



Two-day National Conference
On
**Distance Education in India:
Emerging Challenges
and Prospects**

September 8 – 9, 2016

Proceedings

Organised by
Directorate of Distance Education

Pondicherry University (A Central University)
R.V.Nagar, Kalapet, Puducherry - 605 014



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Pondicherry University (A Central University)

R.V.Nagar, Kalapet, Puducherry - 605 014

Prof. Anisa Basheer Khan, Ph.D., FNEA, FNSA
Vice Chancellor (Officiating)

Message

Distance Education is playing an important role in India in achieving the objective of higher Education of the Govt. of India. Distance Education ensures higher education for socio-economically and geographically disadvantaged group of population and/or for in-service people. Giving an equal weightage for courses under Distance Mode with Regular Mode courses our country further ensured equal opportunity to the students under Distance Mode.

In the given situation, the Two-day National Conference On '**Distance Education in India: Emerging Challenges and Prospects**' organized by Directorate of Distance Education, Pondicherry University has a special significance to all concerned people who are directly or indirectly involved in Distance Education.

We are grateful to Prof. Ved Prakashji, Chairman of UGC, New Delhi for accepting our invitation for delivering the inaugural address in the National Conference. I am sure that the speech of Prof. Ved Prakashji will be a guiding principle for all of us for implementing courses under distance mode. We are also grateful to Prof. Prof. H.P. Dikshitji, Former Vice Chancellor of IGNOU, New Delhi for being with us as Guest of Honour. Prof. H.P. Dikshitji with his long experience in the field of Distance Education will enlighten us about challenges and remedial measures in implementing the Distance Education program. I am sure that the valuable deliberations by other resource persons would immensely help all the delegates in having proper perspectives about Distance Education. I congratulate the Directorate of Distance Education, Pondicherry University for taking the initiative in organizing this Conference. It is a timely initiative when the UGC is in the process to come out with policy for Distance Education. I am sure that the issues, challenges and solutions which will emerge of the conference will be helpful for UGC in shaping policy related to the Distance Education.

Anisabasheer

Prof. Anisa Basheer Khan, Ph.D., FNEA, FNSA



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Prof. M. RAMACHANDRAN, Ph.D.
Registrar (I/C)

Message

Evidence clearly demonstrates that Distance Education has changed the life of many people in getting good job especially in the public sector including Higher Learning Institutions. This is a good example before women, working people and socio-economically disadvantaged people to utilize the opportunity of distance mode of education to improve the quality of life.

Degrees obtained through Distance Mode of Education have got equivalent status with regular mode of education in case of recruitment as per the Government of India circular. But still a large number of common people possess wrong notion about the value of distance education. Given this background, the initiative taken by the Directorate of Distance Education, Pondicherry University in organizing a “**Two-day National Conference on 'Distance Education in India: Emerging Challenges and Prospects'**” during Sept. 8 – 9, 2016 has got a special relevance especially in sensitizing the larger society about the value of distance education. I appreciate the initiative of the Directorate of Distance Education, Pondicherry University.

I am confident that the deliberations of the resource persons in the conference will be enlightening for all the delegates and in turn this experience will help them in implementing the courses under distance mode more systematically keeping the UGC regulations and interest of the students in mind. I express my sincere gratitude to Prof. Ved Prakash, The Chairman of the University Grants Commission, New Delhi and Prof. H.P. Dikshit, former Vice Chancellor of IGNOU and other resource persons for attending the conference and sharing their valuable experiences.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'M. Ramachandran'.

Prof. M. RAMACHANDRAN, Ph.D.
Registrar (I/C)



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Prof. Sibnath Deb, Ph.D.,D.Sc.,

Organising Secretary of the Conference

Director (I/C), Directorate of Distance Education

Preface and Acknowledgments

The popularity of distance mode of education is increasing across the world since the facilities for higher education under regular mode is limited compared to the need. Distance mode of education is an alternate or second possible option for a large number of students to opt for higher education, especially those who did not get the opportunity for higher education immediately after completion of bachelor degree for various reasons. It is also an opportunity for working people to acquire additional qualification for career growth. Therefore, this is a good opportunity for a large number of students to take up higher education. This opportunity helps an individual in life in fulfilling their thirst and desire for higher education. Thus it leads to higher self-esteem and dignity and finally shapes their future and enables them to gain and enjoy better quality of life.

Some of the advantages of distance mode of education are flexible admission process, no age bar like regular educational programs, flexibility in terms of course completion, timings of class, and less cost. Thus distance education gives an option both for study and gaining the desirable employment for their qualifications.

However, evidence clearly demonstrates that some constraints and challenges exist in the process of running courses in distance mode. First, obtaining periodic approval from the DEB (UGC) on time. Second, developing quality educational materials. Third, distribution of study materials on time and maintaining overall quality of the programs/courses. Also, updating the curricula from time to time, lack of direct contact with the students, conducting examinations on time, evaluation of answer scripts and declaration of results on time, answering queries of the students and maintaining contact with partner organizations for ensuring smooth and effective implementation of the programs.

Objective of the Conference

Given the earlier background, a need is felt to discuss about the prospects, opportunities and challenges in distance mode of education among the stakeholders, by mutually exchanging the views about various 'pros and cons'

and coming out with reasonably better understanding for addressing the challenges and issues more effectively for the benefits of a large number of students. Hence, holding the conference is of paramount importance and rather the need of the hour.

Few Pertinent Questions

1. Are courses under distance mode equally beneficial in imparting knowledge and skills like regular mode education?
2. Do students face any challenge in getting the study materials and understanding the contents without personal contact support?
3. Does on-line mode of education facilitate education for socio-economically backward students from rural areas?
4. Are study materials developed by different institutes up-dated and student friendly?
5. Are common people aware of the government circular about equal weightage of distance mode education?
6. Are students from rural background benefitted by distance mode of education?
7. How to motivate the students under distance mode in taking their studies seriously?
8. Is there any social stigma attached with courses under distance mode?
9. Do examination and evaluation of answer scripts of courses under distance mode carried out with equal seriousness like regular mode education?
10. Do students with distance educational background enjoy equal opportunity in job selection and career growth both in public and private sectors?
11. Is it necessary to monitor and evaluate courses under distance mode periodically?

I am hopeful that from the deliberations of the resource persons and researchers we will get the answer of all the questions raised.

On behalf of all the staff of Directorate of Distance Education, Pondicherry University, I extend my gratitude to Prof. Ved Prakash, Chairman of UGC, New Delhi, for accepting our invitation to attend the conference as Chief Guest despite his busy schedule. I also extend my gratitude to Prof. H.P. Dikshit, Former Vice Chancellor of IGNOU, New Delhi, for giving consent to participate in the conference as Guest of Honour. From the very first day of

conceptualization of the issue for organizing this conference, I have got guidance from Prof. Vimala Veeraraghavan in planning and deciding the list of resource persons for the conference, which helped me to move ahead. I do not have any word to express my gratitude for her continuous support and guidance. I am thankful to all the resource persons, chairpersons of the scientific sessions, Chief Guest of the valedictory session, scholars, academics, students and partner organizations for their overwhelming responses and significant contribution in the conference. It would be a lapse on my part if I do not convey my gratitude to Prof. Anisa Basheer Khan, Vice Chancellor (I/C), Pondicherry University, Prof. M. Ramachandran, Registrar (I/C), Prof. Malabika Deo, Finance Officer (I/C), and her unit, Controller of Examinations, faculty members of various departments of the university and my colleagues in the Directorate of Distance Education, Pondicherry University. Without all of their wholehearted support, it would not have been possible to organize the conference successfully.

Support from the Electrical Wing, Media and Mass Communication Department, Horticulture Unit, PU Community Radio and Computer Centre of Pondicherry University is highly appreciable.

Success of any conference lies with finance. We got approval from our Vice Chancellor for using some of our revenues, which DDE earned over a period of time for organizing this conference for academic cause. We are happy for this support. Partial support from the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR), New Delhi, further helped us in organizing the conference covering major expenses. We acknowledge our gratitude to ICSSR for their support. We appreciate the important role of media in disseminating the information about the conference. The printer Penguin Zerox deserves appreciation for printing our conference brochure professionally. In a nutshell, I would say that collective efforts helped us in organizing the conference successfully.

Sibnath Deb

Prof. Sibnath Deb, Ph.D., D.Sc.,
Organising Secretary of the Conference
Director (I/C), Directorate of Distance Education

Brief Speech by Guest of Honour

Potential, Capacity and Capabilities of Open and Distance Learning With Some Unexplored Areas



Prof. H. P. Dikshit
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The great visionary, philosopher, thinker and saint of our country Swami Vivekananda while analyzing the cause of problems and sufferings of our people even before the country achieved freedom made the following far sighted and important statement indicating the path which our country should adopt whenever we got an opportunity to decide about the destiny of our people and our country.

“The chief cause of India's ruin has been the monopolizing of its education and grabbing of the land by a handful of men. If we are to rise again, we shall have to do it by spreading education among the masses.” – Swami Vivekananda

As India achieved independence with just 20% of our people being literate out of which only 2% were women it was realized by all that the country had to handle the important but difficult task of providing relevant education which liberates, empowers, enlightens and enables successful reconstruction of free civil societies. Thus emerged the importance of educating the masses as a prioritized National Task and on the eve of Independence Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India declared the firm Commitment of the Government of India to spread education for eradicating poverty and ignorance of our people. As the country moved forward to achieve desired goals in Education, Agriculture, Science and Technology Sectors some of the leaders in these areas proposed Massive Changes in the systems that existed. Thus emerged Green Revolution, White Revolution, Revolution for Success in Space Technology and a Revolution proposed by Kothari Commission for education as described in following words:

“Indian Education needs a drastic reconstruction; almost a revolution”
-Kothari Commission

However, although a large number of institutions of higher education were developed mainly in conventional mode, the mismatch between demand for higher education and what we could collectively provide kept on increasing.

Kotahri Commission report suggested alternative approach of providing education through Correspondence Courses but this did not receive the attention that it deserved and in general it was recognized as a less creditable system than the conventional system. Instead of investing funds essential for quality Correspondence Courses/Open and Distance Learning (ODL) Programmes, an unfortunate trend emerged in several universities where resources generated by collection of fees from ODL Students were diverted to run conventional programmes with much less fees charged from such students. *An ideal situation would have been where the Conventional System and ODL System should have grown with same pace competing, complementing and supplementing each other for the benefit of the learners.* We have to promote blended learning with freedom to learners to move from one system to another as per their aspirations, expectations and requirements.

A few decades ago people had some idea about correspondence courses and I often encountered questions like: What is Distance Education? How is it different from education through Correspondence Courses? I used to take a lot of pains to answer these questions. But in contemporary scenario, when we encountered urgent need to provide learning inputs for capacity building and capacity enhancement for large target groups under a strict time frame, the only option appeared to be a well planned ODL system. What else?

The system of ODL has been highly flexible and dynamic to suit the convenience of learners. The technology of designing and developing Self Instructional Material (SIM), which is very different than writing a Text Book is based on a well researched area taking into account self-learners' competence level and understanding, availability of time and similar such factors. In essence the purpose is to ensure that the learner feels encouraged to go through SIM in print or Interactive Multimedia mode without feeling deprived of the availability of teachers on a regular basis. The programme delivery of course provides condensed contact sessions and field experience or practices as per requirement of the type of programmes.

General undergraduate and postgraduate courses are being covered by both the conventional and ODL systems, with varying quality of delivery depending on the individual institutions. ODL has to play an important supplementing role in increasing the Gross Enrolment Ratio in higher education from 23.6 percent in 2014-15 to 25.2 per cent in 2017-18 and further to 30 per cent in 2020-21. Currently, massive ODL programme delivery is being provided to nearly 4 million students mainly by Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) and fourteen State Open Universities. These initiatives need to be scaled up. However, in the absence of a National ODL Quality Assessment and Accreditation Agency, one has to be very particular about quality assurance on the following suggestive broad parameters.

1. High quality Design and Development of SLM well before

- launch of a programme both in print and interactive multimedia content,
2. Effective Choice Based Credit System on lines similar to the Guidelines of UGC for the Conventional system to facilitate student mobility, expectation and requirements
 3. Management of Student Support Services with 24x7 availability of online resources
 4. Periodic Review of SLM for improvement
 5. Making available appropriate infrastructure with a firm schedule of all activities and operations at the Study Centres
 6. Creditable Assessment & Evaluation Processes
 7. Effective and Responsive Grievances Redressal System

The focus of this presentation would be on requirement and pattern of education in nonconventional areas through ODL. We begin with some success stories, based on the experiences of the present speaker.

Revival of Computer Literacy and Awareness in Schools (CLASS) a Govt. of India project for four hundred Schools by capacity building of 100 young Science UG students with condensed hands on experience at Computer maintenance shops with SIM developed by an Open University. This was followed by capacity building of more than 400 School teachers in the identified Schools. Against the Target of training 15,000 students per year 60,000 students from schools and others were trained. This led to approval of Head Start Project for 4000 Primary Schools by the European Union.

Capacity building for utilization of capabilities of dedicated satellite EDUSAT launched by ISRO for Institutions of Education across the country.

Successful Intervention in Capacity Building of MBBS Physicians in Cardiology by IGNOU: Two top Cardiologists of our country Dr. Trehan of ESCORTS Hospital New Delhi and Dr. Shetty of Narayan Hridayalaya, Bengaluru made a presentation to show that there had been a fast growth in number of patients suffering from cardiac problems and to handle such patients the country needed a minimum of additional 10,000 trained doctors, while all medical colleges taken together were producing only 200 Cardiac Specialists per year. IGNOU agreed to Design and Develop the programme under the condition that Cardiac Specialists like Dr. Trehan and Dr. Shetty themselves will contribute the content which will be transformed into SIM by IGNOU faculty and practical training will be in hospitals like ESCORTS, Narayan Hridayalaya and a selected few others. This ODL programme has been extremely successful and is currently going on.

Contribution of Flexible Approach of ODL in developing an internationally recognized National Undergraduate Programme.

IGNOU's successful interventions for training of Industrial work force and meson workers

Implementation of Land Rights of Tribes: Development of capacity building at grassroots by transforming Awareness and Training Material in local dialects. It was so successful that the Team of Officials received Prime Minister's Award.

Fast emerging new paradigm shift in Higher Education: The draft Education Policy 2016 recognizes the strength of ODL is and accepts it as an important mode for achieving enhanced access for massive delivery of:

- Skill development Programmes,
- Capacity building Programmes,
- Training Programmes,
- Programmes with Employability potential, and
- Life-long learning Programmes

Starting with Interactive Radio Sessions from 1990s, to Extensive Satellite Communication, and ever fast growing ICT capabilities ODL in our country has a long tradition of successfully employing emerging dimensions of Technology. This is going to get a major boost and support by following new initiatives of MHRD, Government of India.

- Setting up of open learning platforms for access of online courses,
- Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) providing free access to cutting edge courses,
- Launch of Study Webs of Active-Learning for Young Aspiring Minds (SWAYAM).

Mobile connectivity in our country is growing very fast and under Digital India Project of Government of India online connectivity will have extensive reach to remote and less developed areas at low costs. ODL systems have to develop tools for mobile learning to enhance access.

Credit Based System with limited choice offerings of programmes has been in existence in the ODL system in our country for the last few decades. The UGC has now made it mandatory to introduce Choice Based Credit Systems with Ability Enhancement Compulsory Courses and Skill Enhancement Courses which are likely to be common with minor deviations for all Institutions. ODL could accept the challenge of content development and delivery systems for these courses on the lines indicated in the UGC Guide Lines. The present assignment of value to a credit in ODL differs from that prescribed for Conventional System. It is therefore necessary to transform the credit value of ODL system to match it with that for Conventional system so as to facilitate movement of students from one system to the other.

Keynote Address

Improving the Quality and Standards of Distance Education Programme in India



Emeritus Prof. Vimala Veeraraghavan, Ph.D.

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Abstract

Distance education beginning as “correspondence course” was envisaged as an instrument for extending educational opportunity to those who could not attend educational institutions on a full time or on part time basis. The article presents the definition and characteristics of distance education and differentiates the same from face to face education and points out the similarities and differences between them. Tracing the origin of distance education in India and its present status, the article deliberates on the MHRD directives and that of UGC in regard to distance education. Discussing the obstacles to distance education in India the article emphasizes the need for the same and how the presently conducted distance education could be improved enormously through adequate and well written reading materials, training of the teaching personnel especially for distance education, providing on line facilities, Internet connection and IT facilities in addition to adequate infrastructure in all the study Centers. The article emphasizes the need for upgrading the study Centers and providing Internet communication for interaction with the teachers and also introducing online courses. Drawing inspiration from various experiments and researches conducted on distance education in advanced countries, the article recommends rigorous and methodologically sound research in distance education so as to render the distance education programme most effective, meaningful, efficient and useful for the students who aspire to become more knowledgeable, more work efficient and be more productive in their jobs and occupations.

Introduction

Distance education beginning as “correspondence course” was envisaged as an instrument for extending educational opportunity to those who could not attend educational institutions on a full time or on part time basis. Over the year's especially in India and at higher education level, it has established its claim to be an equal partner in providing quality education to young aspiring

students and many working persons who could not continue their higher education due to circumstances beyond their control. It has also been a boon to many persons working in certain fields desiring to acquire knowledge and obtain a degree in areas that help enhance their own professional contribution.

As stated by Discenza et al., (2002), “Anytime, Any place, Any subject”, is an emerging theme for distance learning in higher education throughout the world. Technology based distance education appears increasingly an important feature of post-secondary education in the US (US Department of Education, 1999). As Distance Education is becoming a serious alternative to the standard classroom teaching.

Definition and Characteristic Features of Distance Education

Distance Education or distance learning is the education of students who may not always be physically present at a school. Courses that are conducted (51 percent or more) are either hybrid, blended or 100% whole instruction (Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Distance_education), wherein students can study in their own time, at the place of their choice (home, work place or Study centers/learning centre), and without face-to-face contact with a teacher.

Moore (1991) defined Distance Education as a learning system where the teaching behaviours are separate from learning behaviours. In this, the learner works alone or in the group, guided by study materials. These students do have an opportunity to communicate with a tutor with the aid of one or two more media – such as correspondence, telephone, TV, Radio etc. Teaching role is shared and different study situations are possible for the learner.

Moore's definition of Distance Education highlights 3 elements: (i) separation of teaching behaviours from learning behaviours (ii) the use of technical media and (iii) the possibility of 2-way communication. While in normal face to face teaching, the teacher's preparation is done apart from the students whom he teaches; in Distance Education both preparation and teaching are done apart from students.

Holmberg (1995) stated the following in regard to distance education:

- All learning concerned with the acquisition of cognitive knowledge and cognitive skills, as well as affective learning and some psychomotor learning, is effectively provided for by distance education.
- Distance education is based on learning as an individual activity. Learning is guided and supported by noncontiguous

means.

- Distance education is open to behaviorist, cognitive, constructivist, and other modes of learning.
- Personal relations, study pleasure, and empathy between students and those supporting them (tutors, counselors) are central to learning in distance education. Feelings of empathy and a sense of belongingness promote students' motivation to learn, influencing learning favourably.
- While it is an effective mode of training, distance education runs the risk of leading to mere fact learning and reproduction of accepted 'truths'. However, it can be organized and carried out in such a way that students are encouraged to search, criticize, and identify positions of their own.

Distance Education is a form of indirect instruction which is imparted by technical media, as for example, printed material, Teaching and Learning Aids, Audio-Visual aids, Radio, TV and computer. Mathews (2002) pointed out that technology based distance education is emerging as an important feature of post-secondary education in the US. The increasing growth of ITC could bring about some of the very profound changes to the ways in which people learn and this is highly applicable to distance education. Distance education is a growth field with the development and spread of the internet. (Bailey, 2007).

It is a multidisciplinary field that has reacted to the many new technological changes that have occurred over time, and as pointed out by Bozkurt et al., (2015), it is still evolving and orienting itself to fulfill the demand for application of new technology to distance education. It is considered to be a hybrid or blended course or program when a physical on-site presence for any reason is required including the appearance of students at examinations.

