems of Part-time Learners: Family Level

Issues	Professional		Academic		Both	
	Yes %	**No %**	**Yes %**	**No %**	**Yes %**	**No %**
Taking care of little children	36.3	63.8	39.5	60.5	37.9	62.1
Taking care of ageing parents	15.0	85.0	27.2	72.8	21.1	78.9
Excessive domestic chores	23.8	76.3	44.4	55.6	34.2	65.8
Uncooperative spouse	16.3	83.8	18.5	81.5	17.4	82.6
Noisy environment	58.8	41.3	69.1	30.9	64.0	36.0
Poor time management	51.3	48.8	49.4	50.6	50.3	49.7
Inadequate time to study	86.3	13.8	87.7	12.3	87.0	13.0
Interruptions by social activities	72.5	27.5	70.4	29.6	71.4	28.6
Responsibilities from both nuclear and extended families	47.5	52.5	44.4	55.6	46.0	54.0
Frequent power cuts	51.3	48.8	55.6	44.4	53.4	46.6

Inadequate time to study featured prominently as a dominant obstacle to learning where 87.0% of students cited this as a major problem. Interruptions by social activities were the next highly ranked problems (71.4%). Other problems cited were noisy environment and frequent power cuts. Similarly, poor time management affected a little over half (50.3%) of part-time students.
Overall, uncooperative spouse was the least cited by 17.4% of respondents followed by 21.1% respondents who cited taking care of aging parents as blocks to learning.

Problems of Part-time Students – Work Level

It is not easy to combine work with study. This is because proper time management had to be ensured. Problems faced by workers in their work places are presented in table 2.

Table: 2
Problems of Part-time Students – Work Level

Issues	Professional		Academic		Both	
	Yes %	No %	Yes %	No %	Yes %	No %
Very heavy workload	68.8	31.3	70.4	29.6	69.6	30.4
Inadequate financial support	33.8	66.3	48.1	51.9	41.0	59.0
No financial support	42.5	57.5	49.4	50.6	46.0	54.0
Lack of paid study leave	38.8	61.3	64.2	35.8	51.6	48.4
Lack of time	68.8	31.3	63.0	37.0	65.8	34.2

Very heavy workload featured prominently as a major problem facing 69.6% of part-time students. This involved 68.8% of students offering professional courses and 70.4% of their counterparts taking academic courses. This was followed by lack of time, (65.8%). However, 64.2% of students offering academic courses found lack of paid study leave as their second problem followed by lack of time (63.0%). Inadequate financial support was the least cited by part-time students. For example, 33.8% of students in the professions and 48.1% of students offering academic courses agreed that financial problems blocked part-time study. Obstacles faced by part-time students at the institutional level are illustrated in table 3.

Table: 3
Problems of Part-time Students - Institutional Level

Issues	Professional	Academic	Both
	Yes %	Yes %	Yes %
Lack of appropriate reading materials for research	48.8	72.8	60.9
Irregular supply of newsletters and journals	53.8	43.2	48.4
Inadequate library facilities	62.5	80.2	71.4
Inadequate textbooks	60.0	81.5	70.8
Irregular attendance of lectures by lecturers	36.3	30.9	33.6
Irregular attendance of lectures by me	30.0	28.4	29.2
Poor teaching/learning environment	37.5	44.4	41.0
School administrators do not have time for us	13.8	28.4	21.1
Inadequate time to do assignments	57.5	60.5	59.0
Lectures are scheduled at times when I have to be at work	20.0	53.1	36.6
Tiredness	65.0	67.9	66.5

For many (71.4%) of part-time learners, inadequate library facilities was a major institutional problem. This was followed by inadequate textbooks (70.8%) and tiredness (66.5%).

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Also, 60.9% of part-time students complained about lack of appropriate reading materials. The majority (65.0%) of students offering professional courses cited tiredness as a basic problem. This was followed by inadequate library facilities (62.5%) and inadequate textbooks (60%) respectively.

