

DISTANCE EDUCATION :A REVOLUTION IN THE INDIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM

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Abstract

This paper has provided a detailed overview of Distance Education and its coming into the Indian Education system. The main endeavor has been to point out the enormous impact this non-formal mode of Distance Education has so far on the socio-cultural ,socio- political and socio-economic set up of our country. This writing has pointed out with vivid description how the Education system of India has been revolutionized with the arrival and expansion of Distance Education all over our country. Distance Education has helped in the spread of education to every nook and corner of our society, thus illuminating the Indian society with the light of education.

Keyword: Distance education, Correspondence education, Open university, Open School ,IGNOU

1.INTRODUCTION

From the dawn of human civilization ,education plays a very dynamic role as an instrument of social change. In today's world, what we see in our present social set up is nothing but the direct impact of education. Down the ages, education has been chiefly instrumental in preparing the way for the development of science and technology. Now, considering the ever increasing importance of education in bringing fruitful social changes, in building the nation and in overall growth and development as a nation, the question of spreading education to the far flung areas of our country has been arisen. Today, everyone living in our country ,has the constitutional right to receive education according to his demand and mental capability irrespective of his place of living or his work he is associated with. From this point of view, for the spread of education to every nook and corner of society ,to the remotest areas of our country

and educating maximum number of people, the system of Distance Education has been introduced .Dr. S. Radhakrishnan in this regard said, 'Education must be universalized and equal opportunities for all be given. Each and every citizen be given education irrespective of his caste or creed, social or economic status, motivation and aptitude.

2.WHAT IS DISTANCE EDUCATION

Distance Education as the name suggests ,indicates some distance between the teacher and the learner ,Distance Education is certain system of education which describes all the teaching learning arrangements in which the learners and the teachers are separated by space and time. Distance Education is traditionally defined as any educational or learning procedure in which the guide and the student are separated geographically. There is no interaction between students .Distance education also known as distance learning or distributed learning ,or remote education ,has now existed for ages. It involves acquiring information from methods other than the traditional way of gaining knowledge-attending institutions. Through the system of Distance education ,the mode of delivering education and instruction to learners are different from the conventional mode of education. Distance education has made education lot more flexible and easily accessible to the people living in any part of our country. With the arrival of Distance Education in the field of education ,now in the present era ,education has a new dimension.

3.HISTORY OF DISTANCE EDUCATION

Distance Education has a long history, but its popularity and use has grown exponentially as more advanced technology has become available. The University of

London was the first university to offer distance learning degrees, establishing its external program in 1858. One of the first forms of distance education was correspondence course study, Sir Issac Pitman's Correspondence Colleges in the mid 1840s. Correspondence courses took advantage of the then new rural free delivery of mail to deliver course material to students. The establishment of the open university in the United Kingdom in 1969 paved the way for other several countries to initiate a new concept in making higher education more accessible, flexible and innovative. Our country India was one of those countries which examined the possibility of establishing an open university in the early seventies. This new thinking worked as an impetus in the establishment of the Andhra Pradesh Open University (now renamed as Dr. Ambedkar Open University) at Hyderabad in 1982. After that, in 1985 the Govt. of India, through an Act of Parliament established Indira Gandhi National Open University which is now responsible for determining and maintaining standards of Distance Education all over India. IGNOU is now considered the pioneer institution in the development of Distance education and distance learning in India. It has popularized the concept of open learning system resulting in the establishment of more other state open universities in the late eighties-Kota Open University, Nalanda Open University etc. Prof. Ram Reddy, an eminent educationist, was called the father of Distance Education in India, because he was the man responsible for the establishment of the Andhra Open University. Later in September, 1985, when IGNOU was established, he was appointed as the founder Vice Chancellor of IGNOU.