Distance Education and Open Learning System

The Distance Learning organization in the UK, in association with Britain's Open University, distinguishes between distance and open learning. According to UNESCO (2002), "although the terms are often used interchangeably, there are important differences. Open learning is an umbrella term for any scheme of education or training that seeks systematically to remove barriers to learning, whether they are concerned with age, time, place or space. With open learning, individuals take responsibility for what they learn, how they learn, where they learn, how quickly they learn, who helps them and when they have their learning assessed. Distance learning, on the other hand, is one particular form of open learning in which tutors and learners are separated by geographical distance. This is sometimes called a home study or correspondence course. But

many modes of communication are used for distance learning, not just postal correspondence. If you stop to think about it, most of us use distance learning techniques in some form in our daily lives: we read books and newspapers, watch programs on television and request information over the telephone. These are all learning experiences which 'educate' in the broadest sense.” (Source: [http://www.distance-learning.co.uk/what is/dlvol.htm](http://www.distance-learning.co.uk/what%20is/dlvol.htm))

In distance education transaction occurs between teachers and learners in a special environment having the characteristic of separation of teachers from learners (Moore, 1993) which was also emphasized by Pathak (2003).

Distance Education in India

As of today the enrollment in distance education at higher education level in India is about 4 million students. It is offered at national level by Indira Gandhi National Open University, at state level by State Open Universities as well as by other well established universities. With its vast expansion Distance Education is covering almost all of India, but yet there is still increasing demand for expansion and more courses to be offered in the Distance Education mode. Concurrently, there is persistent demand for quality and standards to be maintained in distance education. It has become imperative to have stricter norms and guidelines and other regulatory steps to ensure standards and provide assurance to students, parents and employers, on the equivalence of degrees provided by distance learning institutions with those offered by other universities and other higher education institutions.

The Distance Education Council - a national body overseeing the standards of distance education, earlier a part of IGNOU has now become part of the UGC which is the highest authority mandated to ensure standards and coordination in higher education. Recently, Ministry of HRD, Government of India (2016) has circulated a discussion paper on Some Inputs for National Education Policy. This document states the following:

1. An autonomous body will be set up to regulate and maintain standards in ODL which will provide norms, standards and guidelines for effective ODL.
2. A quality assurance mechanism for accreditation will be put in place to ensure quality, promote innovation and modernize ODL.
3. Learner support services will be institutionalized by all ODL institutions.
4. 24x7 help desk services and tutoring and counseling services, e-learning modules, webinars, web casting, discussion forum, online programme of the materials, providing assignment, timely feedback of performance, online examinations, and declaration of results, etc., on time will all be in place.”

The Ministry of HRD hopes to finalize the New National Education Policy which will cover Distance Education as well, after receiving comments from various stakeholders. More specifically the Ministry will also take into account the report of Dr. Madhava Menon Committee constituted by it in 2016, which has suggested many measures to regulate education imparted through the distance mode. The Committee received inputs from many Vice Chancellors of Open universities in India and other experts on Distance Education.

Whatever the policy and final regulatory arrangement, it is important to have rigorous and continuing scientific research studies indicating the many measures required to make Distance Education relevant and effective. Focusing on the need for scientific research, Bernard et al (2004) cited a review of 232 studies on distance education and drew attention to the fact that the researches on distance education were of poor methodological quality and lacked critical information about research practices. As pointed out by Friesen (2009) in the rapidly changing world of internet and the web, considerable number of novel practices have emerged which include bulletin boards to webcasts, online educational games to open educational resources, which all could be covered for rigorous and scientific studies in distance education.

Accepting that in the developed and advanced countries, much research in distance education has taken place, the leaders in the field call for more rigorous methods in research and much more research covering various areas in distance education (Zawacki-Richter, 2009).

Obstacles to Learning through Distance Education Mode

Research in distance education has highlighted some of the obstacles in learning through distance education mode. In this context, discussing some of the obstacles to learning in distance education mode, Visser (2012) opined that distance education approach does not work for all students, as some of them will require close in-person contact with the instructors, and some students may not be able to take up responsibility for their own learning. Yet, it is important to note that distance education provides opportunities to gain knowledge and the students can incorporate study around social and work patterns, and take up study on a full or part time basis.

Presenting the various issues encountered by Distance Educators in Developing and Emerging Nations, Wright et al., (2009) considered language of instruction as one of the very difficult problem faced in distance education. The instructors had the unique task of creating content and material accessible to learners speaking various languages. Countries like India where several languages are spoken face the unique challenge of creating content and

materials that can be accessed by all students interested to learn through distance education. In addition, lack of infrastructure, limited funds and non-availability of ITC equipments in remote villages have been indicated as some of the hurdles developing nations face in regard to delivery of distance education. The continued growth and success of distance education in developing and emerging nations will depend on the extent to which the many of the problem issues identified are addressed, as they bear on the quality of the learning experience provided to students.

Distance Education and Face-to-Face Education

One can ask the question if distance education per se can ever be equal or superior to education provided in universities and higher education institutions. In this context Russel (1999) opined that there is no significant difference between the learning outcomes of traditional and distance education programmes. The very fact that many leading universities are offering their educational courses through distance education mode and are offering the same degree that they award to other students indicates that the academic community by and large has come to accept the equivalence of distance mode of education with face to face education provided in higher education institutions. In this regard, mention may be made of the study by Shachar and Neumann (2003) who compared the traditional with distance education in terms of academic performances through meta analytic study and found that in two thirds of the cases, students taking courses by distance education outperformed their student counterparts enrolled in traditionally instructed courses. The purpose of their research was to provide an answer to the “quality question” of distance-learning programs, especially to find out if there is a difference in the quality of DE programs relative to traditional Face to Face programs. Their findings clearly showed that the DE students' performance was significantly superior to those of students studying under traditional or face to face method. Based on the study's results the authors argued that DE should be accepted as a respectable and feasible option for education.

It must be kept in mind that irrespective of the mode of learning, that is, distance or face to face, both require careful planning. Comparing distance learning and face to face learning shows that both are successful and effective. One of the reasons so many students take to distance education is the flexibility it provides them to take classes at any time of the day or night. Distance education reaches a broader student body than traditional education courses. While meeting the needs of students, DE also helps them save money. Further as pointed out in the beginning, there are full-time workers who can take classes when it is convenient for them. The flexibility that distance education gives to students is important in meeting educational needs of non-traditional students. On the other hand the traditional face to face programme gives

students opportunities to interact with their professors and clear their doubts and also interact with their peers and discuss the issues concerned with the lessons and syllabus, which aspect is clearly lacking in distance education.

DE requires the student to think about what they are learning and to pass tests similar to tests given in the traditional classroom. The student's ability to pass these courses creates a desire in them to be able to perform the tasks that are required. No doubt the students will be successful because they have a desire to earn their education often while working and having a family (Custom written.com, 2016).

Nsiah et al., (2015) are of the view that distance education has become a platform for delivery of education around the globe. As mentioned elsewhere in this paper, distance education provides anytime anywhere forms of education and bridges the educational gap. At the same time there may be many drop outs from distance education due to various personal reasons and it is important to bring these persons back into the fold of distance education. Discussing the retention of students in Distance Education, Dahl (2004) discussed various strategies to retain students in the system such as instructor's presence, grading student's assignments with constructive suggestions and so on (AllInfande, 2013).

Teaching Learning Materials

It is now a well-established fact that many universities are able to produce high quality teaching learning materials which are relevant and appropriate to the needs of the students opting for distance education mode. When the British National Open University undertook the production of teaching learning materials, there were many skeptics who scoffed at the effort stating that there were many good textbooks available which could be much superior to preparing of materials. However, well prepared teaching learning materials (self-learning materials) by groups of academics and experts to meet the needs of students proved their usefulness to such an extent that they came to be highly regarded and even used by regular universities. This is because the British National Open University paid very special attention to contents, language and manner of presentation. This tradition has been carried on by IGNOU and other distance education providers. When new materials have to be prepared or existing ones have to be revised, groups of expert writers are commissioned and given orientation in preparing teaching learning materials including the concepts to be covered and questions and problems to be put to the students to help them in self-evaluation of their understanding of the concepts. Such material is collated and edited by experienced professionals in regard to language and effectiveness of communication.

No doubt we are living in an Information Age where students can access knowledge and information from several sources including the Internet. The entire courses on different subjects are also available from various universities. Nevertheless it would be an onerous task to any student to navigate through such excessive information. The Open University learning materials which are carefully written and edited by experts provide an efficient and effective tool for mastery of the concepts in any given subject and their application in real life. The Open University materials provide a number of examples and illustrations relevant for the student for whom it is written and help them to understand the concept and also evaluate their own mastery of the subject.

While there are many good text books it is quite unlikely that any of them will match the collective efforts put in by the open universities in preparing the materials written in simple understandable language, and tailoring the materials to the needs of the students to help them to comprehend and apply the knowledge that they gain.

The distance education institutions should build on this advantage by having institutional and structured arrangements for reviewing and revising the teaching learning materials through feedback from students and experts and also evaluating the same in the light of developments in the subject areas and methods.

Such teaching learning materials should also make appropriate use of audio visual materials available through ICT. In this connection the Gyan Programme of the Ministry of HRD envisages invitation of outstanding teachers to deliver lectures on selected topics in courses and also video graphing those lectures for interactive use. Such materials should be used by open universities where ever feasible. Interactive e-learning material produced under the SWAYAM initiative of the Ministry of HRD could also be used appropriately.

In certain areas simulated learning may be highly relevant. In Management study, where case study discussions are widely used, it is seen that particular cases can be experienced and discussed through simulated learning. The students participate in the simulated situation and this helps them in developing judgemental skills.

Materials for learning by students must at the outset clearly define its purpose. As a first step the experts must sift through and evaluate the usefulness of the existing teaching learning materials and decide their relevance to distance education delivery.

The purpose is to expand, adapt, and enhance the University's educational model to incorporate the unique attributes of teaching via technological media.

The next step is to work out the structure for the topics, which can be done by discussion amongst the faculty and the resulting structure for each topic could be shared amongst the faculty for further refinement through audio-video conferences and submit a report on the structure evolved for the distance learning material. This report constitutes a summary of the group's key ideas (Anastasiades, 1997).

The teaching-learning model topics facilitated by the experts and faculty must contain the structure of the syllabus and ensure sequential ordering of the curriculum materials so that the faculty who would be writing the material contents may be able to write the subject matter logically, meaningfully and in sequential order along with indicating the Learning Outcomes for students on completing that unit or course.

The designed curriculum must be such that there is operational flexibility in teaching small or large groups or single individual, without compromising academic effectiveness.

Technology tools, both current and future, should be exploited in the curriculum to improve the efficiency of faculty and students.

Orienting distance education students on self-direction and peer reliance effectively is an important aspect of development of materials for distance education. The entire material for each subject can be planned in such a manner that students are able to take up more responsibility for their learning.

Collaborative, problem-solving methodologies are important, wherein the students are able to share and seek information from their peers as well as from the instructors/teachers. For this the students should be enabled to make use of the ICT and should be given adequate training and information to overcome the communication difficulties inherent in internet, phone and computer links.

Distance education curriculum should reflect the differences in group collaboration and problem solving, and also identify alternative strategies for this process as a valuable precept of DE teaching-learning model.

Accommodating effective study-groups in distance learning environments requires different approaches to collaborative activities.

For students who study on their own, the instructors can design assignments in such a manner that the student can complete his work even in his workplace.

Successful integration and practice requires faculty participation in the development of curriculum for multi-media delivery and for this the training of faculty in integrative processes as well as in specific media of instruction become important pre requisite.

Delivery of the Learning Materials

These are done through: (i) Study Centers; (ii) Instructional Television (ITV); (iii) Computers internet, (iv) CD Rom etc.

Study centers are essential feature in the distance education programme in India. These centers can be found in almost all states and districts of India. While some of these are run by voluntary agencies, many are placed in a college and some are placed in the university. All these study centers are also in direct contact with the main Distance Education provider and with the students.

These centers use teaching faculty to deliver contact programme lectures on different subjects on days that are suitable for the students who include students working part-time or full time, or professionals who have to attend offices or housewives who may have only certain time of the day possible to spare.

Most distance education programmes provide for participation in special seminars / lectures organized for certain number of days where the students can interact with expert teachers and amongst themselves and broaden and depend their understanding of the subject and also obtain clarifications on their doubts. Participation in study Centers should be considered mandatory. The quality and effectiveness of the study Centers will naturally depend on the motivation and commitment as well as expertise of the teachers and their ability to monitor, mentor and guide the students. Every distance education programme should allot sufficient funds and attract the best possible experts for conducting these programmes and the students should feel naturally attracted to participate in that programme. They will if the programme is experienced by students as valuable and provide the needed skills and knowledge.

There should be many study Centers located in such places, that they are easily accessible to students and there should be special selection and orientation programme for the teachers who are selected to conduct the study Center programmes.

Greater attention needs to be given to the conduct of study Center programmes than is presently the case. Funds should not be allowed to come in the way of organizing such programmes. Similarly where ever skill training or field exposure is required as part of the curriculum, (for example learning the techniques of counseling in the subject of Psychology), arrangements should be made in laboratories / workshops / projects etc., combined with adequate monitoring and supervision. The marks obtained for practical or field work must be made an important component of the evaluation scheme.

If such field work / lab work/ industry work is to be taken seriously, DE programme must ensure that the students are provided effective supervision not only from the distance education provider but also in the lab/field/ industry concerned. It is necessary to incentivize the persons who would supervise and monitor the work of students during internship, and also providing them academically related designation, as for example field supervisors or interneer supervisor etc., and provide guidelines and orientation programmes for them so that they understand their obligations and work in coordination with the experts of the distance education provider.

The assessment including written and oral given by the field supervisors and their contribution should be given due weight in the overall evaluation so that the field supervisors feel appropriately recognized and consider themselves as an important part of the programme and are as much responsible for imparting requisite knowledge to the students as the university faculty. Where possible, they could be involved in even formulating the syllabus, involve themselves in evaluation almost equal to that of the university faculty.

Instructional Television: Many of these Centers also make use of Instructional Television and supplement and complement the lectures on the concerned topics. IGNOU, for instance has arrangements to teach and take videos of the same and broadcast through their own channel and also on request, send the videos to the centers for the benefit of students.

Computers: This is another medium through which the learning materials are delivered to students. These are also widely used by students and some take online courses using the computers. Students and teachers also use computers to write and send assignments; get them evaluated by the teachers who also combine it with suggestions for improvement of the assignments. Students get grades for the assignments through emails and online services.

Interactive Videoconferencing: In addition to the above modes of delivery of study materials, many centers also use Interactive Video Conferencing (IVC) which is another important technology to impart information, clarify doubts

and discuss subject matters more effectively. As pointed out by Hearnshaw (1999), such videoconferencing provides for collaborative environment and shapes a new learning and teaching environment.

Use of more effective teaching aids for clarifying a concept has to be considered. For this one can use software and audio/video tapes and CD-ROM.

Electronically delivered materials for students and faculty would provide efficiency and would capitalize on existing technology.

Graphics, simulations, interactive materials would appeal to various learning styles of students and enhance instructional flexibility.

Distance education programs provide maximum flexibility with regard to place and time. Hence all the above mentioned methods of delivery could be used for students to access them easily at a time and place convenient to them.

Monitoring and Evaluation in Distance Education

According to Chaudhry and Dey (2013), assessment is an integral part of the learning process. The traditional practice of assessment has changed to meet the need of the contemporary society. In Open and Distance Education there are many challenges of assessment. Not only the Content-based testing has shifted to performance-based assessment presently, but also assessment is no longer used only for grading and certification, but linked with learning and skill development of the students.

Monitoring in distance education involves monitoring of the course itself, its relevance, and whether new courses to be started, students performance, teachers performance, study center's performance, etc.

The monitoring of the course is to observe whether the course and the contents are relevant, appropriate and understandable to the learner; and whether the time allotted for the course and its modules is adequate and the different kinds of errors made by students while working on the course and its modules. The monitoring of the time schedules for different activities related to dispatch of the course materials to learners, maintenance of records of the learners, their attendance records, receipt of assignments by students on time, and the teaching schedules, presence or absence of the instructors in the class as scheduled and their using the many technology in imparting lessons on the courses are all monitored. Another aspect of monitoring is to find out if the assignments are corrected and sent on time with suggestions by the faculty and whether the grievance box containing the complaints of students in regard to the programme as a whole or any part of it, is emptied and the contents read and

answered and measures to remedy the grievance are taken. Monitoring also highlights which and how many students and in which course are falling behind or dropping out of the education programme.

Monitoring in the above manner helps in enhancing and maintaining the efficiency of teachers/faculty and coordinators and help identify avenues of improvement in course design and delivery of materials concerned with the course, in addition to developing confidence in the distant learners especially if the assessment and monitoring systems are transparent (Chaudhry and Dey, 2013).

Evaluation

Trentin (2007) suggested that evaluation must be based on the process designed by the teacher and those followed by students for achieving their distance education objectives and also the products developed individually by students as a result of the distance education course they have enrolled in. At the same time, evaluation should be on the level of learning of the course contents by students and meeting the set educational goals (Williams and Black, 1996).

Evaluation of the instructor regarding his knowledge of the subject concerned and the extent to which he is able to communicate effectively with students within the distance education environment is of great importance .

As for evaluation of student performance, the focus should be on their acquisition of required basic skills, and knowledge of subject matter and acquisition or development of skills. In regard to the latter, basic skill evaluation procedures should be adopted and where proctors are specially appointed for this purpose, evaluation of skill development can be done by them. In this regard it is worth noting the observations of Bernard et al., (2004), who, while discussing the effectiveness of Distance Education, pointed out that assessment of student's learning outcomes is the means by which educators determine how much students have learned a course.

Another aspect to keep in mind is that the evaluation must be objective and where needed experts in the subject can be appointed in advance to conduct such evaluation either through oral (viva voce) mode or through student's presentation. Budgetary constraints should not be allowed to come in the way of appointing subject experts and practitioners for this purpose. Timely evaluation and declaration of results would enhance the reputation of the distance education provider.

Evaluation of technological facilities such as audio visual and other equipments including use of educational technology must be evaluated by experts in the study center and in the university which is the Distance Education provider.

Criteria for evaluation of knowledge acquisition and skill development will differ and will require different experts to conduct the evaluation. The tool used for evaluation includes tests, questionnaire, examinations, demonstrating through doing questions on practicals, quiz, viva voce etc. It is important to allot the time required for these evaluations.

Before undertaking evaluation, the expert who will be evaluating the students' written or verbal materials, will have to be decided in advance. Such an evaluator can be an expert in the subject, the faculty itself, the peers, or the support team.

While evaluating, one must consider together the instructional, technological and implementation and organizational issues as they present themselves in the programme.

Of the two types of evaluation, viz., formative and summative evaluation, the former refers to the internal quality and the latter to how well the final object works in the real world. Instructional design issues and interface design issues and the choice that was made by the students in selecting the subject, the instructional strategy, and the learning effectiveness such as whether student learned what he was supposed to learn etc., are part of this evaluation (Lockee et al., 2002).

The methods used for this evaluation include Experts review, One-on-one review, small group review involving interaction among representatives of the target group and Field trials in which students apply in real life situation the knowledge they gained from the course.

Summative evaluation consists of evaluation of the programme inputs are reflected in the performance outcome and the learner's acquisition of knowledge, and the attitudes developed in students, which are all reflected in the professional impact of what the students have learned.

Evaluation of the success of implementation of the programme is seen in the providing of students support services, preparedness of the faculty, accessibility of students to the teaching system and distance education provider, the preparedness of the students and the facilities available to students to communicate with the faculty as well as with their peers and the accessibility to internet.

The quality assurance and accreditation facilities for the DE programme, and study centers are also evaluated in summative evaluation.

It would be ideal to make students also participate in evaluating the learning outcomes. It must be kept in mind that there are more difficult logistical hurdles to testing in distance education as compared to that of the campus classroom evaluation.

Effective Teaching in Distance Education

The immediate goal of the University should be to approach distance education development as a primary activity with its own set of strengths and weaknesses, rather than to artificially constrain development by closely mirroring the classroom setting.