The majority (81.5%) of students offering degree courses, however, complained about inadequate textbooks followed by inadequate library facilities (80.2%); lack of appropriate reading materials for research (72.8%) and tiredness (67.9%) respectively.

It is interesting to note that 63.4% of part-time students did not have any problem with lecture schedules. times of lecture schedules.

Table: 4
Problems of Part-time Students - Dispositional Factors

Issues	Professional		Academic		Both	
	Yes %	No%	Yes %	No %	Yes %	No %
Lack of self-confidence	7.5	92.5	11.1	88.9	9.3	90.7
Anxiety	27.5	72.5	46.9	53.1	37.3	62.7
Poor self-esteem	3.8	96.3	6.2	93.8	5.0	95.0
Fear of failure	20.0	80.0	37.0	63.0	28.6	71.4
Feelings of academic	3.8	96.3	14.8	85.2	9.3	90.7
incompetence	8.8	91.3	12.3	87.7	10.6	89.4
Feeling too old	35.0	65.0	38.3	61.7	36.6	63.4
Ineffective study skills	27.5	72.5	29.6	70.4	28.6	71.4
Lack of study skills						

Data in table 4 show that most (95.0%) part-time students had a high self-esteem. This was followed by 90.7% with self-confidence and academic competence. The majority (96.3%) of part-time students offering professional subjects had a high self-esteem and also felt they were academically competent. This was followed by 92.5% with self-confidence. Again, 91.3% did not feel too old to pursue further education.

On the other hand, most students (93.8%) pursuing degree courses also had a high self-esteem followed by a high self-confidence (88.9%). However, 37.3% of part-time students were plagued by anxiety.

Again, 32.6% of part-time students pursuing academic courses lacked effective study skills. The data shows that part-time students had confidence, limited anxiety, high-esteem, not afraid of failure, competent academically but did not have effective study skills.

Difficulties faced by the Independent Learner
Self-directed and independent learners have problems which impinge on learning. Since part-time students learn independently most of the time, it was necessary to find out some of their problems. The problems confronting independent learners are provided in table 5.

Table: 5
Difficulties faced by the Independent Learner

Issues	Professional		Academic		Both	
	Yes %	No %	Yes %	No %	Yes %	No %
Difficulties in having discussions with other students.	63.8	36.3	59.3	40.7	61.5	38.5
I am not prompted to study because I do not see others doing so.	12.5	87.5	33.3	66.7	23.0	77.0
Learning in isolation	48.8	51.3	58.0	42.0	53.4	46.6
Difficulties in understanding certain concepts and issues	43.8	56.3	53.1	46.9	48.4	51.6
Difficulties in seeking clarifications on lessons	36.3	63.8	53.1	46.9	44.7	55.3
Inability to have adequate discussions with lecturers	50.0	50.0	59.3	40.7	54.7	45.3

Data in table 5 indicate that 61.5% of part-time students had difficulties in having discussions with other students. A break down of this reveals that 63.8% of these students were pursuing professional courses while 59.3% were offering academic courses. For students pursuing academic courses, the problem extended to their inability to have adequate discussions with their lecturers.On the contrary, offering degree courses indicated that they were not prompted to study because they did not see their friends doing so.

Professional Examinations Passed on Schedule
For those students offering professional courses, the majority 48 (60%) had not been able to pass their professional examinations on schedule. Students offering professional courses especially in Accountancy usually failed in their examinations for one reason or the other. Further inquiry into the reasons for their inability to pass the examinations revealed the following details as in table 6.

Table: 6
Reasons for Inability to Keep up Pace

Issues	No.	%
No financial support	2	4.2
Inadequate time	22	45.8
Inadequate preparations	6	12.5
Lack of study materials	2	4.2
Transfer	4	8.3
Ambiguous questions	3	6.3
Inability to answer questions	7	14.5
No response	2	4.2
Total	48	100

Inadequate time emerged as the dominant reason why students taking professional examinations were unable to make it at examinations (45.8%). Added to this was their inability to answer examination questions well (14.5%). It was, however, interesting to note that lack of financial support was one of the least cited reasons.

