

Capacity of Distance Learning In Higher Education

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ABSTRACT

Every underdeveloped country has a cause and effect relationship between economic, social conditions and education. India is no exception to it. History of India is quite divergent and a mixture of various events. However, the educated strata have always been formed up by the higher class and upper middle class of the society. Most of them completed their education abroad and took part in the political life of India. This is a principal reason why the post - independence period has witnessed lesser participation and formal enrolment of Indian students in the education sector. Several educational committees had been constituted for increased involvement of students in primary, secondary and higher education. A landmark thought cropped up in the mind of the then educationists and scholars which had actually revolutionised the education sector within decades. It was the starting of ' Correspondence Education 'initially that was later replaced by the umbrella term open or distance learning. It has brought about the greatest involvement of students in the secondary and high education which was then the need of the hour and dream project of many political leaders. It is one of the greatest as well as productive contributions of the existing ministry for bringing about a leap forward in education.

KEYWORDS: *Introduction, Open Learning Interpretation, Purpose, Establishments Offering It, Major Milestones, Student Participation*

I. INTRODUCTION

Initiation of open learning in the post - independence era is a milestone on the part of the then 'Ministry of Human Resource and Development' in collaboration with other eminent educational bodies of India. In reality 'open learning' is a kind of ideology or philosophy which is given shape by the broad and umbrella term 'distance education'. It is a modern and flexible system of education devoid of any kind of formal restrictions except the minimum age limit. Both the centre as well as the states of India at present have a large number of distance learning institutions. India has the largest network of distance learning , second to China.

II. INTERPRETATION OF OPEN LEARNING

Open and Distance Learning (ODL) encompasses Open Learning, Distributed Learning and Flexible Learning. Its basic tenets are - 'any time' , 'any place' and 'anywhere'. It is a teaching - learning process or ambience in which teachers and learners are separated by time and space. It is a way of imparting knowledge or delivering formal education in which the students are not present in the traditional classroom and face-to-face interaction circuit. Technical medium along with the use of information and communication technology replace the conventional classroom based education. Transaction of curriculum takes place with the help of self-study materials like print media, television, audio-video tapes, videoconferencing, teleconferencing, chat sessions, electronic mail, internet and world wide web. Limited face to face contact sessions are organised in the nearest study centres set up by Distance Education institutions. It advocates flexibility to the learners with respect to entry and exit, place and pace of study, method of study, choice and combination of courses, assessment and course completion. It has enabled the access to education to the larger section of the society. It includes a heterogenous group of teachers and learners engaged on a macro level teaching platform.

PURPOSE OF DISTANCE EDUCATION

The major objectives of open and distance learning in India are -

- 1) Democratisation of Higher Education
- 2) Redress social and educational inequality
- 3) Include working men, women, housewives and other adult learners
- 4) Strike the grass - root level of population in remote areas
- 5) Provide an innovative university level education system with greater degree of flexibility
- 6) Freedom of choice in combination of courses

- 7) Opportunity to all strata for upgradation of skill and qualification
- 8) To develop education as a life-long activity so that people can develop knowledge about new arenas.

ESTABLISHMENTS OFFERING DISTANCE EDUCATION AT PRESENT

The educational institutions offering distance education can be classified under the following broadheads -

- 1) National Open University (IGNOU)
- 2) State Open Universities
- 3) Distance Education Institutions
 - a) Institutions of national importance
 - b) Central Universities
 - c) State Universities
 - d) Deemed Universities
 - e) Private Universities of state
- 4) Distance Education Centres at stand alone institutions
 - a) Professional Institutions
 - b) Private Organisations
 - c) Government Institutions
- 5) National Institute of Open Schooling for pre - degree levels