Distance education should include measurable and clearly articulated learning outcomes that arise from curriculum designed for different types of delivery systems mentioned above, as for example, through electronic media or by correspondence.

The University should identify common learning outcomes which are appropriate across delivery systems and should also distinguish those which are unique to specific media, and make the adjustments required to ensure instructional quality.

Garrels (1997) in ERIC DIGEST 436528, cited by Dan Mielke (1999) describes five critical elements for successful teaching at a distance:

1. Instructor Enthusiasm. This requires animation and comfort in front of the camera, or with the technology utilized. Faculty support and interest are critical to the success of distance learning endeavours.
2. Organization. Teaching materials must be prepared in advance and the timing, variation in materials like addition or deletion, and smooth transitions must be planned. Instructors should allocate from 3 to 5 hours of preparation for each hour of distance instruction. Great attention to detail in planning and organising of classes, videoconferencing etc., is required, long before the actual classroom activity occurs (Summers, 1997).
3. Strong commitment to student interaction on the part of the faculty is also an important requisite. Whatever the modality used to teach at a distance, the instructor must encourage and facilitate ongoing communication between the students and self.
4. Familiarity with the technology used to impart the course material to students in a certain format must be thoroughly understood by the faculty /

teachers of distance education. For this to be effective, faculty development is important before beginning any distance activities, and instructors should be trained in video use, computer use, or other forms of instructional technology used for the purpose.

5. Also effective use of technology by the teachers will also require the services of support personnel such as the production staff, graphic designers, and technical staff members who all can help the instructional formats, produce videos as required by the faculty and thus contribute to successful teaching at a distance.

As mentioned by Pinantoan (2013), effective distance learning is largely about making sure that both students and instructors become comfortable with the technology, and that courses are designed to work within the medium rather than trying to bend it to fit the lesson plan.

Thus the delivery systems of the study materials should be adapted maximally to meet the needs of students, and for this, the instructors must be knowledgeable and flexible enough to be able to alter materials and the technology used, if need be.

There must exist a mechanism/system, which should be such that any technical or other technology related problem that may arise from time to time should be addressed and remedied so that the students could continue his interaction with the faculty and vice versa without any hurdle. The students and faculty should thus be able to email, chat and interact with each other and with experts in comfort.

Vigilance must be practiced by the faculty to find out which student participates and who does not so that any problem faced by the non-participating students could be attended to as early as is possible.

Faculty Development

Unless the teaching faculty is well trained and motivated, these centers will not be able to serve the purpose for which they have been established. Discussing these aspects in their chapter on faculty perceptions and participation in distance education, Kim et al (2002) state that increasing of faculty training, providing them the needed support as well as giving them incentives are three major requirements to make distance education more effective. As stated by Wolf (2006), a well trained teacher is an important component in distance education. Research in best practices in training of teachers show that faculty training programme on use of online materials, computing skills and delivery methods of the materials in the classroom and updating of teacher's skills along with ongoing institutional support and motivation amongst teachers to better themselves in teaching etc., make the distance education effective (Wolf,

2006).

The faculty should be able to successfully integrate theory and practice into the learning experience of students. For this, curriculum alone is not sufficient though it is a critical component of the teaching learning model.

In order to make the faculty knowledgeable and effective, they should be trained to be part of curriculum development, which incidentally should be centralized so it is collectively developed and revised as needed by the faculty and program directors. Faculty must possess advanced degrees and current practical experience.

Faculty must also be assessed, made to serve internships, become familiar with the various practices and techniques appropriate for the media and the subject areas, and receive training and evaluation. These are critical to make the faculty to make a transition from a stand-up, face-to-face teaching environment to one that is conducted through distance mode such as using technology and media.

The Faculty for Distance education should be separate both at the university level and at the study centers. They cater only to students who enroll in distance education programme. These faculties should be well-trained instructors, who could appropriately relate to distance education.

Distance education faculty need to be proportionately represented also on University-wide committees.

Online education, Directed Study, and Tele-education, enable the distance education faculty to be more consistently available when students need them because of the technology set up to accommodate such communication.

Distance education centers should have policies in place to establish appropriate expectations for feedback and response time.

These centers must have trained, efficient and suitable technical support personnel.

Faculty groups and academic governance must ensure program integrity regardless of the delivery system. Distance educators must maintain an active role in curriculum and policy issues so that differences required for implementation will be accommodated.

While discussing faculty development, it is imperative to mention the importance of projects, dissertation and research that are essential part of effective teaching. Education is both about discovering of knowledge and its

dissemination. It is wrong to think that some areas of education such as vocational or practical training or learning through distance education do not require research or discovery of new knowledge. Whatever the educational course, theoretical or practical, the concerned teacher must have an inquisitive mind and ask the relevant questions as how and why. They should understand research methodology and encourage students to be research minded and to be problem solvers.

For the above, not only the faculty should be trained in research methodology but must also encourage Open University students should to take up dissertation, project and research work. The faculty themselves should set an example by undertaking and guiding such work. At the highest level the faculty should have a few students pursuing doctoral research and such doctoral work of distance education institutions should be not only fully compliant with UGC standards prescribed, but even go beyond the same.

Similarly the dissertation and projects and community or institutional work prescribed as part of the Curricula should be of a high order and must be taken as part of the contribution of the Distance Education provider towards the discovery of new knowledge.

There must also be a mechanism for publicizing and utilizing the results of research so that in course of time distances education institutions also come to be known for their research contribution. In fact the distance education institutions have an advantage of having eminent experienced persons undertaking research and such research would be of much practical use if guided appropriately.

Research projects for students to undertake as part of their course curricula, require that faculty and students enter into interpersonal, one-to-one relationships for an extended period of time. In distance education this may complicate issues of faculty compensation, communication, and learning resources. Both course scheduling and assignment scheduling must be in tune with the medium of instruction and the location of the student. Hence it would be ideal to provide for strengthened academic and faculty support to assist students who do not have access to resources in their communities or the time to locate them otherwise.

The University should also examine team-teaching approaches to the research project so as to reduce the intense responsibility placed upon one faculty who must be consistently "available" over the course of two or more years.

Above all, it is vital to remember that, regardless of the method of interaction, this is still a class of people learning from each other, just like any other class,

the only difference being that they learn in the distance mode. Hence, the faculty concerned should also have knowledge and awareness of students and their experiences, backgrounds, learning styles, their expectations from the course and the teaching. All these aspects should be reflected in the activities and lessons imparted to the students in distance education.

Teachers will have to plan and organize delivery of the course to students. Some of the suggestions put forward by Pinantoane (2013) in this regard, include reviewing of literature on distance education research and the existing materials. At the start of class, a straightforward discussion should be held to set rules, guidelines, and standards. If course materials are sent by mail, ensure they are received well before class begins and guidelines to students be given regarding how to organize materials, use handouts etc.

If students are to use internet and online sites, it is preferable to make students use a couple of sites rather than too many which may confuse the students. Helping students to become familiar with the technology used in imparting lessons concerned with their courses. Where students face problems or difficulties, the same must be cleared immediately either in writing or in chat sites or through email. Every student uses unique learning style and the teacher/faculty must be sensitive to this aspect and accordingly the materials prepared and taught should combine the learning styles in putting across the materials for learning to students.

It must be kept in mind that the student in distance education takes responsibility for his own learning and hence considerable help in terms of seminars, webinars etc must be arranged along with video conferencing.

The content to be learned by students should not be either too much to handle or too little that it does not require much of studying or understanding. The courses should be humanized by focusing on the learners and not the delivery system. In Case studies and role plays would be of great value when used in combination with several examples to make clear the concepts being taught.

Timely feedback has to be ensured and students do get motivated by frequent contact with the instructor.

Student support services are of paramount importance. These are presented below:

Student Support Services

- ⊙ Effective and timely delivery of materials and feedback regarding the same from students is a requisite.

- ⊙ Materials should be such that they meet the needs of learning styles of the students.
- ⊙ Systematic review should be taken up of relevance, appropriateness, achievements and learning outcomes as well as the future needs of students and planning for the same.
- ⊙ Students must have the facility of the availability of Expert faculty to enhance their skill to meet the employment requirements so that students get jobs, and the students who are working personnel get promotions as a result of completing and obtaining the degree in the course etc.
- ⊙ Students should get clear and timely as well as accurate information about educational courses and programmes, changes in or elimination of certain courses as well as transfer of credit policies and related issues.
- ⊙ Enhancing the supportive learning environment for students is another service that is to be ensured.
- ⊙ Student access, students' progress, students' learning and students' success are of utmost importance, and methods for ensuring the same are important for student support services.
- ⊙ Academic regulation including academic honesty and integrity and non discrimination have all to be ensured as part of important support service to students.
- ⊙ Orientation to students before taking up the course is important.
- ⊙ Tutoring by experienced and knowledgeable tutors help students to clarify their doubts and get explanation on various complex concepts are essential.
- ⊙ Counseling of students regarding the courses to be taken, the kind of facilities available for the same both face to face and on the internet and the many educational technological facilities available should all be conveyed to students during the counseling session.
- ⊙ Academic advising programme to enhance development and success of students in distance learning is important.

- ◎ Placement facilities for internship required in certain courses, and help in obtaining a suitable job after completing the course is a very important support service for students.
- ◎ Library and learning support services should be available at each study center. The number of reading materials such as books, their quantity, quality, depth and variety as well as accessibility to them must be carefully managed as required by students and as recommended by the faculty.
- ◎ While support services are to be in place, there are certain important responsibilities to be taken up by the students of Distance Education programme.

Students Role in Distance Education

It is well known that the primary role of the student is to learn, which requires high level of motivation to learn, plan and analyze as well as apply the learned information to real life situation.

In a distance education setting, the process of student learning is more complex for several reasons, such as (i) Students may be older, have jobs, and families. (ii) They must coordinate the different areas of their lives which influence each other and their families, jobs, spare time, and studies. (iii) Their goals to learn and join distance education may vary, with some joining a course for just obtaining a degree, some do so for getting a better job or get a promotion in the present one, etc.

The students in distance education, who live in remote villages and far flung areas, may face the obstacles with the technical delivery system, and communication. For some students, the demands of the course and the tasks involved in it may be difficult to follow. They may be unsure of themselves and their learning. Morgan (1991) suggests that distant students who are not confident about their learning tend to concentrate on memorizing facts and details in order to complete assignments and write exams. As a result, they end up with a poor understanding of course material.

Brundage, Keane, and Mackneson (1993) suggest that adult students and their instructors must face and overcome a number of challenges before learning takes place, including: becoming and staying responsible for themselves; “owning” their strengths, desires, skills, and needs; maintaining and increasing self-esteem; relating to others; clarifying what is learned; redefining what legitimate knowledge is; and dealing with content.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Distance Education has great potential in India but to realize this potential we have to ensure its standards and quality and equivalence to other modes of education. It should not be thought of as a financially cheap alternative or as a cash cow for raising financial resources.

In the world over, it is seen that technology is shaping the teaching learning processes both in face to face and distance mode of learning. The technological change is relatively faster and more widespread in distance education than in face to face education.

In this paper, several suggestions for improving quality and standard in distance education have been given and also the know-how to adopt and adapt to rapidly changing technology. It should always be remembered that the best is often the enemy of the good and that we do not, in the pursuit of the latest and the newest forget to make the much needed sustained improvements in the Distance Education as it is provided today to the bulk of our students.

While we should always encourage innovation and hope that the improvement in ICT will provide faster and reliable connectivity enabling many new innovative approaches, we should focus on improving DE as is currently provided to majority of our students. Because of the numbers involved, even a minor improvement in learning effectiveness will have a profound effect on education system and the society. Much of our efforts should therefore be on attracting and retaining good faculty, developing their skills in research and in knowledge acquisition, and provide the faculty opportunities for professional development and making them competent in understanding, assessing and meeting student needs. It is important to give the teachers opportunity also to get trained to make use of new technologies with ease and confidence.

It must be kept in mind that there is no single blueprint solution. The institutions which provide distance education must develop their own models for integrating the various technologies, modes of imparting knowledge and skills to students and thus increase the quality and outreach of distance education.

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Summary of Lecture of the Invited Speakers

Distance Learning in India: The Role of Apex Bodies

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Summary

The inclusive development as envisaged in current policies is possible only when universalisation of education is done on a war-footing. Regular scheme of education, with its rigid structures alone cannot achieve this universalisation. The role of distance education in supplementing this unique effort is indispensable and well recognized. Distance education programs were established with an explicit principle of extending universal access to higher education with an emphasis on equity and autonomy.

Globalization of education has brought in new imperatives and opportunities for distance education programs. Rapid economic development has fuelled a demand for human resources with skills and capabilities to compete in volatile global markets. The developing conditions in today's world have far reaching effects in this current generation without borders. Each and every country around the world is in the process of adjusting and developing in order to keep up with the changing world in which communication is acknowledged to be at the heart of every system and every institution in society.

Distance Education System of this country has also witnessed the birth of other sub-systems such as Open Learning Systems including Open Universities. The sanctity of the Distance Education System lies in the type of clientele system supports. It is expected that distance education and open learning systems should cater to the millions who do not have access to the formal education system, as well as in providing flexible, need-based programme. These programs have become hugely successful in terms of students enrollment and popularity.

While number of educational institutions has increased to meet this demand, the gap between market requirements and supply is widening. Distance education programs are expected to contribute to meeting these demands alongside, regular programs by offering job-oriented courses. Against this background we need to take a careful look at the recent attempts to

restrict distance education programs to specific jurisdiction. The move by UGC to limit distance education programs to the jurisdiction of the parent Universities have raised more questions and brought series of judicial interventions. In this paper we examine the major challenges facing distance learning and how we address these issues.

The main arguments for discussions are:

- 1) Rapid developments in information and communication technologies are increasingly making geography less relevant to higher education. The rapid growth of e-learning and MOOC (massively open online courses) is a clear indication that traditional notion of spatial restrictions meaningless.
- 2) The current attempts to restrict distance educational programs reflect a continuation of the colonial political rationality and represent a regressive move to bring arbitrary enclosures to what is essentially a fluid flow of ideas, knowledge and practices.
- 3) Increasing demand from students for quality higher educational services means that today students are increasingly becoming a “customers” in the market place of higher education. This means that students are beginning to expect high quality programs and are willing to search across borders to fulfill their needs. A jurisdictional restriction to distance education institutions also implies that students are deprived of choices and thus represents a significant loss of freedom.
- 4) Further, in our country significant segments of population are still working and living in rural regions and hence do not have access to formal higher education institutions. Further those at the “bottom of the economic pyramid” require affordable and flexible education that supports learning while earning. Distance education programs meet these needs. Geographical restrictions also mean that we are under serving the most important segments of the underserved population by limiting the choice.

Keywords: Distance Learning, India, Apex Bodies

Jurisdiction of Distance Education: Realities of the Digital Era

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Summary

Transmission of knowledge has gone through various changes over the centuries with respect to creation and delivery. Some of the changes are quite radical while some are just incremental in nature. The traditional 'gurukul' system of imparting knowledge, with the advent of modern schools and universities ushered in an era of universalisation of education. Distance mode of learning is thus an offshoot of universalisation of education leveraging the technological advancements. The rationale behind the spread and wider acceptance of distance mode of learning may be found in the various flexibilities that it offers with respect to the method and pace of learning, entry and exit options, wider choice of programs, etc. Despite all the flexibilities, the issue quite often debated relates to the jurisdiction of Distance mode of Education Programs and the institutions that offer them.

In the 21st century, thanks to the technological breakthroughs, we now hear a lot about driverless cars, pilotless flights, cashless transactions, paperless offices, branchless banking, just to name a few. Therefore, in the present digital era, is it fair to draw boundary lines for the distance education programs/institutions? Is it justified to prescribe jurisdiction for the distance learning? More particularly, when we talk about borderless organizations/management in the context of globalization. The three important tenets on which Distance Education of the present era rests: Digitization, Dematerialization and Democratization warrant dismantling the artificial borders for Distance Education with appropriate safeguards installed for 'quality of programs' and the 'ease of delivery'.

This paper, therefore, addresses some of the current issues confronting the distance education mode in the context of growing digitalization across the whole spectrum of services including education!

Keywords: Jurisdiction, Distance Education, Digital Era

Twinning Programme at Loyola College, Chennai: An Overview of a Non-autonomous Curricular Programme in an Autonomous College

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Summary

Established in the year 1999, The Twinning Programme (TP) at Loyola College (PULCTPC) came with the twin promise of providing quality management education and to reach out to the employed graduates of Chennai and its surrounding localities. With a modest student population of 150, the Twinning Programme at Loyola College has grown to a 'Centre of Excellence' with 4965 students as of 2016. The Twinning Programme – ambitious as it was in the beginning – had several programmatic options for students wanting to pursue post-graduate education, even while being employed. Programmes – plethora as they were – were sought to be restricted to management education programmes – partly due to administrative constraints. If the number of students admitted is any indicator, Twinning Programme could be claimed to be one of the successful educational ventures of Loyola College, Chennai. This paper seeks to highlight some of the quality enhancement and value-adding measures initiated and sustained at PULCTPC over years. However this paper does not seek to generalize the experience of PULCTPC nor does it attempt to tout the PULCTPC model to other HEIs and this paper is born out of the conviction that there are important lessons to be learnt from each other's experience. In consonance with the inclusive admission policy of Loyola College, PULCTPC admits more women students and students from nearby slums. The number of women students in TP is almost equal to that of men students in MBA Finance, Marketing, Tourism and International Business and HRM. MBA program, being a professional course, requires pressing the industry professional into educational service. The expertise so brought to bear upon teaching and learning does enhance the quality of the same. At PULCTPC there are as many as 20 faculties are from industry. Some of them have served 30 years, while others are currently serving in the industry. Professors who served in IIM, XLRI, and LIBA are also roped into teaching in the TP. The MBA programme at PULCTPC is truly interdisciplinary, which, we believe, what it ought to be. Professors drawn from Statistics, Mathematics, Sociology, Economics, Social Work, History, commerce, Computer Science, Corporate Secretaryship, Outreach and Business administration work in unison to produce this quality in TP. This multi-disciplinary of the MBA programme at PULCTPC, it is to be emphasized, is the outcome of a rational choice-making legacy of Loyola College, Chennai.

Keywords: Twinning Programme, Loyola College, Chennai

Improving Quality of Distance Education in India

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Summary

Distance education is the delivery of useful learning opportunities at convenient place and time for learners. It is the education of students who may not always be physically present in an educational institution. The term Distance Education received a formal recognition in 1982 when the four decades old International Council for Correspondence Education was renamed as the International Council for Distance Education.

The old concept of distance education was exclusively associated with print materials, whereas the new concept of distance education includes supplementary material being used through non-print media such as television, computers laptops, recorded lectures in CDs and DVDs and Self Learning Materials (SLM) through projectors, video conferencing and interactive session between students and faculties via internet. With this, it is proposed to discuss the background of Distance Education, the objectives of distance education, problems faced and principally the quality improvement aspect.

Distance Education in India: A Brief Background

In India the University of Delhi first established the School of Correspondence Courses in 1962 as a pilot project. Later, Punjabi University, Patiala set up a Directorate of Correspondence Courses in 1968. Government of India constituted an eight member working group on the proposed Open University in 1974. Andhra Pradesh established the first Open University in India as Andhra Pradesh Open University in 1982. Later the name changed to Dr.B.R.Ambedkar Open University.

IGNOU was established in 1961 and was playing a dual role as an apex body in the country through Distance Education Council (DEC). It was established in 1961 under Section 5(2) of IGNOU Act. Responsible for promotion, coordination, and maintenance of standards of Open Distance Learning in the country. Sikkim Manipal University has been ranked 1st in Distance Education. Mention may be made of the School of Distance Education, Madurai Kamraj

University, Symbiosis Centre for Distance Learning and many more which are engaged to carryout distance education for the pass and needy students particularly those who are deprived of urban-based educational institutions and facilities.

Presentation made in the inaugural function of the two-day National Conference on “*Distance Education in India: Emerging Challenges and Prospects*” held in Pondicherry Central University during Sep. 8 - 9, 2016.