Access to Information on Course
Publicity on a course helps promote it and enhances participation. As to whether part-time students had prior information on the courses they were pursuing, the results are shown in Table 7.

Table: 7
Access to Information on Course

Issues	Professional		Academic		Both	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
No response	-	-	12	14.8	12	7.5
Mass media	6	7.5	14	17.3	20	12.4
News letter/journals	5	6.3	4	4.9	9	5.6
Institute/Secretariat	12	15.0	10	12.3	22	13.7
Friends	49	61.3	33	40.7	82	50.9
Family	4	5.0	7	8.6	11	6.8
Other (e.g. internet)	4	5.0	1	1.2	5	3.1
Total	80	100	81	100	161	100

Table 7 specifies that on the whole, most students (50.9%) got information about their courses from friends. A breakdown shows that 61.3% of students offering professional courses as well as 40.7% of students offering academic courses got information on their respective courses from friends. Other sources including information from the internet, mass media, (newspapers, electronic media) as well as students' newsletters and journals were marginalised.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The results of part-time students' problems at the family level complement many other studies that cited lack of time as a major obstacle to learning (Cross, 1981; Johnstone and Rivera, 1965; Van der Kamp, 1996). It is also not surprising that students cited interruptions by social activities as another major problem. This is because as adults, they had social roles to perform and it would be difficult to shy away from all of them with the excuse that one attended classes after close of work and for the best part of the weekend. Again, students living with their families were likely to contend with studying in a noisy environment. It is however interesting to note that power cuts which is a Ghanaian phenomenon affected just about half of students. Similarly, contrary to findings by Croft (1991) to the effect that poor time management was a major problem affecting part-time students it affected only about half of respondents. Home responsibilities like taking care of the aged did not seem to have much effect on part-time students as was the case in the study by Blaxter (1994). Neither did taking care of little children feature as a prominent barrier to part-time study as found by Cross (1981).

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In addition, uncooperative spouse and excessive domestic chores did not feature as major barriers as the former was the overall least cited. Again, responsibility from both nuclear and extended families ranked fifth on the list. This contrasted the assertion made by Onumah (1997) to the effect that increased responsibilities from both nuclear and extended families affected part-time study. However, his assertion that increased social responsibilities affected part-time students was confirmed as it ranked second among respondents.

Perhaps, family responsibilities did not feature prominently as an obstacle because even though most of the respondents were married, they were mostly men; hence they they may not be performing nurturing roles. It is also possible that most of them did not have children. There could also be the possibility that spouses might have been co-operative and shared in household chores.

The analysis of problems students face at work shows that pressure of work at the office was a major problem affecting part-time students. This is consistent with findings by Waniewicz (1975). It was also not surprising that lack of time was the next pertinent issue for all part-time students and those offering professional courses in particular. What was surprising was the fact that inadequate financial support and lack of financial support did not emerge strongly from the two groups of students.It is obvious that for part-time students, institutional barriers came mainly in the form of poor library facilities, inadequate textbooks, tiredness and lack of appropriate reading materials. These are consistent with findings by Onumah (1997); Ghartey (1991); Blagden (1984) and Waniewicz (1975). Other problems included irregular supply of newsletters and journals (Daily Graphic Jan. 4 1999) poor teaching and learning environment as well as inappropriate

Dispositional factors were generally ineffective as problems — an indication that part-time students were well adjusted. But at another level, the general impression that dispositional issues did not affect part-time students very much is consistent with earlier observations by Cross (1981) and Sdorow (1995). They attribute this to the social desirability concept which makes one set of reasons like lack of time or financial difficulties a more socially desirable excuse than old age and fear of failure. In any case, Mackeracher and Tuijnman (1996) maintain that stress and anxiety act as personal blocks to effective learning as learners may show a lack of initiative out of a fear of failing in front of other learners. Conrad (1994) also argues that the incidence of stress may be higher in older adults than in younger ones.As independent students, part-time learners' main limitation was their inability to have discussions with other students. The results reflect real problems of part-time students since they have to rush in and out of school. Part time students also displayed a high level of self-directed learning. It is indeed refreshing to note that only a few students were unable to learn without prompting. This is an indication that part-time students were basically self-directed learners who needed a few props to enhance learning.