4.OBJECTIVES OF DISTANCE EDUCATION

After the introduction of Distance Education in India, now with the progress of time, the horizon of Indian Education has widened, now education has become much more accessible to the Indian mass from anywhere in the country. In our utilitarian society, everything is judged in terms of its practical utility. And education is also presented now as a package to the educand. Now, in our present society, education has also to go under many effective changes and one of the demands of the hour is to be cost effective in its presentation and its economic prospect after the completion of a certain degree. Distance though has been presented through

many modes such as Open school, Correspondence Education, Distance Education through Open University has become the most effective and relevant to the present need and demand because it is only through Open University the benefits of higher education can be provided door to door. Now, in the present era, even education is also seen as a commodity and through Distance Education, the following objectives can be fulfilled:

- An effective alternative to the formal system of education for arranging higher education for the greater mass.
- Opening a new window for all those who wish to achieve higher education and degrees.
- With the introduction of Distance Education, expense of education has come much within the reach of middle class people.
- People who had to discontinue their study midway for whatever reason can again get the opportunity to start study and fulfill their wish.
- Through Distance mode of education, education can reach to the far flung areas of our country where previously education especially the access of higher education was impossible.
- It brings equality and equity in terms of receiving education, because Distance education helps and encourages socio-economically backward students to receive education to be a useful member of society.
- The system of Distance Education has taken education and the teaching learning process out of the classroom, thus it encompasses a broader outlook in the education system.
- To help those adult learners who were hesitant previously, now with the emergence of Distance Education, adult education has also been improved, because Distance Education always encourages self-paced learning which is highly preferable to the adult learners.

5.DIFFERENT MODES OF DISTANCE EDUCATION

After the arrival of Distance Education in India since its introduction, the system of Distance Education is being practiced through (i) Correspondence Education (ii) Open University (iii) Open School and Mass Media.

6. CORRESPONDENCE EDUCATION

Correspondence Education is an educational process within the purview of Distance Education under which instructional materials are printed and sent to the aspiring students by post, sometimes the materials are provided by mail or electronic transmission. Through the system of Correspondence Education at first, the study material is prepared by the specialists and expert in the field, the study material should always be relevant, interesting and suitable for self-learning. Next, when the dispatch of the study material is done, some questions are prepared at the end of each lesson or unit as an assignment for the students. Students should prepare all the answers of the assignments following proper instructions and send it to the study centers for evaluation. PCP program is necessary in Correspondence education in order to create a classroom environment and interest in the students. Through PCP face to face contact and direct interaction between the educators and the educands are established. PCP provides classroom lecturing, guidance and tutorial assistance. Study Centers are another basic feature in correspondence education system, it is a place for students' benefits for acquiring various important information and collecting different types of application forms etc. At last, candidates after having completed their courses successfully, are given degrees or diploma certificates.

7. OPEN UNIVERSITY

Open University is the latest innovation in the field of distance education. In the field of distance education, it has the widest coverage of area in terms of providing education to the mass. It keeps its door open for those who have the desire to learn and acquire academic qualification. In short, this is a university for all. Andhra Pradesh Open University is the first open university in India opened in 1982. The idea of open university was born in England in 1963. The open university of England was established in 1969. Now, the system of open university exists in countries like China, Pakistan, Thailand, Korea, Sri Lanka, Japan, Spain and India. IGNOU is the first national open university established in 1985. Now, in India, besides IGNOU, few other state open universities have started courses as part of higher education under open university system.

8. OPEN SCHOOL

Open University is another system of providing distance education. It functions in the grass root level with a motive to eradicate illiteracy and expand educational facilities all over the nation. This open school is open to all who have the minimum qualification for admission. It provides educational opportunity to

- School dropouts, who have completed vii or viii class.
- Working adults and women who do not have any formal education.
- Unemployed adults and housewives.
- Students of economically weaker sections who cannot afford to continue formal education.
- Those who wish to pursue continuing education.
- Students desiring to undertake life-enrichment courses.

9. THE IMPACT OF DISTANCE EDUCATION ON PRESENT DAY EDUCATION SYSTEM OF INDIA

Distance Education has given a new dimension to the education system of India. With the introduction of Distance Education, Education is now widespread in every nook and corner of our society. Distance Education and Open Schooling has revolutionized the overall system of Indian education. Now, the people even from the hilly areas and far flung areas can fulfill their wish of educating themselves. Education now being widespread among the larger section of Indian society has had a greater impact on the socio-cultural, socio-economical and socio-political set up of India. With the population explosion, for over the last few decades and effect of knowledge explosion with the advancement of science and technology, now in the present era, the necessity of Distance Education as a mode of non-formal education has been on the higher side. Formal system of education cannot fulfill the ever increasing demand of education because of its various disadvantages and weaknesses. In this regard, Distance Education has come much ahead than the formal mode of education. Now, Education is the prime mover of social change, it is the need of the hour, because, the present Indian society has realized- the more educated the society is the more developed the nation is. From

