

Presented By

1st Author: Dr. Pankaj Singh

Director, Nims University

MBBS, MS, MRCS, MD (Neurosurgery)

Co- Author

Sumer Singh Rathore

Assistance Registrar,

DDE, Nims University

Title: Unleashing the potential of ODL - “Reaching the unreached”

Introduction- 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 for the purposes of the Commission on College's accreditation review, distance education is a formal educational process in which the majority of the instruction (interaction between students and instructors and among students) in a course occurs when students and instructors are not in the same place. Open learning is an innovative movement in education that emerged in the 1970s and evolved into fields of practice and study. The term refers generally to activities that either enhance learning opportunities within formal education systems or broaden learning opportunities beyond formal education systems. In developing countries, ODL is presented as a panacea that will allow in the long term a democratization of education. The number of large-scale ODL projects proposed to developing countries is increasing every year, as ICT infrastructure and connectivity become more and more available to be used (among other purposes) as the mediating artifact of emerging networked educational systems. Major events were organized in Africa during the last two years to promote technology-enhanced education, e.g. the World Information Technology Forum (WITFOR) In Botswana (2005) and Ethiopia (2007), or the e-Learning Africa Conference, in Ethiopia (2006) and Kenya (2007). Both WITFOR and eLA were sponsored by the European Union and local governments; in 2005 and 2006, each of these conferences attracted around one thousand representatives from some forty countries, mainly African and European. Such initiatives activate developmental possibilities in which developing countries can expand and improve their educational systems. I would paraphrase Parkes and say that such ODL projects initiate proximal zones of development where developing countries enter in a strategic relationship with more capable ones, whose discursive regimes influence the new subjectivities being constructed. In this case, "more capable ones" are usually countries from the North, international/intergovernmental organizations and major NGOs whose agenda includes also implicit political and economic interests, such as opening new markets and expanding their influence. In this strategic relationship, Parkes' pedagogical synthesis of Vygotsky's ZPD and Foucault's knowledge-power relationship, will contribute to a better understanding of the issues at stake, resulting hopefully in the highly desirable development of strategies by which local communities in the developing world will be provided with conceptual tools for mastering their own educational transformations.

Scope of Distance Education Learning:

Besides these criteria, open may be associated with free online availability and open licensing. In online education in general, students play the leading role, as institutions are making all the efforts to provide them a comfortable and complete study experience. With open and distance education, students are merely guided and instructed about how they can improve their learning individually, rather than simply read and memorize a text that is taught to them.

Although it may come as a paradox, educational institutions and organizations worldwide have become more united and dedicated to collaborate and make partnerships with the main goal to enhance and provide equal opportunity to education to a larger number of students.

So don't wait any longer and find an open or distance course that meets your learning goals or personal interests.

1. **Open Accessibility:** For open courses, most institutions don't require any specific entry requirements or qualifications, so all students are welcomed to attend, regardless of their educational background or work experience. This is specifically available in the case of MOOCs.
2. **Freedom of Time:** separation of teacher and learner in time or place, or in both time and place. Some ODL courses do however require (online) presence during assignments, group and project work and/or exams
Freedom of Pace: Learners are not required to complete a programme of study within a specific time. Instead, learners learn at their own pace and make their own decisions about the learning path that is to be followed for their programme. However, some distance teaching institutions differ in the offers and some programmes are more closely paced.
3. **Freedom of Place:** Learners are not required to fulfil a residency requirement at the host institution. Most learners do not (have to) leave their home or workplace as they pursue a programme of study. So being a student at a university from a different continent is 100% possible. Blended format is avoided online plus offline on campus program
Open Programming: study at your own pace and place selecting the modules you want to study and combine them with a Bachelor's or a graduate degree programme
4. **There are entry and exit points in the curriculum?** STANDALONE COURSE IS ALSO THERE
5. **Open to Everybody:**
6. **ACCESSIBLE:**
7. **FLEXIBLE:**
8. **Earn while learn:**

Barriers to ODL System:

Since 1980, open and Distance e learning educational methodology has been extensively used in India. Now it is evident that Open University Education in India is playing a vital role in respect of huge number of enrolled students in higher education from disadvantaged group of the society. However, different survey reports reveal that the number of students completing higher education with adequate quality is not satisfactory. To improve the quality Govt. has changed education policy time to time. However, simultaneous improvement in quality and quantity will not be possible unless we consider the following real problems before implementing any education policy/ technique.

