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DEVELOPMENT OF DISTANCE AND OPEN LEARNING IN INDIA



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Short Profile :

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ABSTRACT:

Distance education is a branch of education where teachers and students are separated in terms of place and time. The concept of distance and open learning system focuses on open access to education and training to make the learners free from constraints of time and place, and offering flexible learning opportunities to individuals and groups of learners. Open and Distance learning is one of the most rapidly growing fields of education now a days and it has

substantial impact on all education delivery systems. The new open and distance learning system growing fast because of the development of Internet-based information technology and in particular the World Wide Web.

Now a day's distance education is very popular in India as reflected in the number of Open Universities and dual mode distance teaching institutions in the country. Various efforts have been made to overcome the problem of illiteracy throughout the world, particularly in the developing countries. But none of these had valuable results. Therefore, in most of the developing countries like India, Governments are concerned about handling the literacy problem effectively. Literacy is a basic human need. But in a populous country like India it is not possible to make literate all the people only through formal education system. Because around 80% people of our country live in remote areas and villages. But formal education has not turned its attention to this area. So education is not reaching the masses. Through formal system of only a minority is getting educated. There are people who have not entered the main stream of formal education. They are called non-dropouts. Therefore to meet the educational need of those people, distance and open learning is very effective way.

In this article our main concern is to discuss about distance and open learning in India along with Governmental initiatives which has taken to develop distance and open learning.

KEYWORDS

Distance education, Open learning, Fernunterricht, Disadvantaged group, and e-learning.

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INTRODUCTION:

The term "Distance Education" has been borrowed from the 'European terms Fernunterricht' 'Tele-ensignment' and 'education a distancia' to describe all the teaching-learning arrangement in which the learner and teacher are normally separated by space and by time.

This term open and distance learning reflects both the fact that all or most of the teaching is conducted by someone who is away from the learner and that the mission aims to include greater dimensions of openness and flexibility, whether in terms of access, curriculum or other elements of structure. Open and distance learning systems can usually be described as made up of a range of components such as : The mission or goal of a particular system, programs and curriculum, teaching-learning strategies and techniques, learning material and resources, communication and interaction, support and delivery system, students, tutors, staff and other experts, management housing and equipment and evaluation. The ODL system is used for school-age children and youth those who are unable to attend ordinary schools, or to support teaching in schools, both at primary and secondary level. However most courses and programs are aimed at the adult population teacher training program is an important area where ODL learning has made a major contribution. In developing countries it is found that teacher training at a distance may reach large groups of students and have profound impact on the development of national education system. Literacy is a basic human need it has meaning only when it leads to participation in cultural and social activities. It is empowerment that means ability to make decisions and control affairs of one's own life, economically, socially and politically, it is the first step in lifelong learning process of man and women. Life without literacy is life without hope, security and freedom. It is the foundation of all skills and pre-requisite for economic development (Niaz, 1995). Moreover, according to Stromquist (2005, p.12) in modern societies literacy skills are fundamental decision making personal empowerment, active and passive participation in local and social community. This concept of ODL has evolved as an alternative to the formal system of education after an increasing realization that the second one is not perfectly coping with the educational needs and demands of the rapidly growing population. To cope with the demand of education there was need of finding such a way that may help the people in fulfilling their education thrust which was discovered in the form of distance education.

OBJECTIVES OF DISTANCE AND OPEN LEARNING:

- 1.To advance and disseminate learning and knowledge by a diversity of means.
- 2.To provide a second opportunity to study to those who missed such an opportunity earlier.
- 3.To provide a chance to those who could not go the conventional system and they would now like to study.
- 4.To improve the quality and standards of education relevant to the needs of the country.
- 5.To provide cheap education to learners without depriving them of their jobs and business.

