Challenges for Distance Education Learning

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ABSTRACT

In today’s era of education everybody is trying to get more and more knowledge in the form of education. In the present day scenario knowledge without degrees is only useful for person itself but it cannot help him in getting a suitable job on that basis. So to cater the need of gaining knowledge in this hectic world is solved by various distance learning programs started by universities all over the world. Distance learning is an excellent method of studying for the adult learners, married persons, job working people as it a flexible mode of education. It is now provided by various recognized universities and is approved by the government of that country. Under the distance education programme classes are taken on a weekend basis for both practical as well as theory. There are several problems regarding the structure, cost and lack of faculty support under distance education. In this paper we had tried to discuss some of the problems regarding distance education and give some of our ideas to overcome these problems. This will help in an overall increase in the quality of distance education learning.

Keywords—Distance Education, Flexibility, Knowledge, Learning

I. INTRODUCTION

Technology has made us so advanced that every impossible looking work today seems to be too easy for us. As a result of which things are changing very quickly. This technology has made us futuristic in the field of education. Distance education uses various technologies in learning and made our learning very fast. With the help of these technologies we can easily learn anywhere and get degrees without too much dependence on faculty guidance. It doesn’t mean that learning has become so easy with technology. At the same time distance education has posed many challenges due to which it is ignored by general people. We will be discussing these problems one by one.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Distance learning started in nineteenth century, in United States. In 1873, Anna Ticknor created the society to encourage studies at home for helping all women for education. Within the period of 24 years more than 10,000 members join this course. The first official recognition of education by correspondence came from 1883 to 1891 by Chautauqua College of Liberal Arts. This college was allowed by the state of New York to provide academic degrees to students who successfully completed work by correspondence during the academic year. Thus correspondence study has grown in popularity, acceptance, and effectiveness. In 1915 creation of the National University Extension Association (NUEA) broadened the focus to other issues. Despite the efforts of leaders in the field, correspondence study struggled to gain acceptance, and it was still suspected as academics. At the fifth International Conference on Correspondence Education (ICCE), in Alberta, Canada, delegates from universities, governments, and proprietary institutions emphasized on the increasing interest in distance education. a larger number of substitutes for traditional courses were developed in U.S.A during the 1960s and 1970s. Britain’s Open University made a new beginning in the field of distance education. At United States first Open University was New York State’s Empire State College (NYSES), which came into working in 1971.

Foundation of Distance learning was started in Australia in 1916; Canada in 1919 and New Zealand in 1922 open learning institutes were set up. Other institutions of the world also get motivated later on. The University of China started the first correspondence education program in 1952. There after distance education started spreading in other Asian countries.

III. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the present article are as follows –

1. What is distance education
3. Different norms of government to set up under distance education learning Institutions.
4. Effectiveness of distance education learning.
5. The different challenges faced in distance education learning.
6. To suggest various recommendations to improve distance education learning.

IV. METHODOLOGY

Our study is based on the data collected from secondary sources like previous research available on websites.

1. **What is Distance Education?**

Distance learning is a program of education in which the teachers and students are separated by distance and the education is provided with the help of various technologies. These technologies include internet (voice, video, data, print), books and often face to face concerts, teleconferencing etc. By using these technologies a person can overcome the barriers of limited time, space, age for study and can continue his education even after their marriage and having other responsibilities like children and their job. Thus in a way they are upgrading their education for getting better jobs. The concept of distance education, its potential and importance is well understood by people around the world. It is now well established mode of education in every part of the world. With the advancement in different technologies like multimedia it is flourishing in the present day scenario. So the distance education is now widely adopted by various universities.

Tools used under the distance education program are:-

- Cyber Education,
- Remote Classroom,
- E-Learning
- Television Broadcasting
- Computer Based Training (CBT)
- Computer Aided Instruction (CAI)
- Use Of Multimedia Technology
- Internet

2. **Structure of distance learning**

Distance education learning in India is approved by distance education council of India and ministry of HRD. After getting approval these universities setup study centers all over the country through which students are enrolled which are provided with infrastructure(well equipped study centre), faculty and study materials to students thus acting as a link between students and universities. Study centers also collect fees and provides examination centers for students. These centers provide facilities for studying as well as for their practical examinations.

Figure 1: Existing Structure of distance learning

3. **Minimum Requirements for Establishment of Distance Educational Institutions under the norms of government**

These norms are as follows-

1. The Directorate of open and distance education should offer programs as per the objectives of the MOU signed between RCI & institution/university and the National and Regional requirements of Human Resource in the field of special education.
2. The DEIs will offer those programs of study for which RCI has given the approval or take prior approval before the launch of any program in the field of special education-distance education.
3. Institutions must have proper Evaluation System and Delivery system of learning materials.
4. Institutions must have Infrastructural Facilities
5. Libray and Resource Centre
   
   a. Headquarter Library: There shall be a well-equipped library with adequate number of textbooks and reference books of school and elementary teacher education. Educational Technology Library, ICT Library, Psychological Equipment, CDs Encyclopedias, Journals of Elementary Teacher Education and Distance Education. In addition, Self-instructional material in sufficient quantity shall be available in English/Hindi/Regional Language.
   
   b. Study Centre Library: There shall be a library equipped with text and reference books on special education and general teacher education of respective discipline area, educational encyclopedia, yearbooks, electronic publications, CD ROMs and journals on teacher education and Special Education, distance education etc. Attempt should be made
to procure the books listed in the curriculum of the Program prescribed by RCI

6. Audio-Visual Production Facility and ICT Facilities

7. Management of the Directorate

8. Training of Counselors and other Personnel

4. Effectiveness of distance education learning

Many of us think about the effectiveness of distance education is that as it reaches to all sections of society but actually it is mainly restricted to the adult class and people who are working. In some cases it is chosen by some students who wanted to complete more than one degree courses at a time. The present day education system in India has come a long way and the age old traditions have undergone a new makeover. Normally the students who enrols them for distance education mode are not so intelligent who can learn by themselves so they only depend on the material which is provided to them by the university so as a result of which is that after completing their courses they are not considered as much worth as students of full time course. It can be effective as traditional system but if the norms for it are strictly implemented. Students must be provided at least ones weekly classes and feedback should be taken by them.

