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REVIEW ARTICLE

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## IMPORTANCE OF DISTANCE EDUCATION IN INDIA

\*Dr. Amaresh Chandra Sahoo

Faculty, Capital Law College, Bhubaneswar, Odisha, India

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#### \*Corresponding author:

Dr. Amaresh Chandra Sahoo

### ABSTRACT

This Distance education courses have played a vital role in educating the society in India by providing access to education, flexibility, cost-effectiveness, and technology-driven learning. Distance learning education in India is becoming increasingly popular among students who don't want to travel to campus. It provides teaching to those students who missed the opportunity of getting the formal education at normal age. Many students have taken advantage of online courses to further their education. It provides opportunities for individuals to pursue their dreams without having to move away from the home.

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## INTRODUCTION

The concept of distance education (D.E) is gaining importance on the various developed underdeveloped and developing countries, especially to meet the growing needs and aspirations of the people emerging because of explosion of knowledge, population explosion and explosion of needs. The present world scenario is marked by advancement on the field of science, space and technology and explosion of knowledge in every walk of life. Thus, the formal system of education fails to incorporate significant changes due to its rigidity, high cost and the knowledge acquired from schools/colleges are outdated, obsolete and not the latest. Distance Education can go a long way in this direction in quenching the thirst of knowledge-explosion and meeting the growing needs and requirements of the learners. An increasing importance of technology and the Internet in our everyday life has also left an impact on the education system. In recent years, educational institutions have been faced with a choice, to combine technological innovation with traditional teaching and enable remote learning on the one hand, or to stick to traditional, face-to-face learning that could potentially cause a drop in the number of enrolled students in the near future if technology demands increase, perhaps even forcing them to close down permanently. As a result many schools and colleges have accepted a new curriculum based on distance education. Distance Education is a process to create and provide access to learning when the source of information and the learners are separated by time and distance, or both. It is a type of learning where students do not have to physically attend the classes at a school or university.

Distance learning education in India is becoming increasingly popular among students who don't want to travel to the campus. It provides teaching to those students who missed the opportunity of getting the formal education at normal age.<sup>1</sup> Distance learning provides opportunities for individuals to pursue their dreams without having to move away from home. Many students have taken advantage of online courses to further their education. Online classes allow students to study at their own pace without having to worry about commuting time. Distance education is always economical in nature as it doesn't burden the students and their parents. These help the student to invest their funds into some other productive medium that could help the nation in one way or the other. These programs provide flexibility and convenience to learners as they can access educational resources and interact with their educators at their own pace and schedule. Learners can choose their own learning environment and can learn from any location as long as they have access to an internet connection.<sup>2</sup> Distance Education is one of the latest educational trend helping lots of aspirants to achieve their dreams with minimum effort. It is making the life easy of many candidates by coming to their doorsteps. The open education system is helping to increase the literacy rate of the country.

**Objective of Distance Education:** The role of distance education has enabled learners from remote and rural areas to access quality education. It has also provided opportunities for working

<sup>1</sup>Miller, G. "Agriculture distance education: A valid alternative for higher education?". Proceedings of the 20th Annual National Agricultural Education Research Meeting: vol. 11, issue 9, 2017.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.thehighereducationreview.com/news/the-need-and-importance-of-distance-education-in-india>

professionals to upgrade their skills and qualifications. Learners can study at their own pace and can choose when and where they want to study. However its major objectives are as follows:

- Distance education provides opportunities for higher education e.g. undergraduate courses, post-graduate, diploma, career oriented courses, vocational courses etc.
- It allows the students to learn according to their own time and place because of its flexibility.
- Distance education aims to provide freedom to the learner to carry on self directed learning.
- Distance education aims to help the learner to actively involve himself/herself in the learning situation.
- Its aims and objectives are to provide efficient and less expensive method of education. It provides opportunity of learning for qualified persons who is interested to upgrade his/her knowledge.
- It promotes educational well-being of both urban and rural areas students.
- Distance education provides flexible system of education.
- Distance education provide the opportunity to the entire willing person to join courses who on account of personal, social and also economic reasons could not complete the education.
- Universalisation of education is one of the major objectives of the Distance education. It eradicates mass illiteracy.
- Distance education provides both in-service and pre-service education.
- Distance education aims to provide opportunity to in-service personnel to update their knowledge and skills.
- Distance education uses learning psychology in the teaching learning process.
- Distance education uses maximum educational technology in the teaching learning process.