DISCUSSION:

As a modern system of non-formal education distance education is imparted through mass media, correspondence courses contact programs and other audio-visual materials. Open learning,

open schooling, continuing and lifelong education, home tuition, independent learning, e-learning etc. are synonymous concepts of distance education. Above all, it is a non-conventional type teaching-learning program. Distance learning lends itself to a variety of interpretations which empowers it is a concept. "Distance Education" is an umbrella term which indicates the tangible distance between the learner and the teacher where the process of teaching and learning is not confined to the four walls of the classroom any more with its horizontal mobility. Distance education transcends the barriers of times, space, sex, erred, community and religion, thus breaking the myth of elitism in conventional higher education.

Distance education is simply and broadly defined by Manjulika and V. Reddy in their book "Distance Education in India" as the system of education in which education is imparted to students from a distance. It contain two basic elements (a) the physical separation of teacher and learner, and (b) the changed role of the teacher who may meet the students only for selected tasks such as counseling giving tuitions or solving students problems.

Distance education is in fact a form of Open education. It is a device by which people residing in remote regions receive education according to their interest and aptitude. It is a form of education in which teacher does not take the responsibility of oral teaching but becomes instrumental in imparting knowledge to those who want to get it at the place of their own choice.

Basic Philosophy behind Distance Education:

No one in the world can have complete knowledge in his life. His thirst for learning must be quenched through distance education. This will help him to improve himself on one hand and to improve the society on the other.

Essential Components of Distance Education:

Keegan (1980) suggest that the main elements in any definition of Distance Education are

- ? The separation of teacher and learner which distinguishes it from face to face learning.
- ? The influence of an educational organization, which distinguishes it from private study.
- ? The use of technical media, usually print, to unite teacher and learner and carry the educational content of the course.
- ? The teaching of students as individuals and rarely in groups, with the possibility of occasional meetings for both didactic and socialization purposes.

Need and Importance of Distance and Open Learning:

In modern times all the developed and many underdeveloped countries have adopted the system of Distance education and this system has drawn the attention of all most all educational covers. In India equipments for providing education are inadequate and because of the rising population, the number of illiterate person possible for us to meet the educational needs of all those who desire to receive education.

Distance education showed that it could provide educational opportunities to large numbers of people who had previously been denied such opportunities and that it could be done in a cost effective manner. That is the evince of the answer to the question why distance and open learning? It is not that it enables new technologies to be used and it is not that it is a cheap method of teaching. It is that it has provided access to learning to many people, and not at excessive cost.

Taking education to disadvantaged groups is no easy task. Generally speaking, people in such groups lack confidence in their own ability to learn. One of the obvious manifestations of this lack of confidence is a reluctance to participate in face-to-face classes where they feel their shortcomings will

be exposed. In fact many refuse to participate in an education program for these reasons. That is why distance and open learning is necessary for this group.

It is often argued that the distance teaching mode is only suitable for adults, that something happens at 21 to 23 years which makes the students susceptible to distance teaching techniques. There is no evidence to prove this; indeed there is much evidence to refute it. Students in remote areas in Australia have been taught successfully at a distance from the beginning of their primary schooling.

Thus distance education techniques can be used to teach a variety of courses, across a wide range of discipline the basic necessities are that the students be motivated to learn and that the instructional material be well designed. Most instructional techniques available to distance education teachers are multi-functional and may be adapted to variety of objectives, learners and course discipline areas. But the instructional packages must be functional what matters most is the efficacy of the instructional treatment contained in the instructional message.

Need for Distance and Open Learning in India:

For a developing country like India with its given demographic and economic conditions, the non-formal systems may be better suited for many of its societal aims such as literacy for all and universal primary education which are still just dreams even after more than 66th years of Independence. Alternative strategies under the non-formal systems need to be strengthened further so that they may help in accelerating democratization and modernization. The system of distance and open education has the potential to fulfill the enormous responsibility of universalization and democratization of education, as it holds the promise of checking the falling standards at reasonable costs, making the optimum use of media and technology and providing education relevant to the needs of the country.

