

DISTANCE EDUCATION AND ITS IMPORTANCE ON PRESENT EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

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ABSTRACT:

Dr. S.Radhakrishnan commission says, "Education must be universalized and equal opportunities for all is given. Each and every citizen is given education irrespective of his caste or creed, social or economic status, motivation and aptitude." Formal education in schools colleges and universities cannot help to achieve the goals of universal education. It creates a distance between the haves and the have-nots by serving the privileged few. The great masses have had a little or no schooling.



The Government of India therefore prepared a blueprint for opening new schools which offer non-formal education for the universalisation of education. Thus the tremendous need for open learning through distance education system has made education a life-long process. Distance education system meets the educational needs of all the people of our country by breaking all socio-economic barriers.

Keywords: *Non-Formal Education, Distance Education, Life-Long Education, Importance.*

MEANING OF DISTANCE EDUCATION

The concept of distance education system has been universally accepted as an alternative mode for receiving higher education, professional education and technical education. Distance education is the method of learning at

one's own pace, in one's own time, without the boundaries of the formal classroom and without the formal presence of a teacher. It is based on the philosophy that the learner is an active and self-directed agent who makes choices, takes decision, directs the process qualitatively and assumes the responsibility for all. But it does not remain confined only to the postal services between the universities or institution and the taught. It is a non formal system of education utilized for supplementing and enrechinging the formal system of education. In distance education all the problems and difficulties of the students are solve through correspondence. Supply of books and journals establishment of `radio and television progremmes, personal contact progremmes and the use of audio visual aids are the chief features of this progremmes.

DEFENITION OF DISTANCE EDUCATION

1. **Peter:** "Distance education is a method of indirect instruction implying geographical and emotional separation of the teacher and the taught, where as in main stream of education the relation between a teacher and students in the classroom is based upon social norms, in distance education it is based upon the technological norms."
2. **Dohmen:** "Distance education is a systematically organized form of self-study. It is made possible at a distance by means of media which can cover long distances. The opposite of 'distance education' is 'direct education' or 'face to face education', a type of education that takes place with direct contact between lecture and students.
3. **Keegan;** "Distance education describes those forms of education in which teacher and learner carry out their essential tasks apart from one another."
4. **Borah:** "Distance education is a system of education in which there is no face to face relationship between the teachers and taught but they are linked through correspondence, radio talk or voice and TV appearance."

CHARACTERISTICS OF DISTANCE EDUCATION

1. **Absence of direct contact:** The first characteristic of distance education is the absence of face to face contact between the teacher and learner. It is done either visually through video recording or the television or through impersonation at the of personal contact progremmes.
2. **Non-formal education:** Distance education is a non-formal system of education given like correspondence education, open learning .open learning etc.
3. **Postal courses:** Distance education is quite innovative and flexible as reading material is sent to the students by post.

5. **No fixed classroom:** The universities that conduct correspondence courses or distance education would arrange PCP for a few days but these institutions do not have fixed lecture rooms.
6. **Wide coverage:** Distance education enjoys a wide coverage of learner's. Learner from remote areas and hills can benefit from learning through distance education.
7. **Flexible:** Distance education follows flexible norms regarding the date of admission, number of enrollment and place of admission .There is no age limit and percentage of marks obtained in previous studies is not considered.
8. **Programmed instruction:** The course learning is sequenced according to the principles of programmed instruction that are beneficial for the learner who can learner according to his own pace.
9. **No compulsion of attendance:** In distance education, attendance of learners in the personal contact programmes is not compulsory expect for a few courses like psychology, science subject and other practical oriented courses.
10. **Use of mass media:** Distance education makes use of mass media like the radio, the television and the news papers. It also provides printed lessons.
11. **Close contact:** There is one kind of close relationships between the teachers and the pupils as contact courses and study centers are provide in the correspondence education.

OBJECTIVES OF DISTANCE EDUCATION

Distance education is necessary not only for eradicating mass illiteracy but also for meeting the ever-increasing demand for higher education. This system of education has become successful due to the effective utilization of various media, methods, and materials by the educationist, curriculum planners and researchers. The objectives of distance education are given below-

1. To provide an effective and alternative way for higher education.
2. To provide educational facilities to all who wish to receive higher education and degrees.
3. To satisfy the educational aspiration of people who engaged in socio-economic activities for livelihood.
4. To open the doors of education to people who want to be aware of the modern advancements in their fields.
5. To provide a less expensive system of education.
6. To help socio-economically backward students to receive higher education.
7. To make higher education available to geographically remote and hilly areas.