1. **UNGUIDED MISSILES CULTURE Lack of knowledge in using technology:** With the progress of time technology for communication system is being developed and ODL system is adopting this. However, students especially from rural area are enrolling in ODL system without proper training of the tools to be used for successful program. These students, due to lack of technology skills, mostly become dropouts or unguided missiles TECHNOLOGY SHOULD BE UPGRADED
2. **Vast curriculum area:** Online courses are normally not restricted to an upper size. As a result traditional teaching method cannot be applied here. Both teachers and students face problems.
3. **Lack of sufficient infrastructure:** Distance learning program is quite new and it does not have sufficient infrastructure and learning environment like traditional system. For this reason instructors are facing problems in organizing and planning distance learning programmes, especially for new courses.
4. **Scarcity of EDUCATORS near study center:**

Although care has been taken in opening study centers near the door steps of learners, the availability of skilled and knowledgeable EDUCATORS near the study center is not checked in most cases. As a result study centers as well as the learners are facing difficulties.

5. **Hidden Cost:** For online learning, students need training to use technology. They must have their own or rented computer and internet connection. Again if they want hard copy of any study materials downloaded from website extra cost has to be paid. To attend live video program they have to do proper time management. When contact programs are not arranged nearby or become obscure then learners look for private coaching, paying extra money. EVERY THING REQUIRE MONEY AS THERE IS LESSER FEES FOR DISTANCE COURSES OVERHEAD EXPENSES ARE SO HIGH STUDY CENTRE RELUCTANT TO PROVIDE AIRCONDITIONED ROOM AT 24 7 CULTURE AS STUDENT NUMBER PER CLASS PER TEACHER DO NOT GATHER MOMENTUM
6. **Unavailability of desired course in nearby study center:** There is a difficulty to run practical based subjects LIKE PARAMEDICAL AND ALLIED HEALTH CARE in Open Education as it needs permanent Laboratory AND HOSPITALS SET UPS. Again there are some courses like nursing, clinical which are not available through distance learning per recent DEB POLICIES. Thus distance learning is not suited for all subjects. Demand is too much but regulatory authorities has lot of restriction in 2015 to 2017 for not offering allied health courses even in 1000 bedded hospitals attached universities even in certificate modules
7. **Lack of oral communication skill:** Distance learners do not get opportunity to interact with their classmates and with the professors like traditional system. Hence their oral communication and presentation skills do not develop proper.

Barriers to effective distance education include obstacles such as domestic distractions and unreliable technology, as well as students' program costs, adequate contact with teachers and support services, and a need for more experience.

Some students attempt to participate in distance education without proper training with the tools needed to be successful in the program. Students must be provided with training opportunities (if needed) on each tool that is used throughout the program. The lack of advanced technology skills can lead to an unsuccessful experience. Schools have a responsibility to adopt a proactive policy for managing technology barriers.

The results of a study of Washington state community college students showed that distance learning students tended to drop out more often than their traditional counterparts due to difficulties in language, time management, and study skills.

Distance learning benefits may outweigh the disadvantages for students in such a technology-driven society; however before indulging into use of educational technology a few more disadvantages should be considered. However, through the years, all of the obstacles have been overcome and the world environment for distance education continues to improve.

Some say a negative to distance education is the lack of direct face-to-face social interaction, however as more people become used to personal and social interaction online (for example dating, chat rooms, shopping, or blogging). it is becoming easier for learners to both project themselves and socialize with others. This is an obstacle that has dissipated.