Thus the major objectives of Distance Education in India are:

- ▲ To provide an alternative cost-effective non-formal channel for higher education.
- ▲ To supplement the conventional university system and to reduce the pressure on it.
- ▲ To provide a second chance at education for those who have had to discontinue their formal education or could not join regular colleges/universities owing to pecuniary or other circumstances.
- ▲ To democratize higher education by providing access to large segments of the population, in particular the disadvantaged groups such as those living in remote and rural areas, including working people, women and other adults who wish to acquire and upgrade their knowledge or skills through studies in various fields.
- ▲ To strengthen and diversify the degree, certificate and diploma courses related to the needs of employment and necessary for building the economy of the country on the basis of its material and human resources.
- ▲ To provide an innovative systems of university education which is both flexible and open in terms of methods and place of learning, combination of courses, eligibility for enrolment, age of entry, conduct of exam, and operation of the programs with a view to promoting learning and encouraging excellence in new fields of knowledge (IGNOU ACT, 1985, APOU ACT, 1982, KOU Act.

1985 : IGNOU Project Report, 1985, UGC Annual Report, 1981-82)

The Education commission 1964-66 had suggested the objective of enrolling about one-third of the students at the university level correspondence education (GOI, 1966).

Status of Distance Education in India:

In 1961, the expert committee constituted by the Ministry of Education with a view to working out the relevant details and preparing a scheme of correspondence education for the country, had listed the major objectives that were:-

- a) To provide less expensive education at the higher level.
- b) To extend the benefits of the education facilities to all those who had missed the opportunity to acquire knowledge, skill and training for social and economic reasons (GOI, 1963)

The first undergraduate correspondence courses in India were introduced by the University of – Delhi in 1962 as a pilot project. Within a year the courses attracted a large number of students. Encouraged by its success, the Kothari Commission (1964-66) recommended fuller exploitation of correspondence education for a wide range of purposes (GOI, 1966).

Consequently, the University Grants Commission (UGC) formulated guidelines for introducing correspondence courses in Indian Universities. Three more institutes of correspondence studies were established in the late 1960s.

Thus during the first decade of its existence i.e. 1962-72, the first Distance Education institutions were set up as sub-systems in four conventional universities. To establish their credibility the correspondence institutions adapted the same syllabi of the conventional universities and introduced undergraduate level courses in the humanities and commerce.

In the next date i.e. 1972 to 1982, more conventional universities (19 at together) established correspondence institutions. During this period undergraduate, postgraduate and diploma/certificate courses and science programs were introduced through Distance Education.

During the third decade, 1982-92 independent single distance education institutions were initiated with the establishment of four state open universities and one National Open University, namely the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU 1985). IGNOU not only functions as Open University but also acts as the apex body for all the Open University and distance education institutions in the country. The Central Advisory Board of Education has recommended the setting up of open universities in all the states of India during the Eighth plan period. This trend clearly indicates the increasing shift in emphasis from expanding the formal system to developing open learning/distance education system in the country. It is during this period that the multimedia approach was adopted by many distance education institutes. This decade also saw the introduction of science and technology and vocational courses through distance education.

In the second tier, there are State-level open universities- the Andhra Pradesh Open University (Andhra Pradesh), Kota Open University (Rajasthan), Yashwantrao Chavan Maharashtra Open University (Maharashtra) and Nalanda Open University (Bihar). These universities have the power to initiate new course, introduce flexibility in their design and operation, prescribe their own eligibility conditions

consistent with the philosophy of open education, and innovate own system of evaluation.

On a third level, there are distance education institutions as part of conventional universities. Some of them have been accorded the status of university department. Examples of these are the Directorate of Correspondence Courses (DCC), Chandigarh (Punjab), DCC Patiala (Punjab) and Institute of correspondence Courses (ICC) Srinagar (Jammu and Kashmir). Then there are distance education institutions without the formal status of a college or a department such as the DCC, Bombay, ICC and CE, Mysore, ICC and CE, Madura, ICC and CE, Madras and Directorate of distance education, Annamalai. These institutions are controlled by the respective university syndicates/executive councils but have a non-descript status in the university system. Some of them are self-financing, such as the centre for distance education, Hyderabad. Some are surplus generating and the surplus is generally transferred to the university and in the other cases, the deficit is met by the university from its resources.