8. To provide opportunities to students who discontinued their formal education due to various reasons such as poverty, family condition, or sickness.
9. To create a schooling society, i.e., taking teaching –learning process out of the school.

NEED FOR DISTANCE EDUCATION

Distance education is the imperative need of the present's day society which has undergone unimaginable change with the explosion of scientific knowledge. The following factor has necessitated distance education.

1. **Population explosion:** The unprecedented growth of population results in the corresponding increase in the number of students. Though the number of school and colleges is increasing, they are unable to accomomoted the increasing number of students. Hence students are admitted in school and colleges on the basis of merit. Students, who are not able to get admission in the regular stream, will seek an alternative for the continuation of their education. Distance is the only source by which such students can fulfill the desire for higher education.
2. **Knowledge explosion:** This is the age of knowledge explosion. The rate at which knowledge has been growing is stupendous. As, a result the knowledge acquire in schools and colleges become outdated. It also widens the gap between the educated and uneducated people. In this case, distance education helps people in providing them with up to date knowledge and helps them to adjust to the changing environment.
3. **Improve qualification and skills:** The educational requirements of various jobs have changed and few demands have come up owing to the increased complexity of all the aspect of modern life followed by new inventions and discoveries. This atmosphere forces the individual to improve their qualification and skill in order to complete in the modern world. Distance education is the only source by which they can improve their qualification and skills.
4. **Mobility of modern life:** Modern life is mobile in the business and industrial world. in order to find a better position ,people are moving from place to place .this movement makes it difficult for many people to stick to regular educational institutional to acquire academic degrees and diplomas. Institute of correspondence course and continuing education becomes a better source to satisfy the educational requirements of such people and makes them fit in the modern life.
5. **Independent learning:** Correspondence courses are required for those who are interested in studying at home, at their own time schedule and at their own pace. This type of non formal education helps the people to utilize their leisure usefully. Thus, it encourages independent learning.

6. **Universal literacy:** Universal literacy is the ambitious goal of our country. But it is not possible to achieve this goal unless the government imparts education through distance or correspondence courses which is more economical than teaching in regular schools and colleges.

MODES OF DISTANCE EDUCATION:

The practice of distance education is being carried through:

- Correspondence courses
- Open universities
- Open school
- Mass media

CORRESPONDENCE EDUCATION

The practice correspondence studies or education involves printing the study material and sending it to the aspiring candidates for home study. The postal study material is supported by personal contact programmes. Provision is made for correcting student's response sheets, library facilities, study centers and audio-visual aids.

1. **Study material:** The study material sent to the students is prepared by specialist in the field. It should be relevant, interesting and suitable for self learning.
2. **Response sheets:** At the end each lesson or unit, there are some questions or answer sheets which serve as an assignment for the students. Students should construct the answer sheets properly and send them to the institution concerned for correction. They should be returned to the candidates after correction pointing out the mistakes with comments.
3. **Personal contact programme:** This programme is necessary in correspondence education in order to create interest in the students. It is a process of establishing direct contacts between the educators and students. This programme provides classroom lecturing, tutorial assistance. The period of PCP is 15 to 20 days.
4. **Study centers:** Study centers have been fixed for the benefit of students. They should be kept open during vacations, evenings or on holidays. Application form and other information can be obtained from these centers.

5. **Examination:** Institute of correspondence course and continuing education conducts examinations at the end of every academic year. Supplementary examination is held during November for those who have failed in the previous examination.
6. **Certificates and degrees or diploma:** The candidates who have completed their courses successfully are eligible to apply for degrees or diploma.

OPEN UNIVERSITY

The idea of Open University was born in England in 1963. The Open University of England was established in 1969. Many countries have Open University. The Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) is the first national Open University established in 1985. Besides IGNOU, there are 10 open universities in the country (2003). Tamil Nadu Open University is the 10th state Open University established in 2003. A number of universities such as Annamala University have started courses under Open University system.

