
DISTANCE EDUCATION PRESENT AND FUTURE PROSPECT SUBJECT – ICT TOOLS IN PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

Distance learning has taken off well over the decade back last five years and industry experts predict that India will grow in stature to become the knowledge hub of economy for imparting this mode of education. It is gaining popularity due to its many benefits. For universities, distant learning extends reach and overcomes shortage infrastructure – financial shortage – crisis teachers and quality of teachers. The public private participative program can done the excellent and give them education to all working groups, home workers near by the places in their own time and less remittances and less burden. The ICT is for students it enables access to knowledge and additional resources. It is evolving to be known by different names like open learning, continuing education and non formal education.

Due to its **any-time any-where** educational approach, many students in India are considering this as an option. People who missed out on earlier education, people looking for up-gradation of knowledge and higher education, those employed who need additional skills, and non-traditional clients, who do not prefer class-room sessions – all are thronging towards it. **Even rural students are beginning to prefer this option due to its reduced fee compared to regular courses.**

KEYWORD- ICT OLP, DLP, DEC, Online education, SIM pattern, self study, E learning, off campus learning, 3D education,

EVOLUTION

Distance education has always been around in India; and has evolved with time. E-learning is an emerging facet of distance education. **Ekalavya** might have easily been the first distance learner, it is said. “The difference however is the former has built in formal recognition that the latter may or may not have,” says Professor **B Gurumoorthy**, Department of Mechanical Engineering, IISc. A fine line of difference exists between the two forms: Distance education is done as a postal course, where content is developed using SIM (self instruction material), printed and sent to students; it’s not available on electronic media. E-learning content, however, is delivered only through electronic media. However distance learning today is subtly, the ‘education offered from a distance over an electronic media’.

ABSTRACT

More than 200 Universities across the country rendering innumerable courses under distance mode as open-flexible- and inexpensive and the essence of distance education lies in these words. Learning in this mode is a resource for those who wish to take their lives in new directions, particularly working people – profession to all genders. Meaning to pay high regard in the concept of GURU as EKLAVYA had proved as well as promoting education to all conveniently and comfortably in affordable fee and time slot under the parameters of the DEC, IGNOU guidelines. Today the scope of gain knowledge extend far beyond the traditional form

of learning teaching through study material, submitting assignments, physically attend contact classes and direct appearing in examinations. Integration of information and communication technology (ICT) to facilitate a dynamic progression of new challenges that include digitalization, virtualization, and e - admission helping the students getting educational exposure, support and opportunity in their learning environment to garb it successfully.

System of distance learning providers in India constitutes 16 open universities - one national and remaining state university and 187 dual mode universities that are entitled to provide under graduate and post graduate degrees. Beside this there are sizable institutes that offer professional and generic courses through diploma and certificates. Just after dissolution of distance education council is regulatory body under ambit of UGC, months back the questions related to validity of courses, education franchise units, off campuses are still in a state of flux. Lack of motivation, poor quality materials, and erratic exams a haphazard announcement of result, complaints against DLP are a plenty. We would like to put together an issue that would go beyond the validity and look at these precise issues. This issue in the hand of the end users and is it safe bet that addresses several issues pertaining to distance education both at broader and micro level. A numbers of response receive and recorded by faculty opinion, students' views points and their clarifications that is often to come in mind. Join courses which could assist in making a good career, try to take a course which could enhance the students skill and knowledge in affordable and available form.

Get it right the first time of course content quality and level of students support and ease exams are the important and best selecting factors and institutionalized base services that help to decide by the students through it. While selecting the courses and colleges is a crucial decision when students looking for DL. But unfortunately somehow the reasons are vary little information is available the quality of contents that some university is delivers. **A credential to grow further** - a sizable numbers of aspirants especially those who aspire for professional programs – MBA seek out a DL option since, they would be working and would have acquired the necessary skills to perform their job well. But lack of that right credential hurts them quite a bit. These professional look for topical course content easy, to interface especially on line support system and flexible exams process. Cost may not be the prime criteria concern for these individuals.

Under this scenario, the correspondence is the only option; nearly 15 million students clear the 10+2 exam in the country. But unfortunately, 5 millions places are available in regular degree programs across the country by the multiple reasons and circumstances. Even those places will be available, the prohibited cost acquiring degree make many students opt for DL mode. Students look for cost effective and alternatives, at least and acceptable level of contact either through study centers and promote examination schedules.