On the whole, most part-time students were influenced by social norms as the majority of them got information on their courses from friends. This could be because students seldom read newspapers nor listened to radio nor watched television. It also shows that peer pressure had a positive effect on learning.

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Further, providers of part-time study seldom advertised. The mass media such as newspapers, electronic media as well as new media like the internet were ineffective channels of information.

Students' lack of time being the cause of most part-time students offering professional courses inability to pass their examinations confirmed studies by other researchers like Cross (1981). However, the fact that lack of financial support was not a vital issue is inconsistent with findings by Cross (1981) and Van der Kamp (1996).

The low use of the mass media may be either due to the fact that institutions hardly advertised their courses in the media. It could also be inferred that students did not usually make use of the mass media. The low use of the internet could be due to the fact that it is relatively new in Ghana with very few opportunities to students and society.

IMPLICATIONS FOR DISTANCE EDUCATION

Learners with children, especially those less than ten years old may prefer to learn through distance learning methods as it will be more convenient for them than they having to spend time each day commuting to and from school. This implies that there is a ready market for distance education if only it is well organised. The fact that almost half of students were able to manage their time well is a good sign since distance learners are expected to be able to manage their time well because they may often learn in isolation with no prompting from anyone. However, since most part-time students indicated that they did not have adequate time to study by implication, distance learners aught to be taught how to make time to study during their first face to face meeting.

With very heavy workload at the workplace featuring prominently as a barrier to part-time study, it is most likely that distance learners would face similar problems. It is therefore recommended that employers give such students reduced workloads.

At the institutional level, poor library facilities and lack of appropriate reading materials were major problems that faced part-time learners. It is therefore necessary to improve on library facilities and stock such libraries with the relevant reading materials for distance learners.

On the issue of publicity, since the internet and mass media (newspapers and electronic media) were not adequately utilised, information on publicity of distance education programmes can be done through the use of souvenirs like 'T'-shirts, caps and pens in addition to the internet and mass media.

The fact that part-time students were basically independent/self-directed learners appears to be an ideal characteristic for distance education as it thrives on independent and autonomous learning. It is hoped that part-time learners through distance education would be given the opportunity to exercise their autonomy in relation to:

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- ➢ **their objectives or intended outcomes**
- ➢ **the subjects, themes, topics, issues they will study**
- ➢ **the learning and teaching resources they will make use of; when, how and on what they will be assessed (Lewis and Spencer as cited in Rowntree, 1994:61).**

Giving students autonomy in the above will allow for flexibility in what to learn, how to learn, when, by what methods and ability to withdraw as they find appropriate to their circumstances.

CONCLUSIONS

Learning through part-time study can be very tedious and challenging. This is manifested in a heavy workload at the office and in school. Social problems, occupational problems and institutional problems which faced part-time students hindered effective learning. However, dispositional factors were generally ineffective as problems - an indication that part-time students were well adjusted. As independent students, they displayed a high level of self-directed learning. Their main limitation was their inability to have discussions with other students.

A study pattern clearly emerged as interest in what was learnt conflicted with workload. One infringed on the other and the more workload at workplaces and in school, the less effort one made to learn. This may account for the view expressed by Rogers (1986) to the effect that learning takes second place when it competes with jobs, family and social life. These could possibly be the cause of poor pass rates among part-time students offering professional courses. Issues raised in relation to time and location also point to the fact that the use of distance education would be a viable alternative to part-time study, a view shared by Waniewicz (1975).

All these implications for barriers to learning in part-time study appear to point to the future of part-time study which involves conscious efforts on the part of government and employers towards supporting part-time learners especially at the institutional and work levels. Indeed the future of part-time study depends to a large extent on the removal of obstacles to learning. For, Mabey and Iles (1991:1) rightly note that "the focus now is on self-determined development and unfreezing of barriers to learning".

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