India is thus undergoing a period of transformation. The establishment of the Indira Gandhi National Open University has given great impetus to distance education, and has fulfilled the long-felt need to have an apex institution to act as a pace-setter and coordinating institution for others throughout India. This has also spurred several State Governments to establish open universities, while others are in the process of considering doing so. All this is being done by creating separate university structures. Neither the experience of the existing directorates is being used, nor is an effort being made at either the State level or the Central level to include the existing directorates/institutions within the Open University structure. Instead, more prestigious institutions, with bigger and better resource bases and full freedom to develop their own syllabi and methods of instruction, are being created as open universities.

In other words, a dual structure is developing with independent open universities to impart distance education and correspondence course/distance education institutes attached to conventional universities.

Original Aims and Problems Encountered in Indian Context:

G. Ram Reddy, Vice-Chancellor, IGNOU presented the problems encountered while planning the distance education programs in the Indian context. Some autonomous distance teaching institutions face a number of problems in the early stages of planning. Firstly, they are not given sufficient time to plan. In the case of Andhra Pradesh Open University, India not much time was given to plan the programs of the university. This seems to have been the case of Indonesia also. There are institutions where sufficient time has been given to planning, e.g. Thailand and Japan. Another problem is recruiting the qualified staff and training them in Distance Education. The designing and preparing of the courses is no less easy. If courses are produced in a hurry, quality suffers. In addition, preparation of audio and video material also requires time. The most important problem facing the planners in the new institutions is making arrangements with radio and television authorities. This is a time consuming process. The main concern of planning in these institutions is to see that high quality materials is produced and distributed to the students. Making arrangements for study centers and recruiting staff for tutorials is also a difficult task. Experience shows that autonomous institutions are in comparatively better position to handle these problems than mixed institutions. The working of correspondence institutions does not have sufficient freedom to plan and implement their programs; plan is thrust on them by the authorities of the university or they do not get sufficient time to plan. This

need not be true in the case of all mixed Distance Education institutions as for example the Australian system. In the early stages the most difficult decision as for are those regarding finance. In most new institutions finance are provided by the government. In the initial stages, almost all the funds have been provided by the government. In the initial stages, almost all their own revenues through the fees paid by students and sale of publications. In India, it is the central government which is providing the finances to the Indira Gandhi National Open University. Only nominal revenues are expected by way of fees in the first few years. In Japan, government's contribution is about 86 percent. STOU's example is different from others, almost 82 percent of its income is from its own sources and its dependence on the government is only about 18 percent. But this is not borne out by the experiences of others. While on the issue of finances, we must refer to the feeling that exists in certain quarters that Distance Education institution do not need much money, they can be even made financially self-supporting. If high quality material is to be developed and strong support in the form of tutorials and study centers is to be education institutions have faced financial difficulties resulting in problems in developing courses and providing equipment in the study centers. This was the case with Pakistan. All that one can say on this issue is that a good Distance Education Institution is far more cost-effective than a good conventional system.

In the countries of the region, the aim of Distance Education has been to provide access to education to all those who could not afford to go to the conventional system. While providing wide access, the objective has been to introduce flexibility and innovation in the system. In particular, the stress is on the high-quality education.

The most important problem encountered by these institutions is the reaction of the academics in the conventional institutions. They have generally been pessimistic about the educational material and the standards in these institutions. The usual reaction has been that high quality education cannot be provided by the Distance Education institutions. Good teaching, according to them, has to be only face-to-face. As a result, these institutions, from the beginning, encounter the problem of their credibility.