Not all courses required to complete a degree may be offered online. Health care profession programs in particular, require some sort of patient interaction through field work before a student may graduate. Studies have also shown that students pursuing a medical professional graduate degree, who are participating in distance education courses, favor face to face communication over professor-mediated chat rooms and/or independent studies. However, this is little correlation between student performances when comparing the previous different distance learning strategies.

There is a theoretical problem about the application of traditional teaching methods to online courses because online courses may have no upper size limit. Daniel Barwick noted that there is no evidence that large class size is always worse or that small class size is always better, although a negative link has been established between certain types of instruction in large classes and learning outcomes; he argued that higher education has not made a sufficient effort to experiment with a variety of instructional methods to determine whether large class size is always negatively correlated with a reduction in learning outcomes. Early proponents of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) saw them as just the type of experiment that Barwick had pointed out was lacking in higher education, although Barwick himself has never advocated for MOOCs.

There may also be institutional challenges. Distance learning is new enough that it may be a challenge to gain support for these programs in a traditional brick-and-mortar academic learning environment. Furthermore, it may be more difficult for the instructor to organize and plan a distance learning program, especially since many are new programs and their organizational needs are different from a traditional learning program.

Another benefit of distance education is one for developing countries. Judith Adler Hellman states, "In the face of the pressure on these countries to join the global information economy, distance education appears to provide the opportunity to train more people better and at lower cost.

Even though there are advantages in advancing industrial countries, there are still negative sides to distance education. Hellman states, "These include its cost and capital intensiveness, time constraints and other pressures on instructors, the isolation of students from instructors and their peers, instructors' enormous difficulty in adequately evaluating students they never meet face-to-face, and drop-out rates far higher than in classroom-based courses.

A more complex challenge of distance education relates to cultural differences between student and teachers and among students. Distance programmes tend to be more diverse as they could go beyond the geographical borders of regions, countries, and continents, and cross the cultural borders that may exist with respect to race, gender, and religion. That requires a proper understanding and awareness of the norms, differences, preconceptions and potential conflicting issues.

Discussions And Suggestions:

Distance learning degree, began to be offered in the world by the University of London in the year 1858. However, the Union Govt. of India had considered this methodology only after 126 years and established a Central Open University in the name of former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in the year of 1985. Within 28 years IGNOU has proved its potentiality, securing number one position in enrolment in the world. This university offers 310 degree programmes in arts, science, commerce, social sciences and information technology through different Schools in 36 countries around the world. Now this university is considered to be the world leader in distance education. This is one of the best achievements of the Indian ODL system. The list of achievements of Indian ODL system has also been enriched by the contribution of Yashwantrao Chavan Maharashtra Open University (YCMOU) established in July 1989 in Nashik, Maharashtra. This university has been conferred „Award of Excellence for Institutional Achievement' for the year 2002 by Commonwealth of Learning (COL)“ Canada. Netaji Subhas Open University (NSOU) founded in the year of 1997 in West Bengal, has been conferred Excellence in Distance Education Award (EDEA) from the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) in the year 2006 for its brilliant academic performances. Open and Distance Learning Education Its Scope and Constraints in Indian Scenario This university has achieved the status of „Mega University“ with enrolment over 250,000 students. Apart from Bachelor, and Master / Post graduate degree, Indian Open system also offers Diploma, Advanced Diploma, Certificate, MBA and Ph.D. in different fields of education. Apart from Open Universities, enrolment through Dual mode Universities is also increasing rapidly. Traditional Universities which offer distance learning program by establishing Distance Education Institutions (DEI) and / or Correspondence Courses Institutes (CCIs) along their regular campus based program are known as Dual Universities. At present total enrolments in dual mode universities are much higher than enrolment in Open Universities. Leading role is playing by Delhi University (1962), Mumbai University, Annamalai University, Acharya Nagarjuna University etc. Another channel of enrolment in higher education is Mixed Mode Universities. Although their number is limited but they exist and impart education in a wide variety of mode. Amity University and Lovely Professional University (LPU) are examples. From above discussion it is very clear that the target of enhancing the gross enrolment ratio in higher education from present 11% to 21% by 2015 as set by UGC will be fulfilled easily if Indian ODL system of education is applied and handled with care. To do so following suggestions can be considered. ----To manage technology barriers,