Objectives of Distance Education

Any discussion on improving quality of distance education must proceed with a mention of its objectives. In India the objectives were enunciated in the guidelines by the University Grants Commission in 1974. Major ones are

- To provide an alternative method of education to enable a large number of persons with necessary aptitude to acquire further knowledge and improve their professional competence.
- To cater for students who had to discontinue their formal education owing to adverse pecuniary and other circumstances.
- To cater for students who cannot find a seat or do not wish to join a regular college or university department although they have the necessary qualifications to peruse higher education.

Challenges

All over the world, distance education is gaining a momentum and becoming more popular than conventional education. Distance learning is an excellent method of reaching the adult learner in any place. The structure of distance learning gives adults the greatest possible control over time, place and pace of education.

Distance Education in India is confronted with more than one challenge. The most important one faced by the Distance Education students is that they are not legible for high level posts. The degree awarded by Distance Education mode is not being recognized by some private and government sectors. Especially MBA and MCA students are greatly affected for this reason.

While regular students have a lot of facilities available and people around concerned with their academic activities and growth continuously, open and distant learners are always struggling hard for the same.

There is also the challenge of dropout. The reason for majority of dropouts in Distance Education is the examination pattern and the delayed publication of

results.

Unfortunately in India most of the distance education universities and institutes do not have a separate wing of Controller of Examination to monitor the distance education examination. Because of this, the mark sheets and degree certificates are not issued to the students on time. This is affecting the reputation of the institution and the enrolment of students.

There is more stress on sending printing materials. There is dearth of facilities of multimedia instruction. The variety in the learning materials is definite to improve the quality of leaning.

Improving Quality

India is the pioneer in the innovative course in the Distance Education mode. Despite utmost efforts, the open and distance learning has still to reach its height in quality.

The separation of student and teacher imposed by distance removes a vital link of communication between the two parties. The link must be established through e-mail, telecommunication and postal mail by integrating these into the delivery of the course to provide the missing interactivity.

Support and services such as providing tutors, academic planners and schedulers and technical assistance for distance learners should not be neglected while planning distance education programme. Students need tutors and academic planners to help them to complete courses on time and to act as a support system when stress becomes a problem.

Geographical isolation has been identified as one of the major problems of students undergoing study under distance mode. Distance students suffer from the disadvantage of being unable to interact with other students. This is likely to develop a feeling of inadequacy and insecurity, and lack of confidence in their own abilities. A sense of personal involvement between the student and the institution should be developed and fostered.

Distance education programme is dependent on good communication for successful learning to take place. Good communication presents needed interactions (Teacher- teacher and student-student) in teaching / learning situation. This is because interaction is essential to students' learning and to the overall success and effectiveness of distance education. IGNOU established Educate (a satellite dedicated only to education) on 20th September, 2004 to play a lead role in a new era of technology enabled education in a country like

ours. The university emphasized the development of multimedia and an online learning component in the existing learning programmes.

Conclusion

India lives in villages. There is vast scope for expanding the market for Distance Education. The scattered villages suffer from inadequate infrastructural facilities including means of rapid communication. The rural youth is to benefit a lot from distance education because they are deprived of urban facilities. Distance Education programme is very beneficial to rural India. The course curriculum should be dynamic in character to cater to the changing needs of the various sectors of the economy. Care should be taken to overcome the problems. Regular feedback on the performance of the learners who work in various organizations should be taken from the employers. The course curricula should keep pace with the changing time and environment. Both the delivery and receiving ends should be more responsive.

Online Education: Benefits and Challenges

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Summary

A report on “Higher Education in India: Vision 2030” by EY and FICCI states that by 2030, India will be amongst the youngest nations in the world. With nearly 140 million people in the college-going age group, one in every four graduates in the world will be a product of the Indian higher education system. However, by 2030, the already existing challenges for Indian higher education system – **access, equity and quality** – will only be greatly amplified unless we proactively address issues plaguing our current higher education model. Today, India has the highest no. of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the world with 33,723 colleges, universities and institutes, while closest second and third are US and China who have 4,140 and 2,484 HEIs respectively. India also has second highest no. of enrollments in higher education behind China. However, for all the might that we show in quantity, we fail miserably in quality. Out of 33,723 HEIs in India, only 6 figure in the list of Top Global Institution by Country. That is, a mere 0.02% of our HEIs are of global relevance. The present Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) in higher education is around 24% with only 33 million students enrolled in higher education out of the potential 120 million students, which is way below the Global average of 26% GER. Govt. of India has set a target of achieving 30% GER by 2020. However, to meet the target of 30% GER we would require an additional 10,510 technical institutions, 15,530 colleges and 521 universities. Just from an infrastructure point of view, setting up these many institutes and universities in next 4-5 years is an impossible task.

Another area of problem is that even if we are able to set-up these many HEIs, from where would we get qualified faculty to fill up positions in these institutes? MHRD reports that the institutes of higher learning face a faculty shortage to an extent of 35%, which results in poor quality of graduates coming out of these institutions. There is a direct correlation between Higher Education and Human Resource Development. Economic powerhouses from Japan to Germany, attribute much of their success to their robust academic infrastructure and skilled manpower, while in India skill shortages prevent 61% of employers from filling the desired job vacancies.

The Indian higher education system needs massive expansion if it has to cope-up with demand and supply gap and provide opportunity of quality higher education to the 140 million people in college going age by 2030. Such expansion would be unimaginable without tapping the powerful potential of ICT tools, mobile and increasing Internet penetration in the country. Online platforms and ICT tools have the capability to take higher education to millions of deserving students in far-flung areas who would otherwise have no access to quality education from a recognized university.

Use of technology in higher education is abysmal today. A lot has been spoken about it for many years now, but progress has been very slow. While the govt. is doing its bit through initiatives like making online courses count towards the college degree, recommending that 10% of the curriculum in the country's 10,800 technical institutes should come from MOOCs and such, main stream adoption is yet to be seen.

Need of the hour is private-govt. partnerships that ensures technology-intensive infrastructure is setup in universities, that use of ICT tools in pedagogy is implemented, that faculty and academia are trained in using latest technologies in education – as for this is the only way India can overcome the challenges of access, equity and quality that it has been facing for so long.

Keywords: Online Education, Benefits, Challenges

Professional Courses through Distance Education: Initiatives and Imperatives

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Summary

Professional courses are meant for imparting knowledge, skill and values. This will make the learner a highly competent person who can strive for national building process in the right perspectives. Offering professional courses through distance mode requires careful planning and meticulous execution. Distance Learning program could be offered in three different mode Viz.

- Conventional mode
- Thinking/ Collaboration mode
- Virtual mode.

A well conceived professional Education program very well be offered through 2nd and 3rd mode mentioned above. Distance education has the potential to make equity and access to education a reality and, thus, increase opportunities for a population in a vast democracy like ours. It has great potential for meeting the requirements of the varied demands for human resources. As all the stakeholders know, distance education offers wide range of benefits comparing to campus-based education. They are; Easy access, Independent learning opportunities, Interface with employment, Better quality controls over course materials, Improvement over course materials, Improvement in pedagogic quality and above all Lower cost.

Technology Infrastructure

With the advent of technological development in the Knowledge-Era, various technologies are brought together to create, maintain and run distance education programs in a more professionalized manner. With advances in the capacity of the Internet (and Internet 2), distance education programs can make increasing use of multimedia contents (such as video and animation). Web technology allows the installation, update and viewing of course materials. Video streaming technologies are used in video conferencing systems to support online discussions. It is possible to use education theory to develop distance learning resources and quantitative analysis of student performance. Hence, offering professional course through distance mode is feasible and viable in the present day scenario.

The Key Imperatives Are

Standardization of courseware format and platform. The IP issue associated

with courseware designers Create high quality distance learning courseware with the help of an expert team consisting of education professionals, engineers, and art designers need to work together.

Case 1. The School of Law (SOL) was established IGNOU in 2005 with an objective of imparting legal education through Open and Distance Learning system. The school aims to create awareness about legal rights and responsibilities in the emerging world order. The School strives to ensure high quality education and research through innovative, multi-media learning teaching packages with a focus on learning practical aspects of law, acquiring legal skills and scholarship.

Case 2. Medical Science courses which a student can pursue through Distance Learning. These Medical Science Courses are conducted in Clinical Research, Diabetology, Health & fitness, Health Sciences, Hospital Management, Paramedical Science, Pharmaceutical Management, Physiotherapy, Public Health, Ultrasonography and Medical Imaging Technology through open and correspondence universities. Medical Science qualification of DEC approved university is equivalent to regular university qualification.

Case 3. Symbiosis Centre for Distance Learning (SCDL) is a very popular and one of the largest autonomous Distances Learning Education Institute in INDIA, recognized BY Distance Education Council, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Govt. of India. The student strength has grown exponentially over the past few years and SCDL today has more than 2,50,000 students on its live register from all states of India as well from 48 countries abroad including countries such as US, UK, Middle East, Russia, Germany & Singapore, Japan etc.

They offer Post Graduate Diploma programs in various disciplines such as Business Management with specializations in (Finance, Marketing, Human Resource, Operations, CRM, and Information Technology), International Business, Insurance Management, Supply Chain Management, Retail Management, Information Technology, Instructional Design, Entrepreneurship Development, Education Administration, Pre-primary Teachers Training, Teaching English, Creative Writing and Law and many more.

Having seen the role of major players in the distance education context, it is vividly understood that professional courses could also be offered in distance mode. But professionalism requires very much in all aspects. I congratulate the organizing team of the conference for the wonderful initiatives and sustained efforts.

Keywords: Professional Courses, Distance Education, Imperatives

Success and Failures of Distance Education: A Critical Review

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Summary

Distance Education in India started in 1960's providing access to higher education to students from remote, less affluent backgrounds or to employed students through mail correspondence, which is the oldest form of distance education as an asynchronous delivery technology. Most of the courses offered by Open universities used periodic sessions of Personal Contact Program (PCP Centres) to supplement the sessions. School of Correspondence Courses (now School of Open Learning), Delhi University used face-to-face, distance learning program since 1962 successfully until the number of Distance learners increased to more than one lakh students. It witnessed a daily footfall of 15000 admission/examination seekers struggling to take admissions in SCC Building totaling to be more than 450,000 in all the three years of their graduation. The administrative setup had problems of Poor/Micro management, Corruption, Infrastructure, Structure Control for Materials Distribution, PCP, Exam Cycle, delay in results, more failure of students and delays in Degree distribution. The quality of Teaching material, Teacher/Student Ratio delay in financial payments were major concerns till 2012-13.

School of Open Learning conceptualized later as new Avatar of SCC in 2004-05 added ICT based Open Learning blended with mailing services and SMS push and pull services. In 2004-05 it started development of State of Art ICT technology with high end Computers and Servers. The initiation of student friendly Online/ICT processes with able administrators and ICT team since 2014 has helped us to switch over progressively to almost complete online admission/examination deliverables in 2016-17 i.e. each student is being admitted or submitted their examination fee online. The student can now be admitted in less than 7 minutes and gets his receipt, identity and admit cards, mark sheets and provisional certificates with bar/QR code simultaneously. The introduction of Study Centre's for PCP classes has helped for betterment of students/Teacher ratio in a class room and an increase in overall pass percentage from 43% to approximately 53% in 2014-15 and 2015-16 while utilizing state of art teaching and learning resources of our University colleges.

The concept of Flipped Class room technology is being introduced from 2016 in School of Open Learning by preparing Video and Audio recorded lectures paving the way for future generation teaching and learning process, beyond the boundaries of a conventional classroom and moving towards Global pedagogical methods.

The new approaches to delivery modes, such as online open access of our study material, the use of technology to support flexible learning model allowing learners to learn at a distance, experience enriched methods of Blended Learning/delivery methods and bringing parity in quality of education with regular students has raised the quality of students joining School of Open learning since 2014-15 i.e. more than 50% students with marks above 60% and approximately 10,000 with more than 80% marks have joined School of Open Learning in 2015-16.

The new initiatives such as development of Software for individual student/faculty/administration Dashboards with integrated Learning/assessment and Management (SOLILMS) will not only initiate the development of pedagogy based on web tools for learning and continuous assessment on Tablets/Phablets but will definitely increase the efficiency, speed and transparency in services and management in School of Open Learning, Delhi University.

We have taken lead role in flipping the skilled courses being run at Campus of Open Learning soon to be blended with online learning in form MOOCS and strengthening 'Just in time education' for SOL students so as to bring them a part of Digital India and Make in India concept. The above changes will be discussed based on the big data retrieved from different resources for ongoing open learning in the country and at global scale for preparing Indian Universities with the highest Ranked Open Learning Centers of the world.

Keywords: Success, Failure, Distance Education, Review

Twinning Programme and Distance Learning Model: A Comparative Study

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Summary

Providing Higher Education to a wide cross section of students in our society enhances the quality of living and brings in wide range of benefits among large section of population. As all sections of our population cannot afford regular post-graduation courses, it is necessary to explore all options available at our disposal to provide quality higher education.

Twinning program is an innovative educational concept which widens the scope of educational opportunity and access to working students. In twinning concept a tie-up between Directorate of Distance Education - Pondicherry University with any reputed Institution of higher Education is established. This collaboration facilitates the administrative and academic aspects as per the standard operating procedures set by the Parent University.

Twinning model is considered to be one of the most successful models which provide key ingredients for many universities of higher education to successfully adopt. The twining concept gives a gamut of choices to the student community to learn, assimilate and share the experience of learned faculty on subjects through a well-designed and meticulously executed class room teaching-learning process facilitated by collaborating institution.

Twinning model also has a better competitive advantage over distance learning in providing quality class room teaching experience, inducing practical learning, providing rich learning resources with varied academic support and administrative efficacy as compared to distance learning program.

It is noteworthy to mention that, the marked difference between the conventional distance education programmes and the twinning programme is

that the students would undergo a rigorous extended classroom session during evening or on weekend / Sundays. This class room effect brings twinning programme nearer to the regular PG courses as over 90/100 hrs of quality classes are conducted per semester as against few days of personal contact programme practiced correspondence model.

As higher education accessibility in India and world over is facing myriad challenges, we take cognizance of this issues and work towards plausible and prudent solutions. In this background, our study is intended to understand and analyze the effectiveness of twinning programme as against the correspondence model.

Descriptive methodology has been adopted to understand the concepts, relevance, challenges and implications of both the models. Questionnaire framed to bring out this advantage is administered across the learners of different model to understand their perception.

Actual output performance of students in both the models is examined through various documents available with the University & Institution to assess the degree of twinning programme effectiveness as against regular correspondence programme.

Keywords: Twinning Programme, Distance Learning Model

Learning via MOOC's: A PANDORA'S BOX or A CORNUCOPIA

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Summary

Since 2010, the finest minds in knowledge creation at the world's best universities have developed a networked platform to make available on-demand audio-visual instruction lectures globally. These are available with/without payment and/ or certification. The structure of knowledge, the clarity of visual presentation, the precise explanations and the caliber and contemporaneity of the teacher are truly world class. From 2011 to 2014, some 25 million 'students' have enrolled for the top end MOOC's courses. Only some 4% of those who actually commenced a course finally completed the entire course. Encouragingly, 72% of these reported career benefits and 61% reported educational benefits. The reach, universality, access and cutting-edge knowledge from world leaders across a very vast range of topics / issues from all corners of the world's universities are simply outstanding. Given the vast expected improvements in broadband availability, the scalability of MOOC's cannot be in any doubt.

The issues to be addressed are

- **Integration and Mainstreaming:** Enhancing awareness of MOOC's for lifelong learning, skill enhancement and Career advancement
- **Retaining Learners:** Retaining increasing proportions of initiators till the end of the total module /course.
- **Cradle To Grave Learning:** Extending the MOOC's platform from nursery to secondary level and beyond to overcome the problems of skilled / motivated teacher shortages and absenteeism.
- **Reaching Below For Equity And Social Justice:** Making lesson plans available in vernacular / neglected languages
- **Monetising Free/Public Goods:** Evolving fund raising mechanisms to enhance access for remote groups in inaccessible areas
- **Enforcement of Positive Humanising Goals:** Ensuring that incorrect information, pedagogy, etc is not broadcast or misutilised

- **Aiming For Larger Societal Goals:** Enabling the MOOC's platform for social / financial / hygiene / health awareness programs.
- **Universalisation of Grading:** Developing a credible, equitable and valid system of grading with transferable credits.
- **Foreseeing and Obviating Social Ills:** Preventing Isolation & encouraging Social Interaction and Group learning as MOOC's is a lonely and self-paced methodology.
- **Blended Learning:** A practical approach to test the impact and evaluate the success rate.

The advantages of the MOOC's technology are enormous. It is a cornucopia which needs to be targeted precisely, given credibility and funding and prevented from falling into the clutches of undesirable ideologues. My learning from four individual cases is enumerated in short to illumine how I reached certain conclusions, based on which I have selected the above 12 points for detailed elaboration.

Keywords: Learning, MOOC's, PANDORA'S, CORNUCOPIA

"TEACHERS !!! PL DON'T TEACH US" - Dynamics of Pedagogy for Distance Education

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Summary

Traditional Teaching methods outlived the present day requirements of students. Official reports are vocal on unemployability of University graduates. Traditional education as alternative is losing its popularity. Students and society is looking for skill focus. Employment in Govt. sector is largely replaced with growing Service sector in Private Industry. Industry is looking for third party certified hands on skills to hire the candidates. On-line education has been the key. On the other hand, the Government focus on Make in India, Start up programmes requires the Distance education to play a supplementary role to formal education.

Keywords: Teachers, Dynamics, Pedagogy, Distance Education

Future of Distance Education in India with Special Reference to Rural Population and/or Socially Background Population

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Summary

If technology has entered our lives in a massive way, changing our very pattern of thinking and our very rhythm of emotions, no wonder that our education system is slowly getting invaded by online and distance modes. The invasion is comparatively slower in Indian education as compared to the Western educational scenario. May be because of lack of proper and safer technology our rural schools have hardly been affected by ODL. But it is to be seen if we at all need such a mode of education for rural children who grow up healthily in the sunlight of their rural cultural values. Distance Education and ODL ought to be given in science subjects to develop the left hand faculties of children while the traditional face to face method to be continued, though modified to suit the present age, to develop the right hand faculties of the growing child, for this mode imparts values and moulds the child into a value-oriented human being. Balance and harmony between the traditional and modern ways education is the way forward.

Keywords : Distance Education, Future, India, Rural Population, Socially Background Population

Distance Education: Role of Personal Contact Classes

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Summary

Open and distance education has become an important mode of educating both young and service persons. About 25% of the total enrolment is in this system. The key elements in the distance education are- delivery system and interaction system. In fact, distance education is from a remote distance, it cannot provide for face to face interaction of teachers and students. However, the need for interaction is found significant for UG students as they are too young to carry out self –study on their own. In case of adults also interaction is considered important for providing motivation and instruction. They need advice, encouragement, guidance, and clarification of doubts. They need socialisation for community feeling. The delays in sending instruction materials by the institute, and the difficulty in understanding the study materials, further intensify the need for face to face interaction. The two approaches for face to face interaction or personal contact are: (i) Low tech method of personal contact program (PCPs) and (ii) High tech methods of video conferencing. PCPs faced problems relating to location, timing and duration, learning environment, students, teachers, Institution services and diversions of different type. The problems in effectively organising personal contact programs on one side and the emergence of high tech solutions like video conferencing, have led to adoption of high tech methods. In future, distance education will become virtual without the hassles of delivering printed study material and conducting contact programs at different locations.

Keywords: Distance Education, Communication, Delivery, Contact Programs

Open and Distance Learning: Employability

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Summary

This paper is an attempt to discuss the need for employment orientation in the courses offered by Distance Education Centres. This necessarily aims at providing guidelines and emphasizing the importance of field work in skill based courses. The author is of the opinion that ODL sector can aim at employability and continuing skill upgradation of employees. It in fact believes that, may be an ODL student is better suited for employment. As the student has a lot of time to pursue skill training in different sectors. It is also mentioned in the paper regarding the strategic initiatives which can be taken up by ODL institutions. ODL institutions primarily serve two groups:

- 1) Higher education aspirants seeking qualifications for employment
- 2) Professionals aspiring for continuous education to better their career prospects

ODL sector not only aims towards employability but continuing skill upgradation of employees. Traditional universities bogged by the capacity and infrastructure squeeze are unable to meet enrolment volumes of high education, and are even more challenged when it comes to continuous / professional education demands.

