

## **Role of Distance Education and Open Learning in Higher Education**

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**ABSTRACT:** *The present world comprises of the developed and developing countries. For centuries education was considered to be a social necessity and a service, the provision of which was the responsibility of the individual, the community and the government. The conventional system of the education is no longer able to cope with the growing demands of education for all and life long education. The concept of universalization of education, the increasing role of education and training in all areas of development extra all have forced the educational thinkers and policy planners through out the world to ponder over and devise some alternative system of providing education to those who for one or the other reasons could not get formal education.*

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

The present world comprises of the developed and developing countries. Education is known to play a vital role in transforming a society to enable their nation to achieve its goal of overall development and growth. Earlier, education was available only to the elites in society, and a large majority of poor and marginalised people remained illiterate. Political considerations have an important role in the expansion of higher education. The state govt. experienced tremendous pressure from the public to establish more and more colleges and universities. In a democratic society even the strong Governments find it very difficult to resist such pressures and are compelled to succumb to the same. The concept of universalization of education, the increasing role of education and training in all areas of development extra all have forced the educational thinkers and policy planners through out the world to ponder over and devise some alternative system of providing education to those who for one or the other reasons could not get formal education.

The problem seems to be grossly acute at the higher education level. Higher education is recognized as a vehicle for sustainable development and is realized as a powerful tool to build knowledge based society. Higher education creates professionals, thinkers, future teachers, researchers, economists and knowledge workers, who, besides inhabiting knowledge societies, can be instrumental in creating them. Higher education in the country is available to the top 30% of our population only. The conventional system of education has undoubtedly contributed significantly both to the advancement and dissemination of knowledge, yet the fact remains that the conventional system has neither been able to solve the problem of access, nor of equity and equality. The education through distance and open system is an alternative mode of imparting instruction, which has helped to meet the demands for education of millions of people at different level.

### **II. NEED & IMPORTANCE OF DISTANCE EDUCATION**

Several developing countries have recognized the role of education in nation building and made extensive provisions for educational facilities to the people by setting up formal educational institutions of all types. Despite tremendous growth in the number of educational institutions, the demand has far exceeded the availability of educational provisions. Because of population explosion and limited financial resources of the state the formal system is unable to meet the needs of all the learners. It is imperative to seriously examine the potential alternative that can cater to be more flexible. Thus the changing social, economic political and educational needs of the nations have made the administrators and policy framers to move away from conventional practices of education and have led to the emergence of the distance education all over the world.

### **III. CHALLENGES AND ISSUES**

Education is a socio-economic platform which bridges the gap between the rich and the poor, caste and creed, region or religion. Higher education across the world enabled to respond challenges and opportunities which emanated on account of research and development in various fields of life, made several countries to realize the world over education as an index for human resource development. Expansion, access, equity and equality have become the concerns of higher education. In the process of providing equity of opportunity, many governments in the world has recognized the conventional system of education not only as a costly phenomenon

but also less flexible system to meet the growing demands of the public at large. The problems which besieged the governments include:

paucity of resources and infrastructure: inaccessibility of regular system of education particularly to differently age groups; school dropouts, housewives and working people; non-supportable socio-economic conditions of people especially from under privileged and marginalized sectors of the society; advent of revolutionary changes in print and communication technologies and governmental urge to find another mode of education as a supplement to the conventional mode, a paradigm shift in education from one time learning to lifelong learning gave scope for starting distance education. It may be understood that all these reasons or a few of these could have prompted the governments to start and elevate the distance education in many countries.

#### **IV. SUGGESTIONS**

1. Region wise survey of needs of learners aspiring to enter into the distance education system will result in useful data to plan job oriented courses.
2. An apex body to monitor distance education system is extremely desirable and urgently needed.
3. Researchers need to be conducted to evaluate the effectiveness and success of the distance system in meeting the demands of the weaker and deprived section of the society.
4. Each institution in the distance education system is adopting its own multi-media approach. Common multi-media packages for use of the Distance Education learners, irrespective of the institution in which they are studying, will serve a useful purpose.
5. Each institution must make a honest and detailed study of wastage and stagnation. This wastage and stagnation data may be taken as the basis for SSS, PCP and other important aspects. This data will be very helpful in planning to make the distance education approach more effective.

#### **CONCLUSIONS**

Distance Education Mode has become very popular and common in India, because it is catering to a wide range of aspirants, who are willing to upgrade their educational qualifications for various reasons. The distance education system will help to accelerate the process of transformation from a conservative and information society to a functional, knowledgeable and well versed society of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The Distance education system provides opportunities not only to the younger students but also to those from the older age groups. The main reasons for increasing interest in Distance education lies in the need for continuing education in today's competitive world.

Thus, distance education, conceptually, aims at opening the flood gates of education to people hailing from all sections of society and from all age groups, thereby democratizing the system in every possible way.

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