Universities designed course contents learners need, responds sensitively to the needs and difficulties of learners and seriously cares about quality, then its good courses. UGC based approved DL program aspirant should make their choice based on own assessment of their parameters. However, less opportunity to interact with teachers due to less attending the classes but information through internet and libraries help in clearing the doubts. The teacher can help them to and students should try to interact with teacher in their flexible time as much as they can for better understanding of the course curriculum exam patterns etc. Thus, there is no as such much difference between campus and distance learning. Student can approach them conveniently for doubt removal as doubt clearing session and it has awful education. This education is honing the skill which they empower them to take up in their filed. It can be getting savvy about the students who could not regular attend the classes. The DL program, the methodology and philosophy is for the mature learners and capable to take decision that what and how to learn and earn. The self instructional materials in the form of printed books in addition to E books, Text books, reference books, video or audio program, etc are also available in so many centers as per university norms. Many course ware support system are available in many centers. Work place not permit to much frequently attend the classes or to attend practical session in some special cases you can avail from these courses.

In many country MBA allow after experience, doing MBA after experience always help as good understanding and more desirable than direct attending. DL program offers multitude of benefits for the students making this prospect and mode of study interesting for learning. In this program there is no need to worry to get admission since the numbers of seats is not constraints saving time special for home workers-job workers, those students who want to do other course than these courses in flexible and affordable time and money both. To avoid the tough mandatory and critical classes attending schedule, budgetary support education and helping to all in terms of education even at higher education. This education accelerates the management career. A private sector bias to recruit the experienced MBA/ MCA or professional courses than fresh as the working experience with MBA can improve their career prospects faster than fresher. So DL is quite satisfactory. A **Menon Committee** has given the report on the DL education is need base education in India and shall be appreciated.

BETTERING E-INFRASTRUCTURES

With advancement of e-Infrastructures, increased budget and Indian governmental initiatives - such as the '*Indian Knowledge Network*' - the future of distance learning is gaining momentum. "*More people of all age-groups are connected through the Internet and mobile devices, thus increasing awareness.* There is a gradual resurgence of interest – *more students' login to our university portal and use e-learning modules* – the numbers are only steadily rising," says *Professor Nagabhushan*, Special Officer and Head of E-learning, **Visvesvaraya Technological University (VTU)** as they have opined.

Fourteen universities in India offer distance education - IGNOU at the National University level and others at the state level. AMIE program and the correspondence programs of universities like Delhi University and *Annamalai* and are some of the more mature examples that flourish these facilities across the country. *Institutions also offer engineering and business administration courses as well, showing the growing acceptance of distance learning in India.* It is also becoming crucial since it can be used to both empower and marginalize good and bad educators respectively.

Parallel, distance learning is ensuring a future where people will not be denied education. "Access to education particularly higher education has not been equal and there have not been enough schools and colleges to accommodate all aspirants," says Professor M Muthuswamy, Independent Academic and Consultant to universities and colleges. "Interestingly, *distance education actually brings students closer to learning,*" as he continued.

ROLE OF TECHNOLOGY IN DISTANCE EDUCATION COST EFFECTIVE

Undoubtedly, *technology has a large role in content generation and delivery.* It has tools to put together rich content -- power-point, smart boards, integration of multiple media (video, audio, and text) and interactive animation. Professor D. Singh Delhi University & Gurumoorthy says, "It is just that, computer and web have changed the game by enabling wider access, richness and interaction with content. Internet and constantly improving the bandwidth has enabled delivery of large files with image and video and thus, Technology also allows control of access and evaluation."