Keywords: Distance Learning, Employability

Distance Education: A Comprehensive Analysis across the Globe and in India

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Summary

The term Distance Education had become familiar and popular since the establishment of UK Open University (UKOU) in 1969. The concept of correspondence education, from which distance education has adopted major principles and methodologies, was much older and practiced in various sectors other than education initially. The Distance Education gained momentum all over the world with the success of UKOU. Many distance teaching institutions emerged in various parts of the world, offering a few thousands of programmes across the disciplines. Asian continent had also taken lead in establishing distance education institutions to address challenges faced by higher education in general and democratization in particular. Indian scenario can be traced back with the establishment of first correspondence institute in 1962 in the University of Delhi followed by Panjabi University, Patiala and Punjab University, Chandigarh. After that many universities started correspondence courses as part of the conventional universities. Turning point in India context was establishment of APOU, Hyderabad in 1982 and IGNOU, New Delhi in 1985. At the moment India has one of the largest networks of distance education systems in the world with 14 SOUs, one national OU i.e. IGNOU and around 200 DEIs in conventional universities and about 50 government/private institutions run by professional bodies. Such tremendous expansion of higher distance education system all over the world and in India also brought many issues, problems and challenges. These are - access and equity, credibility, acceptance by the society and policy makers, quality, employability of graduates, regulatory mechanism, source of resource generation; leadership and management etc.

An attempt is made in this paper to present the issues related to quantitative expansion of DE system along with the critical analysis of issues and challenges faced by DE system.

Keywords: Distance Education, Analysis, Globe, India

Present Status of Distance Education in India: Issues and Challenges

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Summary

If India wishes to reap the Demographic Dividend, it needs to quickly educate and skill the youth of this great nation. Open and Distance Education is perhaps the answer to creating equal opportunities for educating the poor and the disadvantaged and thereby providing livelihood to millions of youth. New technologies can help spread education from the world's best sources to all people irrespective of age, sex, creed, religion, socio-economic status, etc. thus crossing all geographical and social barriers. However, there are some issues and concerns faced by this important sector of education. This paper highlights some of the issues and challenges encountered by the ODL system in our country and tries to suggest possible solutions. The areas of concerns looked at in this paper include (i) The issue of Territorial Jurisdiction and whether there is any relevance of the concept of territorial jurisdiction of the institutions offering Higher education through the ODL mode; (ii) Quality in Distance Education and the lack of credibility of programs offered through Distance mode; (iii) Evaluation Pedagogy in the ODL System and issues arising there from; (iv) Faculty Development and training for the Open Distance Learning space; (v) Deliver Mechanisms available for teaching learning pedagogy and their optimum use by ODL institutions; (vi) The nature of Student Support and hand-holding required by the distance learners and the manner in which this need can be met by ODL institutions. On the whole it can be said that, the creators and disseminators of knowledge and its facilitators, be it the ODL institutions, its faculty, the technology solution providers or the regulators of the ODL system owe it not only to the youth of this great nation and to the country as a whole, but to the world at large to create the best quality human resource by making education available to one and all. The issues raised in this paper need to be addressed urgently so that our country can be World Leader in this Knowledge era which has been described as the “Century of the brain”.

Keywords: ODL, Quality, Student Support

Problems and Challenges of Distance Learning in North India

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Summary

This Paper attempts to highlights the problems associated with distance education of North Indians and their tentative solutions. This paper begins with the definition of distance learning and proceeds to analyze the challenges of distance learning. It discusses the challenges of distance learning faced by the students, teachers and the university. It also examines that the instructional design, technology and support are the basic elements which are of great significance to any successful distance learning programme. Lastly it summarizes and suggests tentative solutions for the problems faced in distance education and also widens the scope of any researcher to further research on the problems and challenges in distance education and to improve the working of distance education system of learning in North India.

Keywords: Distance Education, Definition, Problems, Technology, Challenges and Solutions

Address by Chief Guest of Valedictory Function



J. Veeraraghavan
Former Secretary, MHRD
Government of India

It is very apt that Pondicherry facing the vast open seas is hosting this conference. I thank the Pondicherry University, its Directorate of Distance Education and Professor Sibnath Deb for giving me this opportunity to say a few words at this concluding session.

The proceedings of the conference reflect the experience as well as the thinking of many practitioners of Open and Distance Education. The challenges are many, diverse and difficult but the prospects are equally, if not more bright. According to the MHRD document, inputs for the new education policy, ODL has contributed significantly to the development of education in India with over 4 million students enrolled in the ODL, about 10% of the total higher education enrolment which is bound to grow exponentially within the medium term in supply and demand factors.

As MHRD document observes “ODL is recognized and accepted as an important mode for achieving access, developing skills, capacity building, training, employability and lifelong learning and there are several variants of providing distance education courses offered by public and private institutions. These provide avenues to those students who are not able to leave their jobs, or are not able to attend regular classes due to any other reason.”

But I would like to add that if ODL can meet the challenges of quality and relevance and assures standards and transferable credits, the demand for ODL even from students of college going age group 18-23 will also increase manifold.

Higher education everywhere in the world is facing the problem of inadequacy of financial resources and the need to adjust to the needs of opportunities and challenges of the emerging technologies. The problem of inadequate funding is very much more acute in India than in other countries, owing to the very high growth in the college going population and also the need to equalize opportunities for women and those coming from far off areas and excluded groups. The emergence of new technology and their availability through Bharat Net and supporting services provide a unique opportunity and challenge for distance education to provide high quality learning they can provide to one and all.

Moreover the role of education is undergoing a very subtle change. Historically growth of higher education was spurred by the job opportunities it provided in various professions, such as law, medicine, engineering, management, media and of course education. But now higher education has to assume a new role, facilitating and inspiring innovation, entrepreneurship, social change and leadership. Education is not only for filling up existing jobs, but for creating new jobs and innovations, enterprises. Job creation – once the domain of business and industry is becoming an important mission of education itself.

Moreover, rapid changes in technology and globalization and modernization are creating new challenges in education. These will provide an enormous opportunity for open and distant education and offer scope for blended programmes and skill training to various groups as there is growing convergence between Distance Education and the regular (campus) institutions. There are several new directions in higher education where distance education can provide leadership. These include the traditional educational dream of individualized learning and mastering learning of concepts, their application, assessment and self assessments, effective feedbacks to students and teachers, learning and data analysis and connected and peer learning. Distance education in India can also play a very dynamic role in pre-service and in service teacher education programmes.

The two-day programme of national conference on distance education has brought together experts from various fields and we have had wide ranging discussions with focus on implementation. Despite parallel session we cannot say that we have been able to cover all aspects of challenges and prospects but the dialogues that have been begun are important and I am sure the practitioners will carry them forward. I am sure the conference has created a network of distance education practitioners and learners and in this age of online education and learning this is likely to lead to major improvements in distance education in the country.

It is always important in implementing any vision however carefully crafted to have the requisite flexibility to cater to the diverse needs and objectives of the students. It is also important to proceed from what one has and march ahead. Like all of you I am looking forward to the valedictory address of the learned speaker of this session and would like to end by thanking once again all the participants and the Pondicherry University.

Need For Monitoring and Periodic Evaluation of Courses Offered Under Distance Mode

Valedictory Talk by



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Abstract

ODL has emerged as a viable means of broadening educational avenues to not only the deprived and disadvantaged sections of society but also to those who wish their improve their vertical and horizontal mobility in their well-paid jobs. In the 21st century, the lessons learned from earlier ODL experiences are being applied across educational sectors at all levels. A wide variety of educational programs are incorporating aspects of ODL. Meanwhile, ODL is continuing to evolve, using information and communication technologies (ICT) to enhance learning resources and improve communications and delivery.

In addition to offering access to higher education without the traditional constraints of time and location, open distance learning facilitates greater flexibility with regard to entry qualification and formal requirements for entry. Thus, learners who are traditionally disadvantaged in terms of the openness and accessibility of education, have greater opportunity for success given the services and flexibility of ODL programs.

Continuous monitoring and evaluation are essential for effective management of ODL programs. The results of monitoring and evaluation should be used to implement improvements that better ensure the long-term success of ODL initiatives. Monitoring and evaluation should focus on how often the monitoring and evaluation process is needed and on how much effort should be put into changing processes or practices in order to solve the problems encountered, and what efforts should be made to monitor the results of the changes.

Monitoring the enrolment ratio and the pass percentage is relatively easy but this is not sufficient to indicate the success of education and training programs. It is much more challenging to assess the success of graduates and the information gained through monitoring and evaluating must facilitate

education for development. Only then will such a process will worth the effort. Many ODL educational programmers assume that the resource materials in which they have invested so heavily do the teaching. While program design is critical, facilitating support for teachers, tutors, learners, and learning communities is vital in order to build on the foundations of ODL and achieve education and development goals. Against this background, in order to keep abreast of the fast changing world of knowledge and employment, it is important that the ODL courses are monitored and that there is period evaluation of the same.

Keywords: Monitoring, Evaluation, Courses, Distance Education

Abstracts

Changing Profile of Distance Learners in India: A Case study of School of Open Learning, University of Delhi

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Abstract

Technology has brought the so called disadvantaged distance learners into a domain where they are sharing the same facilities from the virtual knowledge hub with their counterparts as the regular learners in the formal mode. In a neo-liberal world economy the states, particularly the third World Countries, finding it pretty difficult to create infrastructure for educating the growing number of population. In that scenario, distance education offers a glimmer of hope for augmenting their human resources. India is no exception. Realizing fully well that in order to strengthen democracy, education has to be prioritized. Indian state had to grapple with various problems after becoming Independent from centuries of colonial exploitation. The School of Open Learning, formerly known as the Directorate of Correspondence Courses, established under the University of Delhi in 1962, is a pioneer institution in the field of distance education in India. The Country witnessed the beginning of an alternate mode of education when the School started with a modest admission of 900 students in 1962. The School enrolled more than five lakh students in the Academic Session 2015-16. On many occasions our students have been toppers in a range of disciplines. The admission process for various courses in the School is governed by the norms established by the University of Delhi. The examination is also conducted by the University of Delhi. The University of Delhi confers the degree to the students of the School as it does in the case of its other constituent colleges. In an effort to cater to the needs of a growing number of students the school established the South Study Centre at Moti Bagh from the academic session 1990-91. In an effort to reach out to a larger number of students, the School is in the process of opening up Study Centres and Regional Centres in the National Capital Region of Delhi. Initiatives Undertaken for providing Quality Education:

- Collaboration with Reputed Institutions of higher learning's in India and abroad.
- Collaboration with the publishers such as Oxford, Cambridge, Orient Blackswan for providing print material to distant learners offline as well as online.
- Providing e-material through virtual wave by providing the access of Compact discs (CDs), Pen drives and customized tablets to the distant learners of SOL for broadening the spheres of knowledge.

Keywords: Profile, Distance Learners, India, Open Learning, University of Delhi

Present Status of Distance Education in India, the Needs and Challenges

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Abstract

In any country economic development is feasible through improvement in the quality of human resources. Human resource development will enlarge people's choices in the development process. Ensuring high quality of education and health care are the most important and well-known aspects of human resource development. Man provides key labor input for product and if labor is efficient and skilled its capacity to contribute to growth decidedly will be high and vice-verse (Naidu, 2001). Education is universally recognized to be an investment in human resources. Education and training can assist people achieve the skills and knowledge which helps them participate in the life of their community to collectively achieve sustainability in each of the dimensions (I R Crellin of Australia p.17). Higher education is the main instrument for development and change. India is a vast country with diverse culture, attitude and needs. It will not be possible to find and propagate a universal model to meet all the challenges. The development of higher education in India in the last five decades, presents a picture of light and shade. The distance education mode is emerging as a supplement/complement to the existing conventional mode of higher education. The rapid expansion of open and distance learning systems is an eloquent testimony to their relevance and effectiveness in resource-scarce environments prevailing in developing countries like India. The percentage share of distance mode in Indian higher education is now put around 20 to 25 per cent.

Keywords: Distance Education, India, Needs, Challenges

Challenges on The Part of Students

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Abstract

Hailing from a conventional as well as an alternative educational background, with a bird's eye view, I can appropriately critique the two systems of education. The conventional education system with its strict conformity to handwritten submissions by 4 o'clock is currently obsolete in this age of technology. Besides, it restricts the learner into learning what the system deems important of learning and not what the learner deems worthy of learning as it does not allow the student to choose the subject or the teacher. The grueling routine, often boring, allows students to miss classes only to later take down notes from their peers or seniors. This often leads to collusion, resulting in lack of creativity and learning. One often associates collusion with internet sources, the sad endemic of technology, but it existed even under the strict guidance of the conventional educational system. But as opposed to these challenges, a student has direct access to his/her teacher in this system. Thus, the physical presence of a teacher enables a continuous progress on the part of the student or the researcher. The alternative system of education, such as the online or the education (Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education) which I have been privileged to be a part of, is flexible in its choice of granting subjects and their facilitators. While pursuing M.Phil. with IGNOU, I chose subjects relevant to my interests, thereby respecting my commitment to the course at hand. One needed not write by hand the assignments and could post them at any time of day or night: time being no barrier. At the present time, International Baccalaureate schools have incorporated this practice. Once an IB practitioner myself, I have often set midnight as assignment deadline. Another perk of online education is that one gets to meet people across the globe. During my Masters, my peers were chiefly from the South: Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Andhra. Only four or five were from the North. During my M.Phil. as well as my IB professional development, my peers hailed from Asia, Europe, America, Australia. Therefore, technology has helped humanity to break free of the unities of time and place by helping people to come in touch with others across the globe with similar or different life experiences. Even though direct contact with teachers is not a possibility in this alternative system of education, all the 'pros' make up for this 'con'.

Keywords: Distance Education, Challenges, Students

Distance Education and E-Learning: The Challenge of Change

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Abstract

The advent of Web-based online learning (or e-learning) in 1996 is widely recognized as constituting a paradigm shift in education. E-learning or online learning is now a component not only of distance education but of classroom-based face-to-face teaching as well. This paper raises three crucial questions: (i) Are all forms of distance education that proceeded online/e-learning now obsolete? (ii) If classroom /campus-based teaching also incorporate e-learning, then do we need separate centers, departments, faculty and staff for distance education? (iii) Can distance education be considered separate or different from classroom teaching? This paper will attempt to answer these questions. Exploring the idea that distance education *can* exist without e-learning, the paper will attempt to show that e-learning or online learning can be a component of both classroom and distance education but is not synonymous with distance education. The needs of distance-mode students are different from those in the face-to-face mode, which makes a similar use of e-learning in both the modes. The paper will also attempt to assess and locate the role of e-learning within distance education. Arguments in the paper will be illustrated using the author's experience as a distance education teacher and developer of study materials for English literature courses at the School of Distance Education, The EFL University, Hyderabad.

Keywords: Distance Education, E-Learning, Challenge

Distance Education in India: Emerging Challenges and Prospects

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Abstract

This paper mainly highlights some important aspects of improving the quality and standards of distance education programmes being run by the dual mode or conventional universities in India. Initially, this paper focuses on the nature, scope and meaning of the term distance education in present educational scenario that goes hand in hand in the globalization, industrialization and privatization era. This paper further discusses how distance education is an alternative or remedy for the conventional system which has been existing in the universities of India. In addition to this, the paper explains meaning and definitions of the words 'quality' and 'standard', quality control, visualization of quality in the distance education, parameters and attributes for improving quality and standard in distance education. While discussing quality, we come across certain quality indicators in distance education that are mentioned in this paper. Eminent educationists, thinkers, philosophers have realized the importance of running varieties of programmes through distance mode for upliftment of education among the educationally deprived people. Finally this paper explains significance of improving quality and standard of distance education through total quality management and removing number of hurdles while working in this field.

Keywords: Distance Education, Challenges, Prospects

Distance Learning Assessment through Moodle

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Abstract

Current and emerging technologies enable Open Distance Learning (ODL) institutions and educators integrate innovative ways to add value to the teaching-learning and assessment processes. ODL institutions have been using Computer Assisted / Aided Assessment (CAA) systems since 1990s. With the advances in the learning technologies, eAssessment systems have evolved from computer marked through adaptive and intelligent assessment and feedback systems. eAssessment (electronic assessment) implies using electronic technology and tools to design and administer assessments, collect and store students' assessment evidences, grade performance, provide feedback and generate reports. Various ODL institutions have been using different CAA software as stand-alone assessment systems. The UK Open University, a forerunner in the technology-integrated ODL systems used its in-house developed eAssessment system – Open Mark in the early 2000s, with emphasis on feedback, multiple attempts, engaging and flexible assessment. The advent of Learning Management Systems (LMS) paved the way for integrated eAssessment systems. From 2005, the UK Open University has been using Moodle as an integrated eAssessment environment. Moodle (Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment), an open source LMS is useful for course(s) administration, users' management, content management and delivery, interaction and communication, administering assessment tasks, tracking student's learning progress, grading and reporting their performance. Moodle assessment functionality supports self-assessment, peer assessment, formative and summative assessment, anywhere, anytime assessment and timely feedback. Moodle-enabled eAssessment provides students with e-submission facility; reduces carbon footprint and expedites assignment return process with timely feedback. In the ODL system, formative assessment with instant feedback helps distance learners to self-assess their learning and improve their performance in summative assessment. This paper explores how various Moodle modules enable ODL institutions and educators manage various aspects of eAssessment.

Keywords: eAssessment, eLearning, Learning Management System, Moodle, Open Distance Learning

Academic Audit Parameters to Assure Quality of ODL

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Abstract

Open and Distance Learning (ODL) has been now for more than five decades in India. From offering conventional courses through correspondence for the needy students to offering job oriented, skill oriented, and professional courses for every constituent of the society, ODL has also travelled from Distance to Flexible learning now. This entire process of opening the doors of knowledge, skill in a large scale and proportion, in order to accomplish a higher GER (Gross Enrolment Ratio), there needs to be a quality assurance check on it. It is the prime responsibility of the providers of higher education. The necessity and importance of quality has to be understood by all the stake holders of ODL. This paper focuses on the QA factors, keeping in mind the expectations laid down by UNESCO, COL, AAOU and UGC/NAAC (National Assessment Accreditation Council) time to time. Quality Assurance (QA) in ODL is as necessary as it is for conventional Universities. Recently academic audit (AA) has also gained importance as it takes an Institute from a minimal quality assurance level to optimizing its quality potential and delivers accordingly. There is not only a need of technological innovations to be implemented in practice but more important is the innovative use of technology by the providers by modifying their traditional attitude towards technology. The challenges before the DEI/OU's to keep a quality v/s quantity balance, to meet international standards, E-learning, M-learning tools can only be handled by following a checklist of QA and AA factors. There are fundamental six check points: (i) Policy (P), (ii) Production (P), (iii) Packaging (P), (iv) Organization (O), (v) Marketing (M) and (vi) Customer service(C). ODL is a huge educational industry wherein the first three P's can be closely related with the three D's i.e. Design, Development and Delivery of courses and programs. The other three factors also form the most important quality assurance measures in ODL. An ICT enabled DEI/OU with this P³-D³, COM approach is highlighted in this paper. The six AA factors described are based on the author's experience in IDOL which may also be applicable to other DEI's.