Objectives:

1. To provide higher educational opportunities to a large number of people at the graduate and the post graduate level.
2. To provide quality education to all, regardless of their age, caste, creed, region or formal qualification.
3. To promote and develop the distance education programme.
4. To provide educational opportunities to drop outs as well as to those who could not study in the regular stream due to some reasons.
5. To satisfy the people who desire to have up to date knowledge or to improve their educational qualification whether they are in-service or not.
6. To provide need based academic programmes related to professional and vocation orientation.
7. To put educational technology in order to make the learning programmes effective.
8. To make education a lifelong process and help the people to utilize their leisure time fruitfully.

Education system in Open University:

Open University adopts a special system of distance education in order to achieve its objects so that higher education will be accessible to the maximum number of people and different groups in the country. It conducts its programmes through postal tuition, personal contact programmes and audio –visual programmes. Any person who has completed 18 or 20 years of age is eligible to apply for the graduate courses.

OPEN SCHOOL

Open schools and open universities are playing an important role in providing distance education. Open school is one of our efforts to eradicate illiteracy and to expand educational facilities all over the nation. This school is open to all who have the minimum qualifications for admission. The enrolled students are pursuing their studies according to their convenient time and in their own manner. These schools fulfill the demand for providing education at the secondary level. It provides educational opportunities to:

1. School drop-outs, who have completed 7 or 8 class.
2. Working adults and women who do not have any formal education.
3. Unemployed adults and housewives.
4. Students of economically weaker section who cannot afford to continue formal education.
5. Those who failed in class 10 and 12.
6. Those who wish to pursue continuing education.

Mass media: Many informal and communication technologies are arranged for the benefit of the learners of distance education.

Satellite: Satellites are playing an important role in telecasting educational programmes. It is praised as “teacher in the sky,” and “education, rising star.” Education satellite (EDUSAT) is used to telecast programmes that can reach the learners living in distance places of the hilly areas, deserts and sea shores.

Broadcast: Radios are widely used as mass media to broadcast the lessons. The learner of distance education listens to the radio programmes.

Television: Television has been functioning as a means of distance education since 1972. It plays an important role in removing literacy and providing education in most all subjects. The UGC programme is telecast through television for the students of regular colleges and universities.

Video cassettes: The explanation through oral communication of ideas is converted into visual images in video cassettes. Complicated and minute scientific ideas and explanations are recorded on a video cassette and they are played in the classroom.

Computer based programmes: Computer is used for teaching in distance education. More than 300 computer – based programmes have been prepared for distance education.

ADVANTAGES OF DISTANCE EDUCATION

This is a very flexible system of education which is not limited by age, place, sex, creed or time:

1. A learner can progress at his own time and pace.
2. It makes education a life-long process.
3. It makes the learner self reliant and confident.
4. It reduces pressure on the formal system on education.
5. It is useful to spend the leisure time fruitfully.
6. It encourages learning while earning.
7. It helps to improve knowledge and skill in the field of interest.
8. It prepares the people to be competent in the modern society.

DISADVANTAGES OF DISTANCE EDUCATION

1. It will lead to deterioration of the academic standards.
2. The course becomes stereotyped gradually.
3. Students hardly get opportunities for co-curricular activities.
4. The provision for study centre's and book bank is very meager.
5. The scope of practical experience is limited.
6. Generally, weightage is not given to degrees obtained through distance education.
7. It prepares the students for written examinations and getting degrees and diplomas.
8. It has limited scope for making people aware of the cultural change and social development.

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE PROGRESS OF DISTANCE EDUCATION

1. Need based courses should be selected and imparted through distance education.
2. Study should be dispatched in time.
3. The course material should properly be edited by the experts.
4. The response sheets sent by the student's should be evaluated regularly.
5. PCP should be held at regular intervals and at suitable centers.
6. Appropriate guide line should be issued.
7. Study materials should be prepared in regional languages.
8. Printing of material should be well organized with reasonable quality.

9. The cost of distance education should be minimized and adequate practical training should be given wherever necessary.

CONCLUSION:

Distance education is a new innovation in the process of imparting education. This system will be helpful to solve our educational problems and minimize the pressure of population over the traditional system of education. It is an alternative to formal education through which crores of people can get education and fulfill their dream of higher education. National policy on education (1986) states thus, 'Distance education is cherished goal of educational process. It pre-supposes universal literacy. Opportunities will be provided to the youth, housewives, agricultural and industrial workers and professionals to continue the education of their choice at the place suited to them. The future trust will be in the direction of open and distance learning'. Nobody denies that it is an effective media of life-long education, which is essential for the progress of our nation.

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