VTU, Kota Open University etc has used technology to pioneer an initiative inside their campus called **e-Vidya**, a Video Content Management system. "Making a course available to many students simultaneously was the challenge. Content on a VCD or DVD can be viewed only by one or few students, at a time. So we setup e- Vidya in VTU for the first time in India. Here lectures from professors are recorded and developed into rich video e-content for different courses. These videos are then ported onto the *entire college campus network* – enabling a few hundred students to watch it concurrently," says *Professor Nagabhushan*. They use a hi-speed and hi-capacity streaming server; and have video content for 130 odd courses ported to their network already. 50 colleges will be receiving it soon, with the plan of covering remaining 150 colleges

of VTU in future. *VTU also uses EDUSAT (over five years) to provide live lectures of industry experts and professors to students across locations.*

Many Professor organized Times of India seminar at Delhi 2015 in presence of many learned Vice Chancellor on this themes. All they had insisted and talked about the role of 3D technology in education. In traditional systems, one would use chalk and board to teach the operation of an electric motor to mechanical engineering students. But with capability of animation available today, this can be done using 3D models. "VTU and many others university IGNOU etc are working with the company 3D Solid Compression (3DSoc), which is developing few animation modules for our engineering courses. 3DSoc is an interactive 3D modeling company borne out of Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore and Stanford University, Palo Alto and is based in Bangalore. They are helping teach difficult concepts like, turbines, internal combustion engines etc. Adding great value, these modules provide better understanding and clarity to students, making it more effective," said Professor Nagabhushan.

MORE INITIATIVES

Government of India initiative like NPTEL (National Program on Technology Enhanced Learning), a joint venture between IIT and IISC launched in 2009, setup a core structure for e-learning to engineering and science students. This paved the path for introducing multimedia and web technology to enhance effective learning.

High quality e-learning solutions are being developed using right technology and industry support in various sectors today. *As the PC costs get lower and broadband penetration becomes deeper, distance learning technology will strengthen further.* Today, it co-exists with other technologies.

However, more initiatives need to come up to improve and increase this mode of education. Things such as basic ICT (Information and Communication Technology) infrastructure, creation of content, better quality and statutory recognition, vast geographical reach-out, depth of content need to improvise. Also this will allow students to benefit from a pervasive access to learning and multiple language content.

DISTANCE-LEARNING IS A SUBSTITUTE OR CAN REPLACE ON-CAMPUS LEARNING FOR THE WORKING PEOPLE - MEN AND WOMEN -

Perhaps not? Professor Muthuswamy says, "E-Learning is an effective technological tool - a conduit to deliver education - which can improve quality of distance education, provided it is deployed. Yet it is only a supplement and not a substitute to on-campus education." This was endorsed by the many expert in India who stated how his one-hour class room sessions on any topic are never be the same each time. "My illustrations vary, feedback is real-time, and communication is inter-active, which makes a difference," he says.

So, will distance learning enable a return to the *gurukul* tradition in future? "Albeit virtually - in front of the computer screen it is only the student and the teacher interacting," says by many professor. Only missing link maybe the feedback from the teacher, which can be mitigated with better evaluation systems in future.

PROSPECTUS

*Enrollment in Open and Distance Learning (ODL) is growing by the day. The growth of ODL can be gauged from the fact that contribution of ODL in enrollment in the IXth Plan was 16%, while it has gone up to 24% in the initial period of the Xth Plan. As the number of students opting for ODL NIOS continues to swell, **Bhuwan Sharma** and **Himanshu Kumar Singh** of **Amity Edu-Media** caught up with Professor*

Amarjit Singh Narang of Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) for a discussion on the pros, cons, future, et al of ODL quite impressive and notable.

Besides being a Professor of Political Science, Amarjit Singh Narang is well-known for his widely-sold book "Indian Government and Politics," which has been of tremendous help to university students. His other books include "Ethnic Identities and Federalism" and "Storm over Sutlej: The Akali Politics." Professor Narang who is on the verge of publishing yet another book titled "Minorities and Police in India" is also the immediate- past Registrar (Administration) of IGNOU. Many more observation by the experts- :

There is still a stigma attached to distance education. The job market is more comfortable recruiting students educated in conventional colleges/institutes. What can be done to make distance learning more acceptable?

First, our mindset that classroom teaching is the best is flawed. We continue to live with the misconception that when students are directly taught by the teachers, they get better opportunities.

Second, we make another cardinal mistake by equating distance education with correspondence courses. One must understand that there is a lot of difference between traditional correspondence courses and open universities or distance learning. Students opting for correspondence courses are sent some study materials, which again is sub-standard because the whole idea is to be cost-effective. Correspondence courses are part and parcel of established universities.