Keywords: ODL (Open and Distance Learning), Quality Assurance (QA), Distance Education Institute (DEI), Open University (OU), Academic Audit (AA)

Regular Students' Perception Concerning Distance Mode of Education

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&

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Abstract

Education is a process of imparting knowledge from one to another. Selection of apt mode of exchange is essential for successful completion of exchange of knowledge. In the present scenario different education systems or mode of education exists like regular class, online learning, and distance learning and so on. All these systems have their own pros and cons. In India, Right to Education Act (RTE), 2009 ensures free and compulsory education for children up to the age of 14. Researches show huge discrepancy between number of children aged above 14 and the number of children who are attending secondary or higher secondary school and the higher levels of education. It indicates that higher education is beyond the reach of majority of the youngsters. The majority is mainly from low socio-economic families. The open school system and distance mode of education can help such deprived group of people to attain higher education together with their struggle to find means for day to day survival. So for those deprived section people distance mode of education is a ray of hope. But the views of the regular students on the distance mode of education will be totally different from that of students of distance mode education. Given this background, the present study aims to ascertain the perception of regular mode of students' concerning distance education with special focus on the areas like knowledge, advantage, challenge and threats. A semi-structured questionnaire was prepared to explore different aspects of perception of regular mode students. A group of 200 regular mode students of Pondicherry University was included in the study and they include post graduate students and Ph.D. scholars from different streams of education like humanities, social sciences, management and science. Appropriate analysis was carried out for meaningful interpretation of data. The results disclosed that the majority of the regular mode students accepts and appreciate distance mode of education only as requirement for promotion and not as a

career option. According to them, distance mode of education is only second grade. Regular mode students were of the opinion that distance mode of education should not be extended to the science and applied and behavioral science areas where practical lab experiments are required to be performed by the students for gaining first-hand experience. The views of the regular students directly or indirectly indicate the reservation or the psychological barrier to accept the courses under distance mode as an equivalent to regular mode education even when the rule say that both are equal. The study also found out that still there are areas that requires more clarification and explanation and proper awareness is needed to alleviate the anxieties of the regular students.

Keywords: Perception, Regular Mode Students, Distance Education

Improving Quality Assurance and Standards for Distance Education in India

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Abstract

Distance Education in India has gained major significance over the last two decades in India due to technological developments, curriculum revamp and ICT infrastructure. Every Open University and DEI in India has a mandate of providing quality education through Distance Learning mode to build an inclusive knowledge in the society through inclusive education. IGNOU as a National Resource Centre for Open and Distance Learning (ODL) in India has been widening access across all sections of the society to prove that inclusive education as a reality in reaching the unreached and marginalized group of peoples in the country. Moreover the Open Universities and Distance Education Institutions (DEIs) in the country largely contribute to the increase in Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in Higher education. The private universities are the major concern in the country and they use the distance education to earn profits for their infrastructural developments and resource mobilization and most of the state universities in the country also not exceptional in this view point as they do mobilize funds through distance education for managing the financial crunch in the conventional system of higher education. Maintaining quality assurance in the overall system of distance education is a mammoth task as most of the distance education universities have huge number of enrolment and human resources for handling the day to day activities. Lack of quality monitoring agency either at regional or national level to review the Open Universities and DEIs is a major problem since quality assurance of the conventional higher education system in India handled by the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC). The present study focuses on the barriers in maintain QA in the distance education system and suggestive measures to improve the quality and standards.

Keywords: Open and Distance Learning, Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER), Quality Assurance and Standards.

Rumblers and Roadblocks in Implementing Policies and Regulations of Government Bodies in a Dual Mode System

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Abstract

The advent of ODL in India has been there for almost five decades. During these five decades there has been a technological revolution. The six generations of technology right from the correspondence mode to the connectives mode is helping students to attain higher education in India. The purpose is to cater to the need of the disadvantaged students by offering job oriented, skill oriented, and professional courses across Nation. This transition of ODL from Distance to Flexible learning has led to the increase in the number of State Open Universities and Distance Education Institutes (DEI) in India. There is a change from the apex body Distance Education Council (DEC) set up under IGNOU to the present Distance Education Bureau (DEB) (an extended arm of the UGC). But the norms and policies laid out are vague, for both the Open Universities and DEI. This study aims to highlight the discrepancy on the norms as stated by DEB with special reference to DEIs of dual mode Institutes. Currently in India there are one National and 14 State Open Universities; and 116 Dual mode Universities. The concerns pertaining to dual mode universities are different to those of Open Universities. Hence, there is a need to clarify the regulations, norms and guidelines by DEB for DEI. In most areas, there is lacuna on the interpretation of these guidelines by various authorities of DEI. The major focus of this paper is to highlight the lacunas in the existing DEI policies, its execution and evaluation. It also explores the inadequacy in adoption of technology for DEI and the vast potential of increasing the catchment of the diverse learners in India. The paper recommends appropriate measures to look at the roadblocks to ensure effective policies and practices for ODL system through DEB in DEI. The areas covered are pograms-syllabus, mode of delivery, pedagogy, assessment (internal and external) and the crucial area of effective use of online education and the credit based systems for DEI's.

Keywords: Dual mode university-DEI, DEB, UGC, ODL

Emerging Trends and Issues in Distance Education

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Abstract

Distance Education is an excellent way of learning for the adult learners because of its instructor's and student's flexible learning approach in terms of time and location. This is an rare opportunity for those who missed the regular education due to various reasons, and wish to pursue further studies. Although there is a tremendous demand and growth of Distance Education, still there are certain issues which require attention. Issues include lack of motivation, lack of face-to-face contact, faculty support, and inexperience with the mode of learning and so on. This paper is conceptual paper in which the trends and issues are discussed and throw light on as to how to make Distance Education effective for the learners. This paper also discusses about generations of Distance Education and adoptions towards the e-learning and its necessity. Finally, from various literatures some of the common barriers in Distance Education have been identified and they could be classified as student's perspective, faculty perspective as well as organization perspective. Finally the paper also suggests the remedial measures to make Distance Learning effective and interesting.

Keywords: Distance Education, Flexible Learning, E-Learning, Face-to-Face Contact

Need for Course on Child Protection under Distance Education Mode

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Abstract

Child care and protection is becoming a serious issue and concern for all community. Since the incidence of child maltreatment is in increasing trend across the globe, there arises an immediate necessity to reduce the occurrence of such incidents. It has also been observed from previous studies that there is a wrong notion about child rights and a large number of parents and teachers are not in favor of allowing the children to enjoy their rights specifically right to safety from physical violence and right to expression of views and opinions. Data from different sources are gathered for understanding of the available course on child care and protection through distance mode. There is an urgent need to alter the preconceived notion about the fundamental rights of children and for the same purpose there is a need to design course on child welfare to train professionals in the same field. Thus the knowledge obtained through course of study will help the individual to take up the issue at various levels and ensure the protection of child rights. Distance mode of education is one such platform through which One-year Diploma Programme on Child Protection can be initiated for those working in government and non-government sectors resulting in safety of children and thus ensuring healthy society.

Keywords: Distance Mode of Education, Child Care and Protection.

The Role of NGO in Promotion of Distance and Online Education in Rural Area

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Abstract

India is the second largest populated country in the world. The total population of the country is about 125 crore and 65 % population belongs to rural area and the condition of education in rural areas is in a very sorry state. Lack of infrastructure facilities and common curricula are some of the reasons which are holding back the process in rural education. But non-government organization is taking dynamic place in the process of rural education system with global prospective. Education is the ultimate resources for the development of nation building. Now-a-days science, technology and innovation are the most important part for the unification and modernization of rural education. In a village area a large number of people are unable to go for higher education because of non-availability of higher learning institutions. In the given situation in rural areas, NGOs can play a significant rule in taking up technology in rural areas and educate common people to take the advantage of distance education or on-line mode of education.

Keywords: NGO, Promotion, Distance Education, Rural Area

A Study on Challenges Faced By Students Undergoing Distance Education in India

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Abstract

Distance education or distance learning is a field of education that focuses on teaching methods and technology with the aim of delivering teaching, often on an individual basis, to students who are not physically present in a traditional educational setting such as a classroom. It has been described as 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. The theory, research and practice of Distance Education has evolved considerably over the past few years, and experienced a major transformation in form and function primarily within the few years. Massive Open Online Courses, offering large-scale interactive participation and open access through the World Wide Web or other network technologies, are recent developments in distance education. In India a great number of people are getting educated through Distance Education. Time and place flexibility attracts more and more students. However, many of them encounter serious challenges that prevent them from completing their courses successfully. The advancement in the field of technology opened so many opportunities to the students to study. But along with these advancements there raised some problems too. This study is focused to bring up the opportunities and challenges faced by students in distance education. The findings may be useful and can be considered by authorities while developing a model for distance education.

Keywords: Social Impact Assessment, Effective Approach, Economical Strategies and Impact of LPG

Twinning Programme: An Innovative Way for Quality Higher Education through Distance Mode

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Abstract

We live in a world in crisis, in a knowledge society and in an era, in which time is fluid, nothing Lasts, everything changes and is unstable. Twinning is an innovative educational concept which widens the scope of educational opportunity and access for students. This twinning concept is a boon to the students who are employed but would want to attend continuous classes. The twinning concept envisages a tie-up between Distance Education Institutions and recognized Educational Institutions (Twinning Institutes). The programmes offered by Distance Education Institutes through Distance Mode are offered at Twinning Institutes. The marked difference between the conventional Distance Education programmes and this innovative twinning programme is that the students would undergo a rigorous extended classroom session on Sundays/Evening hours during the academic year instead of the usual few days Personal Contact Programmes. This twinning concept gives a gamut of choices to the student community to learn and assimilate the nitty gritty of the subjects of the various programmes through a well-designed and meticulously executed academic rigour. This paper would highlight the nitty-gritty of twinning programmes in enhancing the quality higher education in India.

Keywords: Twinning Programme, Academic Enrichment, Twinning Institutions, GER

Ensuring Quality Distance Education: Problems and Prospects in Kerala

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Abstract

Recently distance education worldwide is emerging as a significant means towards democratizing higher education. The catalytic role of Open and Distance Learning (ODL) mode are an unbeatable position in globalization of education as well. While the democratization process moves up, quality concerns in higher education especially within distance education becomes problematic in India. When traditional mode systems also attempts for increased Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) in higher education, the quality and equity of distance education degrees were being challenged crossing the guidelines set for its quality assurance. The distance education institutions in Kerala cannot be detached from such environmental constraints. The ODL mode programmes in Kerala all the time try to provide quality degrees within its severe financial as well as infrastructural constraints. Coupled with those age old problems, the recent University interventions to raise revenue via increased enrollment under distance education became contradictory in terms of quality assurance. As such the quality related debates aggravated and resulted in challenging the basic existence of distance education institutions. Thus this paper analyzes the quality debate issues of ODL programmes in Kerala under this context. In addition, the paper attempts to discuss the prospects of Kerala distance education in the era of information technology.

Keywords: Quality Distance Education, Problems, Prospects, Kerala

The Expectations, Perceived Challenges and Scope of Distance Learning in India: A Qualitative Study

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Abstract

The arena of distance education is comparatively a new venture, an appreciable by-product of globalization and advancement of technology. Distance mode of learning is considered widely since it can go in sync with other pursuits or engagements of the learner. The number of courses as well as the students and institutes is on the rise. This rise itself indicates a need for understanding the learners' perspectives about various realms of this learning. The present study aims to understand the experiences of distance education in India according to the past students, the factors motivating the students to take up the study, expectations about the courses, satisfaction with their learning experience, and the major challenges faced during the study period. Two focused group discussions; each including 10 participants who have completed a minimum of one course in distance mode was conducted using a set of guidelines. Ethical issues of informed consent, homogeneity of participants, voluntary participation and consent in recording the discussion etc were addressed. All the participants were selected from the parental institution and involved both boys and girls with an average age of 26 years. Results indicate that the major motivations behind the distance learning are the convenience of learning, and expectations about the career growth. Many expectations are actually paving the ways to take up the study like the exposure to a wide area of knowledge which is related to one's original interest, the desire to learn and understand a new subject etc. Participants also came up with challenges related to ignorance of technology in online courses, difficulty in grasping the materials fully, inconvenience in studying practical and experiments oriented subjects and the problems related to obtaining an equivalency certificate to the courses from other institutions. In summary, the study has covered the motivations and challenges associated with distance mode of learning in India. It was also fruitful enough to yield some practical suggestions for further enhancement of the system.

Keywords: Distance learning, Expectations, Challenges and Recommendations

Role of ICT in Improving Quality of Distance Education: A Technical Perspective

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Abstract

Modern Education is very much influenced by Information Communication Technology (ICT) by which all educational activities communicated through ICT resources. ICT has become need of present education system in most of the spheres vastly used in Distance Education sector. Education is always considered as dynamic process in which all issues pertaining to acquiring new knowledge, method of teaching, necessary teaching competency and skills are expected to learn by the candidate. The objective of ICT resources can be shared, adapted and remixed to fit individual teaching and learning aids and also improve the knowledge that can support improvements in teaching and learning. In India these educational transaction is always dominated by regular institutions that offers all sorts of educational degrees. In order to break these barriers ICT resources has played a crucial role in distance Education. The learners of distance Education can also enjoy all the facilities which were availed by the regular students through this means. Electronic resources or digital resources have become the heart of distance education, in which ICT resources always act as means of disseminating educational transaction. The present paper highlights the various ICT resources including Multimedia Resources (course modules, electronic lectures, digital home works and assignment submissions, recorded lab and classroom activities, pedagogical materials, games, simulations) and other educational resources around the world.

Keywords: ICT, Quality and Distance Education, Educational Resources

Challenges Faced by the Student Community of the ODL System in India: Possible Solutions

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Abstract

Providing education and equal opportunities to all its citizens is the obligation of any of the democratic nation. Education is treated as a liberating force by many visionaries of India. Education empowers the person. Education is aiming in addressing many barriers. Schooling of children itself has so many issues for the marginalized and deprived. Higher Education is a farther goal for the unprivileged. Though the state is making many attempts to fulfill its goal of education for all, many challenges are ahead, some are due to socio-economic factors. There are other factors which influences the development of higher education system in India. Alternatively development of ODL System is an opportunity for the higher education seekers to fulfill their aspirations. Even the open schooling agency (NIOS) is trying its best to ensure the schooling of those who could not succeed or continue in the regular mode. Those who are deprived of pursuing higher studies through regular mode could be able to acquire the required qualifications and certification through ODL systems for their career building and bread earning. But many of the issues of the system and attitude, acts and deeds of the stakeholders of the various institutions arises many challenges before the students of the ODL System. Those acquired degrees also facing many challenges. Though ODL was started as an initiative of public education institutions in India supported by the legislative framework and many favorable provisions, the takers of the ODL so far is treated with inferior views by almost all the systems. This paper is an attempt of analyzing the challenges faced by the student community of the ODL System in India. An endeavor is made for the SWOT analysis of the ODL programmes from the perspective of the students. This also envisages the gap between theory and practice of the philosophy behind ODL System in India. An effort is also made in identifying the problems and supported with probable solutions to address issues of the system and challenges faced by the students.

Keywords: ODL System, Student Community, ODL, NIOS, Higher Education System, SWOT Analysis of ODL.

Proximity of Examination Centre as a Learner Welfare Measure in a Distance Education System: A Study

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Abstract

Learner welfare measures in Distance Education System (DES) are of prominent importance because of the need of the learner to pursue education amidst their family, occupational and social commitments. The nature of the clientele of the Distance Education System (DES) namely slow learners, reluctant learners, gifted learners and differently abled learners, besides the motive to democratize education have been a challenge to be met while taking the education to the door-steps of the learners. Decentralization of the Learner Support Services (LSS) and establishment of new Regional Centres at the States/Union Territory all over India and Learner Support Centres working under the Jurisdiction of the Regional Centre are some of the initiatives taken to optimize the reach of the learners. With the wide option for the Distance Teaching Institutions (DTI) available for the Learner, accessibility to a specific Institution is favored mainly by the decision of the learner. In addition, the onus of being learner friendly and at the same time to maintain the quality of the services rendered remains a challenge for the Institution. One of the mandatory aspects to be dealt with by the Institution is the conduct of the Examination at the Proximity of the learners. Taking the case of the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), a Central University which offers tertiary education, the present paper presents a case-study of the Examination Centre at Bijapur, Karnataka for a session. The IGNOU Regional Centre at Bijapur was established in July 2011 and the first session of the Term-End Examination was in December 2011. Results revealed that the Examination Centre catered to 92 learners in all for 138 courses during the Examination Period of 24 days. Of the 138 Courses, 63 of Courses spreading across 35 sessions (17 Morning Session and 18 Morning Session) had only one examinee allotted to the centre. At the same time, of the 35 sessions which had only one examinee allotted to the centre. In 26 sessions (74.28%) the allotted examinee was absent. The highest

number of Courses held in a session (Evening Session) is 7 and One Evening Session did not have any examinee allotted for any the courses in the Time Table. The total expenditure incurred for the conduct of the Term-End Examination was Rs 59487 for the 92 learners who had opted the Examination Centre at Bijapur making the cost per learner to be Rs.646.59/-. The results imply that the conduct of the Term-End Examination at a small Examination Centre like Bijapur, even though is an expensive affair for the University, is one of the ways for the Learner Welfare Measure to provide a venue to write the examination at the place of the examinees convenience.

Keywords: Examination Centre, Learner Welfare Measure, Distance Education

The Impact of Distance Education in India

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Abstract

The paper examines whether the distance education can be delivered in a paced format similar to traditional campus-based models in which learners commence and complete a course at the same time. Paced delivery is currently the most common mode of distance education delivery. Alternatively, some institutions offer self-paced programs that allow for continuous enrollment and the length of time to complete the course is set by the learner's time, skill and commitment levels. Paced courses may be offered in either synchronous mode, but self-paced courses are almost always offered asynchronously. Each delivery model offers both advantages and disadvantages for students, teachers and institutions. Distance learning can expand access to education and training for both general populace and businesses since its flexible scheduling structure lessens the effects of the many time-constraints imposed by personal responsibilities and commitments. Devolving some activities off-site alleviates institutional capacity constraints arising from the traditional demand on institutional buildings and infrastructure. Furthermore, there is the potential for increased access to more experts in the field and to other students from diverse geographical, social, cultural, economic, and experiential backgrounds. As the population at large becomes more involved in lifelong learning beyond the normal schooling age, institutions can benefit financially, and adult learning business courses may be particularly lucrative. Distance education programs can act as a catalyst for institutional innovation and are at least as effective as face-to-face learning programs, especially if the instructor is knowledgeable and skilled.

Keywords: Impact, Distance Education, India

Adopting the Adaptive Learning to Improve Persistence, Performance, and Personalization

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Abstract

The purpose of this initiative is to demonstrate the benefits of Adaptive Learning Technology. Adaptive Learning is an advance pedagogical approach to provide personalized learning by adapting the sequence of learning as per the need of individual learner. Besides persistence and performance of the online learners, personalization is an area of concern for effective learning – mainly due to the linear course structure that compels same learning path to every learner. While modern web-browsing offers aesthetically enhanced user-experience with personal choices and recommendations, web-based learning is mostly flat and linear. Since 2003, CogBooks are leveraging its advance algorithm-based and data-driven technology to transform linear learning into adaptive learning (even a MOOC to an Adaptive MOOC) and witnessing progress by enabling real-time interaction sensing, adaptive authoring, reporting analytics, and social learning to build scalable adaptive courses with and contemporary web-experience. This paper shares the findings of CogBooks Adaptive Courses Implementation Survey with Arizona State University Students for two courses, namely Bio100 and ASU History. CogBooks being a winning finalist of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation Courseware Challenge was funded to develop these courses. The study used questionnaire and focused group discussion. Finding for ASU History Course: 81% participants were positive to repeat the adaptive system for other courses, 81% participants found the navigation easy, 92% participants found the system has modern look and feel, 81% participants found the system easy to use, 84% participants confirmed that the system helped with deeper understanding of the subject, and 68% students stated that CogBooks gave useful feedback after answering a quiz. Finding for Bio 100 Course: Students' pass-out rate increased from 76% to 94 % and students' drop-out rate declined from 15% to 1.5%. The findings of this study stress the need for adopting the algorithmic adaptive learning in the existing learning environment.