#### Nature and Characteristics of Distance Education

- Distance education is characterised by self-dependent learning, that is, the student has to totally depend on himself/herself for studying and also completion of the courses.
- Distance education provides self-instructional learning/material to the learner.
- It is characterised by the presence of a counselor. The counselor guides and solves the problem of the learner throughout the course.
- Distance education is based on assignments system.
- Distance education is characterised by the presence of study centre, that is, a centre which provides facilities for counseling classes, library, submission of assignments, study materials, counselors. The study centre has a Programme Co-ordinator who takes and look after the affair of the study centre.
- Distance education is flexible in nature while the conventional system which was rigid in nature.
- Distance education is based on by two way communications, that is, the learner communicates with the counselor through learning, telephone, e-mail, counseling sessions.
- In distance education, there is the physical absence of a teacher.
- In distance education, there is individual learning and group learning is absent. It means privatization of learning, that is, the learner study alone in private situation.
- Distance education is based on credit system of learning. It is characterised by the presence of grading system, that is, A+, A, B+, B, C, D, etc.

#### Benefits of Distance learning

**Convenience:** Students do not need to worry about commuting to school or finding parking spaces. Instead, they can simply log onto

their computer and continue studying. Distance learning also offers students the convenience of being able to access their course materials anytime and anywhere.

**Cost-effective:** With distance learning, students only pay for what they use. There are no additional fees associated with textbooks, supplies, or equipment. In addition, students do not have to travel to campus. Therefore, distance learning saves money for both students and schools.

**Accessible:** Distance learning courses are accessible to anyone who has internet access. Students do not need to be physically present at a particular location to take online classes.

**More professional people lead to greater improvement:** Distance learning helps individuals get trained in different fields. In addition, they can learn skills that would not be taught in schools. As a result, they become more skilled and knowledgeable. This makes them more employable than others who do not have any training.

**Convenient education medium for women:** Women can use distance learning to complete their studies. They can choose to attend evening classes instead of going to school during the day. This is convenient for working mother.

**Multi-talented professionals:** Distance learning gives students the opportunity to develop their talents. They can learn how to play instruments, sing, dance, write poetry, paint, sculpt, and many other things. This helps them gain confidence and build self-esteem.

**Pocket-friendly fee structure:** Students can save money by taking distance learning courses. They can pay fewer fees compared to those who go to regular schools. This saves them money and time.

**Flexibility:** Distance learning gives students the opportunity to learn at their own pace. Students have the flexibility to study whenever they want and wherever they want. Distance education in India also provides students with the opportunity to work at their own pace and complete assignments at their own time frame.

**Variety:** There are many different types of distance learning programs offered today. These programs range from traditional classroom settings to virtual classrooms. Students can choose the type of program that best to virtual classrooms. Students can choose the type of program that best suits them.

**Self-paced:** Students can set their own schedule and pace while taking distance education in India. They can start and stop lessons whenever they want without having to wait for others to finish.