Distance education is provided by full-fledged independent universities. Any university worth the name of an Open University or distance university must have multi-media facilities. And, in fact, by using these technologies, particularly audio-video, radio and television, teachers can and do provide classes to the students. Once the misconception that ODL is nothing but simply a correspondence course is removed from the minds of the people, people will more readily accept it. It's true that students mostly do not have direct contact with the students but there is virtual contact through the media. Having said so, it must add that open universities like IGNOU also ensures that there is direct interaction between the students and their teachers in their study centers where they can meet every week.

SOME OF THE PLUSES OF DISTANCE EDUCATION

First, admission is flexible. We do not discriminate on the basis of the marks scored by a student in his last examination, minimum marks reserved.

Secondly, open universities do not restrict a student from taking admission on the basis of his/her age.

Third, you can choose your timing. You can continue your job and study at the same time. It provides flexibility with regard to the number of years in which you can complete the course that you have opted for. For example, in IGNOU you are free to complete a three-year course in 5 to 6 years.

Fourthly, is it is economically viable though the standard of education provided by open universities is as good as that provided by conventional universities.

Fifthly, distance education is an alternative to those who live in a geographically challenged area. There are people in India or in many other countries who live in areas from where the university or a college is quite far.

Also, professions are getting extremely competitive, so you have to upgrade your skills continuously, but you can't leave your job and do the same. Distance education gives you the option of doing both the things at the same time. Of course, having said that all, let me make it clear that distance education is not an alternative but an addition. It does not mean that conventional education is rejected. Students are free to join conventional colleges/institutes.

ELIMINATED DRAWBACKS TO MAKE DISTANCE LEARNING POPULAR

Some of the universities, both private and public, have taken distance education as a means of earning money, which is very unfortunate. To earn money, they start distance education without caring for proper standards, both in providing print material as well as other facilities vis-à-vis TV, radio, et al. This creates a problem. Students are deprived from availing standard education.

There are universities that are basically not meant for such type of courses. They are set-up with a certain purpose and target but they begin offering distance education for making money. Another drawback of distance education is that in the absence of a teacher many students do not fare well. There are students who need teachers to constantly motivate them.

It brings us new concept of beauty of traditional college experience, spirit and can be compensate.

Yes, by all means. Let us give example of IGNOU. In IGNOU we have done two things.

One: We have established study centers all over India. These study centers are generally located in already established colleges. Here students can go except for a few courses (where it is compulsory). Students are welcome on weekends and we engage reasonably qualified teachers from that college or from other areas. So they can go there and talk with the teachers and other students.

At IGNOU, we also have the facility of live tele - conferencing. Through live tele-conferencing we can bring the best of the teachers available in India for our students. Students all over India can not only watch him but can also interact with him.

Throughout India produces a stunning 2.8 million university graduates each year, doing the DLP education by doing their employment and meet out the market demand of professional and quality manpower and fill its shortage?

This is a broad question and is not solely related to ODL. First, all human developments reports have made it very clear that any type of education is an investment. This holds particularly true for countries of South Asia, including India, where enrollment in higher education is still insignificant. Not even ten percent students from the age-group that should be availing higher education do that. This is one side of the question. Secondly, there are people being produced and they are unemployed. So there is a problem in the type of education imparted and the relationship between the job and education. What distance education can do is to introduce certain vocational courses in certain areas. For example, IGNOU has successfully run courses on computer education. What distance education can do is help working people to continuously refine their skills.

The problem is a bigger one. We have to identify the type of jobs that are available in the market and develop courses accordingly. It is also important to develop a sense of dignity of labor. For example, in India, no one wants to be a bus driver because the job is looked down upon whereas a person doing the same job abroad commands the same respect as any white-collar job. All that ODL can do is to help provide vocational education at a cheaper rate.

FUTURE OF DISTANCE EDUCATION

In fact, there is future only for distance education, not only in India but even in developed Western countries. What I am trying to suggest is that in the present process of the so-called **globalization**, states are not in a mood to spend much money on higher education. They are directing their energy on privatization and spending less money on higher education. So, universities are getting costlier, therefore compared to establishing a new conventional university you can set-up a distance university at a much cheaper rate. Also, as a result of the development in technology, students are getting education right at home and they don't mind it.

Third, as sated above, with the fast process of technological development, people in jobs are feeling a constant need to upgrade their skills therewith role of distance education. So distance education has an enormous future, enormous potential for growth but, at the end the growth should not come at the cost of quality and services.

The end