Keywords: Adaptive Learning, CogBooks, ASU, NBC Learn, Gates Foundation, Personalized Learning, Linear Learning, MOOC, Adaptive MOOC, Adaptive Authoring, Reporting Analytics, Social Learning

Success and Failure in Undergraduate Distance Education

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Abstract

Distance education initiatives that incorporate interactive television are explored from the perspective of two social work programs. Though both programs are of similar size and exist in the same state, one is private and located in an urban area, while the other is public and located in a rural area. Four key dimensions essential to distance education are determined to be recruitment, preadmission screening, retention or student support, and socialization of students and faculty. The Program Directors who are responsible for the effective administration at each university frankly discussed perceived successes and failures that characterized their respective initiatives. Based on reflective evaluation, one administrator chose to terminate its Program's interactive television component, while the other continues to expand its outreach.

Keywords: Success, Failure, Undergraduate, Students

Journey of a Government Office Clerk towards Central University Professorship: A Success Story of a Distance Education Learner

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Abstract

The paper presenter is a teacher in Higher Education in a Central University. Having entered Government Service at the age of 18 as a Clerk, his desire to become a Teacher in a higher Education institution materialized solely because of the notification of the Government of India, Department of Education, MHRD dated 01.03.1995. But for the notification the paper presenter, discontinued his formal education from a college, accepted the job offer from Government of Tamil Nadu and joined services on 30.03.1995, obtained his B.A and M.A from the Institute of Distance Education, University of Madras and earned his PhD by part time from the same University and quit his government service to join as an Assistant Professor in a State University in 2003. The higher level of success of the paper presenter in his profession can be corroborated to the access he had to higher education while working in the Government, studying about Government (Masters Programme in Public Administration). This paper can be a classic case study of the success of Distance Education. It is also pertinent to mention that despite the legal validity of distance education degrees and the greater degree of motivation of students the recruitment system of Public and Private sectors needs suitable sensitization as in the western countries for maximizing the benefit of Distance Education. Thus the paper explains the strength and weakness of Distance Education from an insider point of view and recommends ways and means of strengthening the distance education system.

Keywords: Journey, Central University, Distance Education

Distance Education in India: A Boon or Bane?

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Abstract

Distance education is popular and authorized distance learning centres are launching courses in India as required by UGC, DEB and other related regulatory bodies. It has 36 years of long rich experience in offering distance education programmes with the social outlook and upliftment of human resources in all possible ways. Presently all universities in India are offering Technical, science, arts , vocational degrees or diploma programmes as to inculcate technical and managerial know-how among the youth especially among employed people. Delivery of quality academic products is our conviction and hallmark. All distance learning programmes are meant for learning the principles and practices of HRD for getting the best from the distance learners. It will pave the way for career management. Distance education reaches out to all those segments of the society who are otherwise or deprived of the on campus education. It supplements the efforts of the institution engaged in on-campus programs through the creation of employable and skilled manpower to meet the growing needs of the economy. It helps the students to take advantage of the technological developments in the design and delivery of academic programs cutting across the cultural and geographical barriers. It also infuses ICT enabled education like M-Learning and facilitates our distance learners.

Keywords: Distance Education, India, Boon, Bane

Distance Education in India: Emerging Challenges and Prospect Especially on the Part of Students

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Abstract

According to Sir Isaac Pitman, “distance education or distance learning is the education of students who may not always be physically present at school.” Sir Isaac Pitman was the pioneer of distance education in the 1840's. He started the system of learning shorthand by mailing texts transcribed to shorthand. Advantages of distance education are flexibility, less expensive, choice of schools and learning while working. The disadvantages of distance education are lack of social interaction, format not ideal for learners, some employers do not accept distance education degrees, and candidate's knowledge of the subject is underestimated. There are a number of challenges on the part of the students. Distance learning is taken up by people who are unable to continue their studies in the regular mode due to their family situations. Hence there are a lot of challenges they face in the course they undertake as well as coping up with their job. The completion of the course at the stipulated time is the prime challenge of each and every student. Other challenges faced by students of distance education are (i) Inadequate time to read and study the material completely; (ii) Inability to get in touch with their course mates; (iii) Family situations and circumstances; (iv) Inability to attend the contact seminar classes properly; (v) Non receipt of the information about the exam details; and (vi) Non availability of leave for private employees for their study and examinations.

Keywords: Distance Education, Emerging Challenges, Prospects, Students

Challenges on the Part of Students of Distance Education

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Abstract

Despite being expansion worldwide, distance education system of study for students in Indian subcontinent is still facing the turbulent times. The ordinary school/college dropout students are often confused in selecting the course. Apart from getting guidance on registration, the fees and the availability of the study material, they are in vacuity on the clarity on the selection of course or option of subjects and the future after pursuing it. The objective of this paper is to discover the general problems usually faced by the students of distance learning and search for the solution. The distance education students in general come across various problems which include (i) Dearth of awareness about the courses and relevance of it; (ii) Deficiency of knowledge of accreditation and recognition at par with traditional campus based study; (iii) Scarcity of continuous interaction and professional guidance; (iv) Limited or no contact classes; and (v) Procrastination of assignments. The expected outcome would be to ease the study for the students opting for the distance education by providing suitable solutions for the problems faced by them.

Keywords: Challenges, Students, Distance Education

Role of Distance Education in Promoting Access of Modern Education to Islamic Scholars: Opportunities, Challenges and Prospects

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&

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Abstract

A global trend towards providing access to modern education through distance learning to Islamic scholars of Arabic colleges has imputed a categorical transformation from the convention of insulating Islamic theology of traditional madrasa. In the backdrop of this latency of distance education in innovating a new trend of blending sacred learning with secular education, this paper attempts to elucidate the emergence of Arabic colleges as well as the opportunities, challenges and prospects in convergence of Islamic theology with higher education through graduate and post graduate degrees offered by Directorates of Distance Education among Islamic scholars in Kerala. Based on secondary sources of data combined with in-depth interviews conducted in sample selected from the Arabic collages in Kerala, this paper is designed to throw light on the functionality of distance education in attaining the human development goals in religious Muslim community. This paper also endeavors to demonstrate the potential of distance education in engendering multiple modernity in the contemporary society.

Keywords: Distance Education, Islamic Scholars, Challenges, Prospects

Possibilities of Blended Learning in Distance Education Program

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Abstract

Distance education has proved to be a boon to millions who do not have the opportunity, time or the money to pursue regular education in a college or university. The developments in technology have been offering effective and affordable modes of learning globally, particularly through the possibilities of Blended Learning. Major universities in the United States and Europe have been offering Massive Open Online Courses for quite some time and this is an impetus to our Distance Learning centres to explore the possibilities of Blended Learning. Blended Learning combines the facilities of the traditional class with computer-aided learning using various possibilities of Information Technology. This is particularly suitable to our context, where totally online course are yet to gain acceptance and accreditation by authorized agencies. The present paper explores the advantages and challenges posed by combining the traditional teaching methods with online learning using Learner Management Systems like Moodle, in the specific context of Distance Learning in India. It will look at the technicalities of the actual adoption of online and multimedia tools in the learning process, and also the particular limitations and strengths of our socioeconomic context.

Keywords: Blended Learning, Distance Education Program

Evolving Knowledge Dissemination through Digital India Initiative: An Insight into Current Distance Education Framework

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Abstract

The science and art of **creative** teaching in the era of Digital India needs a fundamental change in approach to design, develop and modeling of ICT based teaching and Learning Environments. ICT based Education and information dissemination platform is the new generation policy of integrating information, innovation, research and skill development to provide future dimensions of transformation in Higher Education and Training. Emerging Cloud-based educational platforms, Massive open online courses; Open educational resources are currently the factors driving paradigm shift in Distance and open learning environment in India. Improvement in pedagogical tools for technology based learning provides learners with innovative practices in order to foster collaboration between academia and industry. This work proposes a possible framework-based sustainable environment, cognizant of the knowledge pool required by Technical and Research Organizations that collaborates the aspects of improvement in digital literacy, meaningful research, and technological innovations along with indicators for future challenges of adopting new technologies with evolving learning environments.

Keywords: Digital India, Cloud based ICT, Online Courses, Technological Innovation, Digital literacy

An Analysis on the Creeps of Professional and Practical Oriented Courses Offered Through Distance Education Mode

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Abstract

Distance Education sometimes considered as the poor cousin of the regular college programmes turn up as a stroke of luck to students who wish to study further continuing with their jobs or for those who might not be in a position to attend a full-time course for various reasons. Even though the structure and scheme of distance learning gives individuals the utmost feasible control over the time, place and pace of education; it is not free from problems. Globally, distance mode of education is gaining a momentum and becoming more accepted than conventional modes of education. Through distance education mode several universities are offering professional and practical oriented courses that require mandatory practical training on hand. Apprehensions regarding the effectiveness of these courses are always there in the mindsets of the common populace. The main objective of this article was to study the problems associated with the professional and practical oriented courses in distance mode. The other two specific objectives of the study are: (i) To find out the apprehension related to the distance mode professional and practical courses and to find out the credibility of the professional and practical courses offered through distance mode; (ii) To know the reliability of these courses a survey was conducted among 100 individuals working in the educational sector of the Calicut district, Kerala. By employing a convenience sampling technique the sample was selected and the result was analyzed with the help of statistical tools. The detailed result and their implications will be detailed in the full paper.

Keywords: Distance Education Mode, Education, Educational Sector, Practical Oriented, Courses, Professional Courses

Exploration of Benchmarking Intra Personality Traits: An Approach of Data Envelopment Analysis

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Abstract

This study has focused on the identification of the prominent intra personality traits from a set of around 35 well defined psychological and behavioral aspects. A non-parametric study device of operational research entitled Data Envelopment Analysis (DEA) has been considered for exploring and ranking the influencing efficiencies of leading traits. Quantification of behavioral aspects through psychometric methods are a traditional approach. While analyzing this data, the researchers used to adopt the conventional statistical tools. As psychological parameters of an individual are interrelated, the individual's leading traits are playing an important role on its subsidiaries behavior. Hence, DEA is more appropriate as it handle the multiple inherent behaviors used to affect multiple exhibiting characteristics in intra personality analysis. An empirical data set in the context of bank employees is considered with set of the input and output activities during the banking hours. The hidden and benchmarking traits are explored using the said tool. The study also focused on identification of influenced and influencing traits within an individual personality.

Keywords: Benchmarking Traits, Intra Personality Analysis, Data Envelopment Analysis

Need for Kuhonian Revolution in Open Distance Learning in India: A Perspective

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Abstract

There are various developments that are taking place in the field of tertiary education in response to the felt need of active involvement of higher education institutions in various walks of life. It is argued that universities and colleges should not work as isolated ivory towers and need to be one in place serving the needs and demands of the society. Knowledge-based economy and globalization demands forced many countries to bring in dramatic changes in the character and functions of higher education. The challenges India faces are different and sometimes unique. Narasimharao (2013) identified different boundary expansion needs of knowledge society. There are several questions one can ask with regard to the developments in open distance learning in India. For instance questions like – Are we adding numbers to the unemployable graduates? Whether ODL is second chance or second grade education? Whether ODL is used as a means for development? Whether the theory of ODL is put into practice or there is gap between Dharma and karma? Whether ODL concept is used by other stakeholders of higher education? Are Open universities are promoted as successful professorate? As Narasimharao and Ramani (2015) argues that though ODL system was envisaged as an alternative/supplementary/complementary system of education in India, certain wrong practices had crept in jeopardizing the whole ODL system. This has resulted in questioning of very credibility of offering certain courses through ODL system in the minds of policy makers and some educational practitioners. This is where we can take a cue from Kuhonian revolution explained for science. One of the basic concept of kuhonian revolution assumes that normal science does not aim as novelty but at clearing up the status quo. It tends to discover what it expects to discover. As against “cumulative” progress in science, Kuhn's version says progress with discontinuities having a set of alternating “normal” and “revolutionary” phases. Yashpal Committee (2009) opined that there is a tendency to imprison disciplinary studies in opaque walls. The concept of invisible walls between disciplines can be extended to education systems including ODL system. There are significant transformations and reforms that are taking place in tertiary education systems of many countries to make these systems a part of their surrounding society (Thulstrup et al., 2005). We need to ask the question whether our ODL system is imprisoned. Whether it is able to move beyond

distance education? The paper discusses the general modalities ODL system follows in the country and how it is necessary to think and act beyond traditional ways. It is argued that strict compartmentalization or straight Jacket systems take us nowhere. It is necessary to enlarge the scope of institute-institute collaboration, institute-industry interface, institute-society interface, institute-community/society interface so that relevant inputs are made in the form of certification, skill development, capacity building to ensure inclusiveness. The distance education institutes should be able to think and go beyond offering courses. For all this we need to think in different, non-traditional and innovative ways. ODL system needs all the support from policy makers for making it possible to take up kuhnian revolution.

Keywords: Kuhnian Revolution, Open Distance Learning, India

Integration of Multimedia Resources for Quality Distance Education: A Necessary Boon

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Abstract

Educational multimedia has really changed the existing learning principles which became a boon in order to encourage the student centered learning and flexible approaches in which content can be structured and presented effective way through multimedia resources. Multimedia encompasses computer mediated software or interactive applications that integrate many media in single application for a meaningful and concrete learning. Educational multimedia learning system offers a complex multisensory experience in exploring the world through presentation of various media resources. Educational resources always offers quality teaching materials that help the teachers to integrate the content, conceptual background and synchronization of digital resources through hyper-linking and mentioning the Uniform Resource Locator (URL) which helps the student's community to locate the media resources. The present paper highlights the various multimedia resources like teacher tube, khan's academy; snag-learning, next vista, Teacher's Domain and Free Documentary TV can be used effectively for better and meaningful learning.

Keywords: Multimedia Resources, Distance Education, Quality

Opportunities and Challenges of Distant Education

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Abstract

Distance education usually involves a situation where learners are separated at a distance from their teachers, involves the provision of systems to establish and maintain communication between teachers and learners, and employs a form of pedagogic interchange between the teacher and the learner to promote learning, assessment and support. Autonomous, self-directed, intrinsically motivated participants prefer DE as the programs are specially designed for them. The agility going with this type of arrangement is the positive difference from the formal teaching proving to be the root cause for the system gaining an acceptance as the best alternative for formal education. It becomes helpful in improving literacy. However this is not a completely perfect education system, there are some challenges too. This paper aims at presenting the opportunities and challenges of distant education in Indian scenario.

Keywords: Opportunities, Challenges, Distant Education

Learners' Challenges in Distance Education

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Abstract

Distance education is a boon for many students, who find difficulty to attend regular classes due to varied reasons. The study tools in distance education can be divided into two types – traditional tools (includes hardcopy, videotapes, tele-conferencing) and more advance tools (includes web browser, chat room, video broadcasting etc). Like regular mode of education, distance education also has opportunities and challenges on the part of students, teachers and institutions. The objective of the present study is to review the problems encountered by the learners in distance education. Secondary evidence indicates that students encounter a range of challenges in learning and, attending contact classes in addition to lack of support, stigma and non-recognition of the degree by regular mode students and larger society in general. The challenges on the part of students are discussed with possible alternatives in detail.

Keywords: Learner's Challenges, Distance Education

Distance Education: Potentials, Issues and Way Ahead

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Abstract

Distance Education was one of many inventive support systems of Industrial Work life. With a modest start as offering an opportunity for working people who could not afford formal class room learning environment, it has come a long way from old days “Night College” to modern On- line Courses offered by World Class institutions like Wharton and Harvard Business Schools. This paper tries to sum up some of the potential areas where Distance Learning can usher a new lease of learning and make high economic impacts. Some of the glaring issues related to distance learning especially in Indian context are discussed. Few suggestions are also offered to sail through and reach to a new level in coming days. Historically, Distance Education was limited to part time classes offered for working people after working hours. Later, these “Night Colleges” took a more structured shape named Open Universities where teacher and student had no face to face meeting point. In initial phase, this was more to get a chance to get a College Degree for someone who could not attend normal colleges. Social status and job betterment were prime goal. Learning new skills were secondary. With new skills and technology evolving at much faster rate than Teaching Institutions can imbibe into formal curricula, On-line education has replaced the normal Distance Education with Printed Books mostly designed as “Capsule” Learning where students can get an overall but brief presentation on various modules and get prepared for Examinations. Potential of such on-line Courses are immense, especially for mobile and occupied new generation service workers. Such areas of learning are detailed with potentials and limitations.

Indian Distance Education is about 30 + years old. Initially this was all most a substandard substitute for Formal College Education. Main goals were to get a Degree or Diploma to get an edge on work place promotion system where formal certification was necessary to get a better position in hierarchy. Another dimension was social upgradation. Indian society is notably degree mongering. One is ready to pay a good amount for a Degree which may not add to knowledge or skill level but is sure passport to cherished destination of so

called intellectual class. Distance Education is an enabler for this dimension. Psychology behind this is discussed. With need for on-going skill augmentation and addition of new areas of Knowledge for Service Workers, Distance Education has become one of the needs of society. On-line, flexible courses on many new skill areas are hot choices. Global reach is a specialty of this mode. Current status and future trend of this mode of Distance Education is detailed.

Issues of Distance Educations are many. While proliferation of this mode is visible, chronic issues like high drop rate, out-dated course wares, sub-standard treatment by potential employers and second class citizenship for students of this mode mar all good efforts. Social and psychological stigmas, attached to Distance Education, are also huge. However, with new entrants of private universities adopting evolved technologies of interactive on-line classes and industry acceptance, a change for good is visible. With ever changing service Workers' skill needs and Time and Money constraints, Distance mode will be most useful and accepted mode of Education if coming days. An indicative trend to enumerate future Mile Stones is added.

Keywords: Distance Education, Potentials, Issues

Online Mode of Learning: Its Advantages and Disadvantages

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Abstract

Technology has brought us together. It has compressed the world in a small server through which we can access anything from any place. It has certainly made education very affordable and accessible. Especially in this era when there is a crunch of time, when one wants to earn and learn, distance mode of learning emerges as a boon. It is certainly a time saver for a serious student who wants to dedicate maximum time creatively and productively studying his subject. While this technology has given much to the sincere learner it has taken away the personal touch between the teacher and the taught. In the online mode or distance mode of learning, sometimes one does not even know one's teacher/ his or her personality! Are these personal contacts not important? What about the pat that the teacher gives to the student after having fared very well in exams? What about the lesson that the student learns from the reassuring smile of the teacher? All these aspects are missing in distance /online mode of learning. Personal contact programme tries to bridge this gap but they do not necessarily prove sufficient. What then is the solution? Like Gautam Buddha's way, we have to find a middle path... the middle path lies entirely on the teacher and the student's consciousness. If a teacher is a yogi, if he is a person who can affect and influence irrespective of the medium of communication then all these barriers can be overcome. Similarly, if the student is a true seeker of knowledge, has aspiration and is dedicated, surely, he can benefit from such a teacher no matter if he learns online or in the conventional system. The process of teaching and learning has to rise and go beyond the limitations of the medium of communication.

Keywords: Online Mode, Learning, Advantages, Disadvantages

Distance Education in India - Past, Present and Future: A Conceptual Analysis

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Abstract

Distance education has grown in different dimensions to become the chosen route for higher education. The larger section of the student community in India, aspiring for higher studies, seeks distance learning for its convenience, flexibility, affordability and accessibility. The eligibility aspect of distance learning attracts even the adult segment to pursue higher education. As per the 2011 statistics, during the last decade distance education has grown from 20% to 26% of the student populace in India. This growth is further catalyzed by the increasing demand for better competencies for a particular job. Add to that, the technology boom has bolstered the distance education space, through better reach, promising to deliver a bright future. Distance learning institutes in India have witnessed a remarkable rise in student enrolment crossing the 10 million mark. While experts in the distance and online education domain agree that this mode is amongst the best to increase the gross enrolment ratio in higher education (30 percent by 2020), it is the quality aspect in offering such courses which is of prime concern.

Keywords: Distance Education, Generation Model, Technology, Course Materials

Distance Education Merits and Demerits on Overview in India

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Abstract

The economic progress of a country is strongly linked to education and education is the back bone of Indian economy. Every one of us may not get opportunity to study at school and colleges. Distance education, on the other hand, helps a person who failed to complete degree due to financial and family problem, dropouts and employed persons to pursue higher education. Distance education is flexible to learn and fee of the course is affordable. Technology bridges the gap between regular classes and distance education and the quality of distance education is improving day by day. It is the easiest mode to learn and change our life style by improving knowledge and acquiring skills. The best thing about the distance education is that one can study the course from anywhere. Distance education brings the dreams of learner in true and uplifts the personality and attitude of the learner.