that perspective ,the relevance of getting more people educated comes in the consideration of Govt. policies .Distance education has the largest coverage in terms of spreading education to those who are willing to educate themselves to get higher education and become an effective and useful member of society they belong to. This modern introduction to the conventional mode of education has opened a new window for those for whom nothing can now be an obstacle on the way of their getting the light of education. Distance education has become quite popular among the students and the learners because it does not believe in any rigidity ,on contrary, it maintains utmost flexibility in admission procedure ,always provides cost effective education, and to top it all ,lays down minimum standard and procedure which are quite student friendly .After the emergence of Distance education ,no distance is too long to disturb the continuation of study for the greater section of Indian society ,Distance education has utilized the modern gadgets and technology especially mass media with good effect .Formal education system proves futile when it comes to educating maximum number of people ,because it restricts education within the four walls of classrooms. Distance education in India has had influence in many ways.

After independence, India had made tremendous progress in the field of education, though mostly quantitative in nature. Earlier, education was available only to the elites in society, and a large majority of poor and marginalized people remained illiterates. So, in a democratic society ,education especially higher education should get maximum expansion to all over the places of country .Therefore, in order to ensure maximum access and education of a reasonably good quality, the then policy makers and state leaders must think of some alternative system capable of supplementing the role of conventional system and distance education is one such alternatives. With the motive of meeting the ever –growing demand of those students who lacked means to pursue higher education through the regular system, the distance education mode was adopted by many universities with IGNOU being the pioneer and with its establishment in 1985,Distance education achieved a nation wide acceptability .Since then, the wind of change has started blowing in the field of education with the introduction of Distance education as an alternative mode of providing education. This system of open and distance

learning has redefined the mode of education in the last century. Distance education is the need of the hour of our present Indian society which has taken a new shape due to the knowledge explosion. This alternative mode of education has already affected many changes in the social set up.

- Distance education makes education available and accessible for all ,thus creating equality and equity in the education system of India.
- Distance education has made education more enjoyable and more attractive to the adult learners with the use of latest technology and modern teaching learning materials ,thus improving the picture of adult education.
- This new system of education has encouraged self learning and allows the learners to continue their study with their own pace, thus brings a mobility in the education system.
- With the optimum use of mass media, internet based study, e -learning ,digital library under the system of distance education, education is no longer restricted within the school campus, so it believes in the de-schooling system.
- This new system has come as a blessing to all working professionals and teachers who want to upgrade their knowledge and enhance their academic qualification.
- It gives opportunity to the students to attend evening classes and classes in the weekend in holidays simultaneously earn their bread working in some places ,thus this new system helps the people earn while learn.
- Now farmers and workers can acquire knowledge helpful for their respective field by availing the benefits of distance education, it increases the national production.
- It helps in the utilization of man power creating employment for the people as per their academic qualification because for the smooth running of distance education nation wide, a huge man power is required.
- Distance education has been very successful in achieving universal literacy to a large extent with people from different walks of life finding this new mode of education quite cheap and convenient as well.
- This new system has also eradicated the geographical isolation making education

possible for all those who reside in remote and hilly areas.

- has helped the people from backward classes to achieve better social status and social respect by equipping themselves with the weapon of higher education.
- Distance education has uplifted also the condition of female education, in the words of Swami Vivekananda, educated women means educated nation. Now in the present era, girls of remote villages and girls of minority community also can take the advantage of higher education with the help of distance education, because in the past, it was unimaginable for the girls going outside their villages just for their educational purpose.

10.CONCLUSION

Overall, Distance education has had an epoch making impact on the present system of Indian Education from different angles with all its greater accessibility, technology enriched study ,flexible admission procedures, cost effective education and helpful for independent study etc. Even if this non formal mode of education is not free from few demerits like the absence of co-curricular activities, peer learning, delay in delivery of study materials and unavailability of providing distance education to the subjects like science, engineering ,technology and medicines, the practical worth of Distance Education can never be denied .Being in the modern era with the huge impact of knowledge explosion and technological advancement, it is only through this distance education and open learning, the demand of education can be fulfilled for the larger part of present Indian society.

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