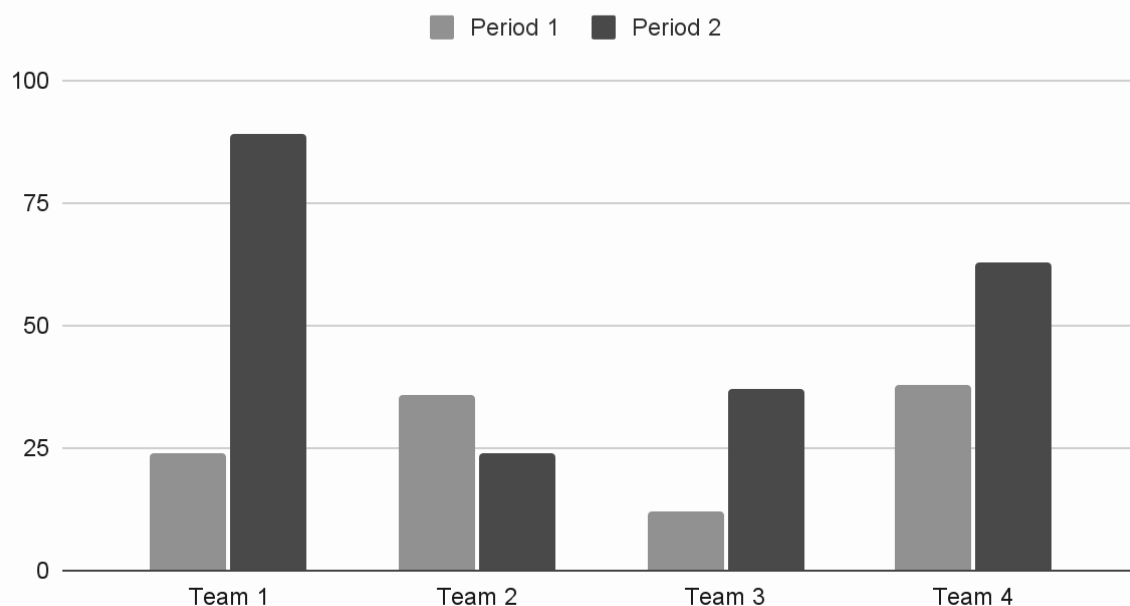
MAJOR MILESTONES IN THE HISTORY OF DISTANCE EDUCATION IN INDIA

YEAR	EVENTS
1962	School of Correspondence Courses and Continuing Education , University of Delhi
1964 - 66	Stress on Correspondence Education by Kothari Commission
1980s	Idea of Open University System
1982	Dr BR Ambedkar Open University, Hyderabad
1985	IGNOU
1987	Nalanda Open University, Patna
1987	Vardhaman Mahaveer Open University, Kota
1989	Yashvant Rao Chavan Maharashtra Open University

STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN DISTANCE EDUCATION

India has registered the highest ever enrolment in distance education since 1989. It offers different courses like - Undergraduate and Postgraduate programs on various disciplines of Arts, Science, Commerce, MBA, MCA, MPhil, PhD, various professional , vocational and technical courses. The principal governing body of all the distance learning centres is within the vicinity of IGNOU under the Government of India. It has become an international champion of distance education. Free study material have reached millions of students through important channels like ‘Gyanvani’, ‘Gyandhara’, ‘e-gyankosh’, ‘SWAYAM’ , ‘SWAYAM PRABHA’, ‘SAKSHAT’.

Points scored



The following chart shows student ratio in some of the courses in IGNOU in the year 2013 (Source : interpreted from www.researchgate.com)

Team 1 = Agriculture, Humanities

Team 2 = MBA, MCA

Team 3 = Environmental Science, Commerce

Team 4 = Science, Diploma

Distance education centers have been providing over 250 courses of study to the learners all over the world. There are 13 State Open Universities at present which have engaged approximately 22 lakh students. IGNOU collectively consists of 4 million students at present. It is a part of Commonwealth of Learning (CoL), Canada and stands as the 'Centre of Excellence in Distance Education'.

III. CONCLUSION

Newly independent India was highly problem oriented. Post independence period saw threats from every sector to the smooth development of India. The one stop solution to all these menaces was educational development. Initiation of Distance Education is a boon for the Higher Education sector of India. It successfully encompassed the vast majority of learners who had no alternative to learn previously except in conventional universities. It has resulted in continuum in teaching - learning process. Undoubtedly it has achieved more than it's desired intention. It acted as a catalyst in the history of Higher Education in India.

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