**More skilled Individuals lead to more development:** Distance learning not only helps you to upgrade ones' skills but also helps to earn more. This, in turn, will help to multiply the countries skilled workforce which in the lieu makes a greater contribution to the GDP of the country.<sup>3</sup>

**Importance of Distance Education in India:** India, after 1947, has made major changes and a great advancement in its education system. Earlier the education was available only to the high class people of India, and many poor & middle class people remained uneducated. There was an enormous pressure on multiple state governments by common people to establish more & more colleges, institutes and universities. This pressure has resulted in faster growth of higher education in India. But the only disadvantage is that this development is more emphasised on quantity then quality, all because of the increased demand. Therefore, a complimentary methodology was needed in terms of ensuring quality education and success and distance learning is one kind.<sup>4</sup> In a developing country like India,

<sup>3</sup> <https://spins.in>

<sup>4</sup> Dr. SantiKundu, Open and Distance Learning Education Its Scope and Constraints in Indian Scenario, IOSR Journal Of Humanities And Social Science (IOSR-JHSS), Vol. 19, Issue 4, 2014.

education is still a dream for many. Though we are living in the 21<sup>st</sup> century there are lots of barriers in the formal education system. As formal education is not so economical Non-Formal education system is gaining more popularity in recent years. Distance learning is a modern way of learning allowing students to study within their own space and time without being physically present in the school/college/university. As distance learning plays an important role in today's education system.

Distance education is also known as online or correspondence education has played a significant role in educating the society of India. It is a mode of education that allows students to study from anywhere, at any time, and at their own pace. It means that instead, they learn online via computer or mobile device. In order to complete degree online, students need to enroll in a program that offers online courses. It is a type of education in which teaching is given from a distance. In this education there is always an absence of teachers as the teacher and students are separated from each other. In other words, distance learning is the process of creating an educational experience of equal qualitative value for the learner to best suit their needs outside the classroom. One of the major advantages of Distance education in India is that, it provides flexibility to students who have busy schedules. In addition, distance education helps students stay focused and motivated while studying.<sup>5</sup> Distance education in India is called by various names. Some of them are: Correspondence Courses or, Correspondence Education or, Open Learning. It is also called as Virtual Education or, Online Education. This is done through the use of technology such as the Internet, video conferencing, and other multimedia resources. Distance Education gets overwhelming response in India. However, even in this system, the actual aim of providing quality education is getting replaced by the aim of making more money from students by the institutions. The universities running distance education need to ensure the quality of higher distance education. Following are top needs & importance of quality distance education in India:

- **Rapid growth of Education:** With the advancement of education & technology, it is almost impossible to incorporate new changes through formal education.
- **Population:** The unimagined growth rate of population has declined the chances for formal education to educate each and every student.
- **Geographical limitations:** Students who live in places which are geographically isolated find it tough to take education through regular manner.
- **Qualification improvement:** Distance learning offers possibilities to candidates who want to enhance their qualification while being in their present jobs.
- **Desire to work & study:** If one is capable of earning while learning then it is the most favorable advantage you have with distance education.
- **Education for all ages:** Distance education is for people of any ages.

- **Financial Circumstances:** Distance learning is also highly accepted in India because of financial & family responsibilities of many young candidates.
- **Faster Promotion:** Studying for higher education while working may result in high and improved knowledge and skills which ultimately enhances your chances of promotions.
- **Flexibility factor:** Flexible education is what everyone wants and distance learning offers the same.

Distance learning is an effective alternative to the formal education system. It is extremely important for the emerging learning society as a whole and for the society that is educationally underdeveloped or developed. It has its message for both lifelong learning and universalisation. Distance education course has played a vital role in educating society in India by providing access to education, flexibility, cost-effectiveness, and technology-driven learning. With the continued growth and development of technology. Then, distance education course plays an even more significant role in the future of education in India. Distance education was appreciated by many reputed universities to meet the increasing expectations of those candidates who had insufficient resources to pursue higher education through regular method. So, distance learning in India has become most popular today. There is lot of boundaries in the formal education system, which a lot of students are not able to undertake as a result of which they are getting enticed towards distance education. That's why it is growing so rapidly in India. Different mode of education was necessary to help the people to receive education. For this the need, importance of Distance Education is felt. Today, India has achieved universalisation of Education to a great extent only due to the efforts and services of Distance education institutes.

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