Shortage of trained manpower is another problem faced by several of these institutions. In developing countries, says the Report of the workshop organised by UNESCO Regional Office, there is already a shortage of well-qualified staff in conventional universities. With the establishment of another institution, the staff shortage problem becomes more serious and selection even more restricted. In the case of Distance Education institutions, the task is doubly difficult. In certain areas, like production of audio-visual material, there are hardly any trained personnel available. The demand for technical personnel in this area has been very great and quite often the Distance Education institutions find it difficult to recruit personnel in this area. What is worse, they face a very stiff competition with private sector in this area. In China's CRTVU, "this is a general shortage of staff. There are not enough highly qualified academics..." The Andhra Pradesh Dr. Ambedkar Open University is experiencing a dearth of people with expertise in Distance Education. The Indira Gandhi National Open University is encountering difficulties, for example, in recruiting people who can produce educational broadcast material.

In the case of science students, there is the problem of providing facilities for their experiments. The broadcast back-up has been either inadequate or has been of high quality.

Some Distance Education institutions have faced financial difficulties resulting in problems in developing courses and providing equipment in the study centers. This was the case with Pakistan.

Multi-lingual societies like India face the problem of language. In these countries the course material is to be provided in more than one language. In India, the Indira Gandhi Open University has to provide the course material in English and Hindi. The Dr. Ambedkar Andhra Pradesh Open University is producing its course material in both English and Telugu. Translation becomes yet another requirement.

There is also the problem of broadcast (radio and television) reaching only a limited area. In some cases, the reception of signals is poor in remote and mountainous regions of a country. Broadcast time is not convenient to students.

There are instances of Distance Education institutions of the mixed type facing problems because of policies and attitudes of their own university. The correspondence courses run by the conventional universities in India experience these difficulties. The persons working in correspondence course institutions have a low morale and there is hardly any research support to them. The university authorities feel that the correspondence courses are an adjunct to the formal system. The correspondence course institutes are treated as second-rate institutions. There is the view that the correspondence education should be self-supporting financially, they are expected to pay for themselves. Whatever revenues they generate go into the general revenues of the university. Even with regard to student services, the correspondence institutions are not treated on par with the conventional system. For instance, the concessions which are available to the regular students by way of scholarships are not available to the students of the correspondence courses. The status of the event of a department is not very low in most universities. They do not enjoy the status even of a department, not to speak of an autonomous college. As a result, the position of the head of the correspondence institution suffers. What is worse, several of the correspondence institutions do not have full-time academic staff.

Despite these problems, awareness is growing that Distance Education has been an important role to play in widening access to education. Their credibility is improving.

CONCLUSION:

UNESCO's role in international co-operation for spreading ODL system which consists of both intellectual co-operation and technical assistance.[6,7]. Great importance is given to international interregional and regional co-operation for the promotion of open and distance learning, such as awareness, confidence and capacity building, mapping of relevant experience, success and failures, networking between key players in distance education and educational technology, piloting and adapting educational technologies in different settings, shared development of learning systems programs, and learning materials involving inter-country and industry-country exchanges and joint ventures, technology assessment, examining the actual costs and impact of alternative delivery systems, and support for the development of system wide policy and planning on new technology in education. Co-operation is pursued with intergovernmental organizations such as other UN system agencies, the Commonwealth of Learning, the World Bank, the Commission of the European Union, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and development, regional development banks, private and public sector partners, non-governmental organizations, notably with the International Council for Open and Distance Education (ICDE).[9,10,11,12].

Which are competent to act in this field? With the advancement of technologies, learning and

collaborative work in the future can become radically different from what it is today. Although no one can expect that educational networks will totally replace the traditional lecture. The traditional lecture has some drawbacks: students have to attend at a fixed time, the needs of students with different backgrounds cannot be met and students have no control of their learning pace or environment. Many web-based training and learning platforms have been developed. However, none of these platforms offer an integrated and open platform for learning according to our requirements. Some of them do not support all the necessary ODL services (synchronous, asynchronous and collaborative learning). The ODL system is now a fast growing subject. The time is not far from now when the entire education and training system will be fully controlled by ODL system. In India especially IGNOU is doing key role in this area.

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