Keywords: Distance Education, Merits, Demerits

Distance Education in India: The Role of Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

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Abstract

The introduction of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) usage and its integration and diffusion have initiated a new age in educational methodologies. It has radically changed traditional methods of teaching. It has changed the learning patterns in the domain as well as offering contemporary learning experiences to both instructors and students. Information and communication technologies (ICTs) which include radio and television, as well as newer digital technologies such as computers and the Internet have been touted as potentially powerful enabling tools for educational change and reform. By the use of ICTs, it gives an opportunity to learn from each other. In the past, distance education was based on the production and the asynchronous exchange of materials. The learner was sent written learning materials plus written instructions, and returned his homework in a written form. Today, the use of synchronous forms of communication, like chat, voice-over-IP or the live-broadcasting of lectures and presentations, increasingly gain importance in distance education, which can lead to a transfer of new didactical arrangements. This paper discusses about the need and challenges of ICT in Distance education and also discusses about the barriers to the growth of communication.

Keywords: Distance Education, ICT, Contemporary Learning, Synchronous & Asynchronous Learning,

Changing Roles of Teachers and Students in Distance Education

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Abstract

Distance Education provides mass education and more viability to the employed people. It helps to learn individually and creates self-responsibility of learning. It facilitates student selection of courses to reflect their needs and motivations. In the contemporary scenario, the roles of teachers and students are changing in distance education to become more effective. The main role of the teacher is designing course curricula according to the needs of students and guiding the students. In the process of learning, distance education students have difficult role to learn. Distance learning empowers individual to act credible, useful on their self and career development. The aim of the present paper is to review the specific roles of the teachers and students on learning process by the Distance Education. Distance learning programme provides fast, depth information, limits time, distance for learning. Students become more self-realized, responsible on their training and learning. Everyone can have the opportunity of their higher education. With the help of modern technologies (online), distance Education eliminates distance, time and cost on education. Computer-based technologies make easier interaction between teacher (tutor) and student in the process of learning. In distance education, teachers have to play multi personalities like tutors, instructors, programme (curricula) designer, consultants, advisor, supervisor (project guidance), evaluator and motivator. There are plenty of studies that reflect the importance of the distance education and provide alternative implementations, reflections on the roles of the students and teachers. But there is less number of studies related to changing roles of teachers and students in the distance education. Hence, the study tries to attempt the changing roles of teacher and student in the distance education.

Keywords: Distance Education, Changing Roles, Teachers, Students, Teaching-Learning

The Status of Indian Languages in Online Learning Resources: Role and Challenges in ODL

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Abstract

ODL is an opportunity to those who are deprived of acquiring knowledge and qualification of through conventional system of teaching, learning activities of educational institutions. ODL emerged as a student centered approaches for delivery of academic material and allowing flexible learning. Learners of ODL system certainly need of support services in addition to print material provided to them. This was ensured conventionally in the form of contact programme, counselling session, video conferencing, Radio and TV Programmes, Educational video etc. With the emergence of ICT (Information and Communication Technologies) extensive facilities of utilizing resources for teaching and learning developed. Largely many of the resources are available in English. Through there is flexibility of studying some facilities through Indian Language medium, online resources are not developed to the considerable extent. This study is aimed to analyze the use of Indian languages in various public domains aimed to be e-learning platforms and various public institutional web resources. Pragmatic study of various public platforms was conducted for this study.

Keywords: ODL, ICT, Indian Languages, Online Resources

Challenges of Distance Education

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Abstract

Distance mode of education is gaining a momentum and becoming more popular than conventional education all over the world. Adult learner have competing priorities of work, home and school and Distance learning is an excellent method of reaching them adult learner. Distance learning structure gives the adult learners the desired high degree of flexibility. Through the structure of distance learning, adult learners gain the greatest possible control over time, place and pace of education. Distance learning allows students to study as per their convenience. Previous un-reached learners are provided with educational opportunity by distance learning by enabling the students to extend their period of education from limited school years to lifelong learning process. It changes power and authority relationships between teachers and students and often encourages more equal and open communication than occurs in traditional educational settings. The Distance Education generally defines as “Distance education usually involves a situation where learners are separated at a distance from their teachers, involves the provision of systems (electronic or otherwise) to establish and maintain communication between teachers and learners, and employs a form of pedagogic interchange between the teacher and the learner to promote learning, assessment and support”.

Challenges of Distance Education include lack of motivation among students since there is no personal contact. Lack of faculty support is another hurdle to successful distance learning. In addition, distant-learners face a variety of problems pertaining to the system, as a whole, of open and distance learning. These problems, in turn, compel them to drop the course in the middle. As a consequence, this becomes a challenge for the open and distance learning system. The main challenge of distance learning is that direct real time feedback from the students or teachers is not possible. Problems faced by distant learners are related to study materials, lack of multi-media instruction, no scope for teachers feedback about students performance, perceived low status of the coursed under distance mode, rigidity imposed by university regulations and so on. The three basic factors - distance, communication and infrastructure - can give solutions to all challenges, if properly dealt with. Innovations and experiments can give a better solution to all these challenges

in Indian context. Although distance learning is not new, it has not received respect in the academic community because of the number and seriousness of problems presented here. The dramatic growth of the adult learner population is making distance learning an increasingly popular choice of learning techniques.

Keywords: Challenges, Students, Distance Education

Employability and Employment Opportunities of Distance and Open Learning Students

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Abstract

Distance Education is the answer to the ever growing demand of higher education for a populous country like India, who adorns herself with a number of challenges, barriers and variations in topography, language, culture, tradition, religion and races. The number of Universities venturing into distance education mode grows competitively to the number of courses offered through distance mode. The bottle neck to this boon is the question of employability and the job opportunities for the students who pursue their studies in this mode. This paper revisits the pros and cons of the distance mode of education in the perspective of the quality and outcome of the knowledge transfer in comparison to the regular mode of education. The major objective of this paper is to analyse and understand the discrimination in the recruitment sector of industries – regular students Vs Distance mode students. This paper holds the Government of India circular in 1995 which clearly indicates that the Central and State Government nod of approval for recruiting the distance mode students and treating them on par with regular students as the base for analysis. The personal experience of the author, being herself a Distance mode students and her career journey of ups and downs, acceptances and rejections are explained to understand the view of Industries on Distance Mode students. Landed now in a Central University, author concludes the paper with a positive and confident note. Hence, essentially this paper is an exhibit of the employability and the employment opportunities of Distance Mode.

Keywords: Employability, Distance Education, Government Job Opportunities

Leveraging the Unique Strengths of the Distance Learning Mode to Improve the Employability Quotient of Our Youth

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Abstract

The future of Distance Education can be bright and rosy only if it aims to improve the Employability Quotient of those who subscribe to this stream of knowledge. Given the challenges it faces from traditional class-room learning and from the emerging realm of open on-line learning, there is a strong need to reinvent and reinvigorate the content being offered by it. The mode of distance education therefore faces a twin challenge. One, proving itself superior to the traditional class-room learning. Two that of being one-up on the open on-line content on offer to the youth of today thanks to advances in technology. Looked at from the perspective of an employer, when a candidate is being considered to be hired, she needs to not only overcome the barrier of a weaker perception of the distance education mode but also demonstrate her superior depth of applied knowledge. The unique strength that such a candidate brings to the table is possibly that of her prior working experience. It also shows that the candidate has the grit and determination necessary to complete the academic criteria of a course, even while handling a career and other mundane responsibilities of life. In terms of credibility, on-line courses rank a poor third as of now. But the possibility of these catching up and making HR managers sitting up and taking notice of its contemporary and dynamic nature cannot be ruled out in the very near future. How does the distance learning mode reinvigorate itself? The key lies in understanding the industry requirements and in incorporating the same to redesign the content on offer. Irrespective of the subject, contact programs which offer workshops on body language, communication skills and in building up self-confidence can help. In some cases, elementary IT skills could add value to a student's marketability. In others, a crash course in a specific foreign language could perhaps help the candidate bag a dream assignment. Customer is said to be the king. In the case of distance learning, the customer is the prospective student. If the focus is on improving her Employability Quotient based on the skill-gap felt by the industry, the mode of distance learning would improve upon its unique place in the education-mix on offer to the aspiring youth of today.

Keywords: Strengths, Distance Learning, Employability, Youth

Distance Education: A Stronger Foundation for Tomorrow

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Abstract

This article provides an overview of positive sides of distance learning, challenges faced by distance learning programmes and the recommendations to face these issues. Distance learning had grown tremendously. Distance Education Universities comparable in size to traditional Universities had developed to a great extent. Presently, distance education is offered through a variety of formats. Radio, television, telecommunications and especially the Internet have come to play an integral role in expanding the minds of students around the world. With the wide distribution and accessibility of computers, distance learning has become faster and more prevalent. The nation's economic strength too stems from any distance they conveys not only the skills that advance the nation but with which also enables her citizens to think.

Keywords: Open and Distance Learning, PCPs

The Significance of Multicultural Education

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Abstract

The contemporary world is shrunk into a global village. The information and knowledge from various sources of the world is readily available through various media to the people. The migration of different cultures of the people left a significant influence and it leads to importance of the multicultural education. Broadly speaking, the multicultural education is essentially an attempt to release the child from the confinement of the ethnocentric straight jacket and to awaken him towards other cultures, societies and also ways of life. Basically multicultural education aims at freedom from inherited biases and narrow feelings and sentiments. Freedom leads to explore the other cultures and perspectives that help in making one's own choices along with full awareness and practicable alternatives. Multicultural education permeates all aspects of practices policies. It is a means to ensure highest level of academic achievement for all students at all levels. It also helps students to develop positive self-respect along with knowledge related to histories, cultures and contributions of diverse groups. It prepares all the students to work actively towards equity in institutions by providing skills for the redistribution of power and income among the diverse groups. Multicultural education relates to education instruction designed for the cultures of the different races in an educational system. This approach of teachings and learning is based upon consensus building, respect and fostering cultural pluralism. Multicultural education advocates the belief that students and their life histories and experiences should be placed at the center of the teaching and learning process. The pedagogy should occur in the context that is familiar to the students which leads to the multiple ways of thinking.

Keywords: Multicultural Education, Pedagogy, Teaching, Learning Process

Improving the Quality and Standards of Distance Learning in India

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Abstract

It's a widely acknowledged fact that over the last two decades, India has remarkably transformed its higher education landscape. It has created widespread access to quality university education for students of all levels. Distance Education is a prominent feature of this landscape. Besides earning huge revenue for the universities, it has successfully addressed the problems of learners/students outside the formal system of education who have no access to universities, and those with physical disabilities, and women who want to pursue their educational goals but are unable to do so owing to family responsibilities. However, the greatest challenge of Distance Education has been that of offering distant learning students comparable, almost identical results with face-to-face mode campus programmes. This paper intends to discuss issues pertaining to quality delivery of distance learning and also evolve guidelines for assessing and building quality in Distance learning.

Keywords: Distance Education, Face-to-Face Mode

Maintaining Standards: A Challenge for Distance Education Programme

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Abstract

This paper on Distance Education will analyze the challenges faced by Distance Education mode and its achievements too. The data is collected through the content analysis of selected texts and surveys based on it. This project thus highlights the major challenges in the distance education. Flexibility plus learning is one master tool which makes this education mode very effective. In terms of challenges, there is lack of proper channel in this system. Communication gap is a major issue. Students are not able to benefit from group studies. One challenge is to update curricula time to time. Distance education mode has a major challenge to convey students that it is not just a formality to complete the stipulated time period of any particular course. I personally have seen the high standard of study materials of distance mode programme. But the challenge lays with conveying students the quality it has maintained so that students get enrolled in them without much fear about their career. In distance education, big challenge is to compare the knowledge standard of students with regular mode students. As a result distance mode of education is always misunderstood as just obtaining grades and certificates. Another challenge faced by distance education is how to infuse quality learning instead of just providing quality study materials to the enrolled students. One can never underestimate the achievements of distance education mode because it helps students to start their studies at any age, and from any place. Frankly, it helps develop academic excellence.

Keywords: Distance Education, Study Materials, Flexibility, Quality Education, Certification, Group Study, Communication Gap.

Advancement in Biotechnological Knowledge Dissemination by Distance Education Mode: A Feasible Solution for Improvement in Content Delivery

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Abstract

The rapid generation of knowledge in different fields of Life Sciences specially Biotechnology where with new information and applications are bringing out dynamic improvements in understanding the subject. This leaves a lot desired level of knowledge disseminated to the students by the teachers. Also, the techniques and their application in research methodologies require conceptual understanding. This could be easily disseminated by the distance mode of education. For instance, the genome sequencing principles taught includes the Sanger method and the Maxam and Gilbert method which constitute only commonly known techniques which are being fast replaced by cheaper and more reliable techniques of the Pyrosequencing TM method, and the method of single-molecule sequencing with exonuclease. The impressive progress in Next generation sequencing has brought in advancements in the fields of molecular biology and technical engineering, parallelization of the sequencing reaction has profoundly increased the total number of produced sequence reads per run. Current sequencing platforms allow for a previously unprecedented view into complex mixtures of RNA and DNA samples. NGS is currently evolving into a molecular microscope finding its way into virtually every fields of biomedical research. There are good prospects for the emergence of new and non-conventional methods of DNA sequencing, which may one day revolutionize the field of DNA sequencing. Some of these candidates are methods based on atomic force microscopy, on the use of nanopores or ion channels, on quantum optics, DNA microarrays and TOF MS of aligned ssDNA fibres, among others. The content of the techniques the principles and also its application leading to further innovation in cost reductions could be brought in only when current knowledge is updated. Thus the information about the advances in Biotechnology dissemination by distance mode would provide synergistic and time regulated upgradation of knowledge leading to improvement in understanding and possible applications for improvement in content delivery.

Keywords: Biotechnology, Knowledge, Distance Education

Success and Failures of Distance Education

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Abstract

The philosopher especially Immanuel Kant in his Moral Philosophy defines Education as, “The final destiny of the human race is moral perfection. How, then, is we to seek this perfection, and from whence is it to be hoped for? From nowhere else but education”. So all the philosophers from both the Indian as well as western tradition have contributed more for the development of both Primary educations to higher education. Here we are in a position for seeking both positive and negative aspects of regular basis curriculum and distance mode of education. The most important problem here is that, how much we are capable in making use of the facilities available and our own potentialities to put forth around us for the development of society in particular and nation as a whole. In Kant's writings on history, human progress is viewed primarily as the unintended result of our selfish, competitive, and violent actions.” The great artist nature” forces us to progress whether we want to or not. In his writings on education – the stress is much more on how the species achieves progress through the intentional development of its own capacities and talents.

Keywords: Success, Failure, Distance Education

New Education Policy 2016 in Promoting Open and Distance Learning and Online Courses: An Evaluation

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Abstract

Distance education system is emerging as an important means to cater to the increasing demand for higher education. Open and Distance Learning (ODL) is recognized and accepted as an important mode for achieving enhanced access, developing skills, capacity building, training, employability, life-long education and continuing education. Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) have recently received a great deal of public attention. The New Education Policy Draft Documents released by the Ministry of Human Resource Development with a view to meet the changing dynamics of the requirement in the school and higher educational institutions in terms of quality education, innovation and research, aiming to make India a knowledge superpower by equipping its students with the necessary skill and knowledge and to eliminate the shortage of manpower in science, technology, academic and industry. The MHRD already started the consultation process by inviting the views of citizens through online to enrich its document. The Committee for Evolution of the New Education Policy 2016, headed by TSR Subramanian submitted its reports to MHRD on 30th April 2016. Both the policy documents and recommendation given special focus on Promoting Open and Distance Learning and Online Courses to fulfill the above objectives. By taking into consideration of above this paper is going to address how ODL and MOOCs supplement and complement learning in colleges and universities? What impediments are likely for implementing ODL and MOOCs courses and how can they be resolved? How can ODL and MOOCs expands the learning opportunities or to improve quality of existing courses? How it's going to bring international experience in ODL and MOOCs?

Keywords: New Education Policy, Open and Distance Learning (ODL), Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) and Internationalization

Multidimensional Approach in Teacher Education (TE) Through Distance Stream (DS): A Challenge

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Abstract

A remarkable area of higher education system of the present day is teacher education. It is a hard fact that the progress of a country depends on the quality of the education, which in turn depends on the quality of its teachers at all levels of education. Teacher education being an integral part of the total school system cannot remain conventional and static while education itself is dynamic in character. So, it has to transform itself into a progressive, dynamic and responsive system. In this paper, it is clear that making effective teacher education programme through distance mode, we cannot walk single step without having the help of multidimensional approach.

Keywords: Distance Stream, ICT, PCP, Cost-Effectiveness

Role of Social Media in Improving The Quality of Distance Education Programme in India.

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Abstract

The distance education programme plays a major role in facilitating alternative, flexible opportunities to pursue the education for every age group. Beside several beneficial prospects, the distance education programme in India need to enhance its services in various aspects. Many studies have discussed the challenges of distance education programme in India , generally the irregularities in supply of reading materials, lack of study centers in neighborhood , learning in isolation etc, are the priorities. The present paper suggest, how social media can be designed to take care of the challenges associated with distance education programme in India. The easiness in accessibility of internet, facilities offered by the social media can well be catered to realize the full potential of distance education programme in India. The case study of several unorganized education and research groups in Whatsapp, Facebook and from other social networking sites are discussed in this paper.

Keyword: Social Network Sites, Challenges, Distance Education

**About
Pondicherry University
and
Directorate of Distance Education**

Pondicherry University

Pondicherry University established under an Act of Parliament in the year 1985 is located in Puducherry. The university has 15 Schools, 37 Departments and 10 Centres offering 175 Post Graduate and Research programs. The university has all the state-of-the-art facilities in all the Schools and Departments paving the way for the students to have a student-friendly, result-oriented academic environment with green ambience. The University has four campuses. The Main Campus is located at Puducherry and the other three off-campus are located at Mahe, Karaikal and Port Blair. The University has made a giant leap in promoting usage of Information & Communication Technology (ICT) products/ services in the areas of teaching / learning, research and administration. The Ananda Rangapillai Library at the University has a collection of more than 2-lakh books and over 25,084 e-journals, 7,455 e-books, 36 e-databases and 620 e-thesis.

It offers rent-free accommodation to all girl students and provides totally-free education to all the differently-abled students. The campus has 100% power back-up to all the Departments and Hostels of the University. A 24-hour-hospital with fully-equipped Ambulance is yet another facility on the campus. The University has over 450 faculty and 5000 students from across the country in addition to about 45,000 students in its 87 affiliated colleges.

Directorate of Distance Education

The University entered in the field of Distance Education in the academic year 1995 – 96 to cater to the needs of the aspirant students who otherwise could not pursue higher education in the on campus academic programs. To reach out to all those sections of students who are away from the main stream academics, the University has conceived several innovative and job oriented academic programs. To be precise, the prime motto of the university is to 'reach the unreached' and thus taking higher education to the door steps of all the citizens of the nation.

Broadly three types of courses offered

1. Conventional Mode with Online Admission
2. Online Mode
3. Twinning Mode

It has been the approach and policy of the University to focus on sector specific need based and job oriented professional programs. The Masters Programs in Management (MBA), among others, offered by the Directorate of Distance Education have made a mark of their own among the quality conscious of unemployed youth and working people in the corporate India across the country. Thus, the Pondicherry University 'DDE' has made a mark in the field of higher education.

Vision of Directorate of Distance Education, Pondicherry University

To attain leadership in sphere heading qualitative and responsible academic programs relevant to the society through cost effective off-campus distance mode of education. Another mission is to produce the quality and skilled manpower in the fields concerned with a view to bridge the gap of 'demand supply' of manpower by imparting quality education, hassle free and with affordable cost and with supreme quality of students support services.

A Glimpse of Pondicherry University