Technology plays an important role in the distance education. So educators must focus on the latest technology. Educators must know the needs of the learners, their requirements, and their difficulties, to pass the knowledge to them. Systematic approach will make the distance learning effective. The main features that must be included to make distance education effective are as follows-

- Selected printing notes in the form of book must be provided by the universities as per the syllabus, and day-to-day schedule.
- Instruction must be provided in the form of Interactive audio or video conferencing. This is the best use of giving education using latest technology and the difficulties of students are solved with the help of experts.
- If student’s problems are not solved they must have various facilities like electronic mail or sms by mobile to send messages, and get their problems solved directly by experts. These facilities can also help in providing feedback from the students. These communication devices are used to increase the interaction between teachers and students. Video CD or DVD is also provided to students to explain various difficult questions.
- Feedback from the students must be timely taken in the form of message or e-mail

Through careful planning, focusing on the requirement of course as well as on the needs of students this education is becoming popular among all people. For Successful distance education programs universities must consistently shows strictness in following the norms and keep a eye on the various study centers, students, faculty, support staff etc. Time to time inspection and strictness in evaluation of examination must increase its effectiveness.

5. Challenges faced in Distance Education Learning

Each and every individual wants to seek full time education but due to certain reasons such as people who are in job, old people and persons who are not much affluent are not able to join regular full time courses goes for these types of courses. The students who are enrolled with distance education program are promised various things at the time of admission, but as the study progresses students face various difficulties. According to Anupam Basu “Limited infrastructural support and lack of adequate teachers demand for distance education program which can be used to augment the learning of students especially in rural areas of India and in other Developing countries” These problems are about

- The Quality Of Education,
- Hidden Costs
- Behavior Of The Administration

All the above points effect on the overall quality of distance learning. These all are inter linked issues.

The quality of education

- The students are mainly depended on the materials available to them on different websites of internet.
- Many study centers provided by the universities do not fulfills the norms as laid down by authorizing body due to which students suffer the most as they do not get proper education through distance education mode.
- Lack of teaching staff on study centers results in problems of learning for students as they are not able to learn as well as solve their various problems. After taking admission they found that they have been cheated by the advertisement.

Hidden costs

Mostly the cost of the distance mode is less than regular courses. But study centers charges some hidden costs in the form of registration fee, practical’s fee, examination fee and desertion fee extra as hidden fee. This hidden fee is not mentioned in the regular advertisement of the course at the time of admission. As a result of which the students becomes depressed and feels cheated.

Behavior of the administration
Officials appointed on the behalf of that particular university are only concerned about fees and are not much interested in providing them good education. Weekend classes are not provided to them on a regular basis and various facilities which are provided are only on paper but the charges are taken from students as hidden costs. This is because these study centers are not regularly inspected by officials from time to time.

**Students** - students are the main part of the system for which this system is created. The system provides education to the adults, married; working people and people who are not economically vibrant. To teach such students we require proper planning and motivation to analyze their ability. We have to bridge the gap between age and time in the field of education so that best learning is delivered to them.

**Faculty** - The success of any education program depends on its faculty. Distance education is not an exception to it. In a traditional classroom setting, the faculty responsibility circles around the students development but in distance mode faculty have to face Special challenges in teaching. For example, the faculty must:

- Develop special understanding as the students are not so young.
- They must adapt new ways of teaching styles to teach such persons.
- They should use more and more technology devices for providing education to them.
- They have very less time for going through the whole syllabus.

### 6. Recommendation for improving distance education learning

From the above it is clear that distance learning is a revolutionary idea in teaching. It covers both rural as well as urban sections of society and uses technology to its maximum potential. Following are some recommendation which can improve the value of distance education learning:

1. DEC must inspect the study centers regularly.
2. Government faculty should be appointed at study centers on par time basis whose working hours time should be between f 7PM to 10 PM.
3. Faculty must be present on Sundays for at least 5 hours.
4. Evaluation of examination must be done under the supervision of DEC.
5. Internet facilities are to be checked at the respective study centers.
6. Study material, videos of difficult concepts must be available at the DEC sites.
7. Distance education should be treated with par with other modes of education in jobs.
8. Practical and workshops must be provided for faculties and students.
9. Fees of these courses must be reasonable.
10. Examination must be scheduled on same time as regular courses.

### V. CONCLUSION

Distance education can play a significant role in education as people do not have time to do the regular courses due to lack of time. The introduction of various technologies have further enhanced the future of it as these tools have made this form of education easy and in the reach of general mass. Thus distance education if followed strictly according to the rules and regulations can be one of the options to the people to increase their knowledge in future. Therefore the government should take all steps to promote and strengthen distance education learning so that a large number of people can take benefit from it and thus the nation can become developed.

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