distance learners must have training on each tool to be used throughout the program in advance. This can be done by incorporating a proactive policy for managing technology barriers in school level. -----The results of a study of Washington state community college students showed that distance learning students tended to drop out more often than their traditional counterparts due to difficulties in language and time management. This problem is also here in India. Most of the learners like to study in their own mother tongue. To solve this problem we can open at least one State Open University in every State and Territory allowing them to offer education in regional language. -----All the CCIs and private initiatives may be converted to study centers of the respective State Open Universities (SOU).-----To maintain standard and equal syllabus in the all-India level IGNOU may play the following roles ----- Can arrange training program for course writer, Coordinator, Counselors and others associated with DLearning system. ----- Can establish resource center like studio for video/audio production.---- Can establish regional library with a rich collection of books and journals on distance education. ----- Can prepare instructional material for some of the innovative program and making them available for translation in regional language. -----Although negligible but still there are some employers who do not acknowledge distance learning degree. This problem can be solved by discussion between employers and distance learning institutions in presence of IGNOU before designing curriculum-----Distance learners normally study alone and miss social physical interaction and the scope of personality development. They also do not get the chance to participate in extracurricular activities like NSS, NCC etc. Video conference, e-mail, chats etc. are not sufficient to give that smell. In this case we can incorporate such auxiliary program like NSS, NCC so that learners of same class and counselors can come at least once in a month to their nearby study centre and mixed together. To encourage economically poor section of the society we may think for fee concession (half-free or full-free) or can help them in the form of stipend / scholarship on the basis of their first semester result. In a survey on UK made by Werry it reveals that every respectable person of the society admits that the distance learners are as good as traditional learners. But there are still some people who believe that face-to-face interaction as we have from the GURUKUL system can only produce better scholar. Werry did not sort out any solution but wrote that it is an emotional problem and this will go with time.

If you're thinking about studying or training, think first about what skills you already have. You may be able to reduce the time it takes to get your qualification—you may not need to study at all. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is about the skills and knowledge you've gained through work and life experiences Recognition of prior learning (RPL), Prior Learning Assessment (PLA), or Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR), describes a process used by regulatory bodies , Adult Learning Centres, Career Development Practitioners, Military Organizations , Human Resource Professionals, Employers, Training Institutions

Lastly blending of RPL and IIEP is required through open distance learning to break long waiting latent Inertia in field of OD to bring biggest reform and bold innovative initiative--THAT IS NEED OF HOUR

Conclusion: In conclusion, it can be said that the Distance Learning system of education is being more popular around the world and in India day by day. Central Open University of India IGNOU by name is securing top position enrolling 7000 students per year from 36 countries around the world. Use of updated communication technology is making the methodology more attractive to the learners. In spite of its remarkable success, one can still find some constraints in this learning system. To remove these

constraints probable suggestions are given. It has been suggested that Government should think such policy which will be able to remove technophobia from all students in school level. Suggestions are also given to open at least one State Open University through which learners can study in their own language. To encourage economically poor students, suggestions are given to arrange for financial help in the form of stipend / fee concession or one time gift to the students performing good result in the 1st semester. Finally to develop personality of distance learners it has been suggested to incorporate programs like NSS, NCC etc.

Acknowledgements:

Dr. (Prof.) Balvir S. Tomar

Chancellor, Nims University

- M.B.B.S., M.D., M.C.H. (USA), M.I.A.P., M.A.H.T. (ENGLAND), F.I.A.P. (USA), F.A.A.P. (USA), F.I.C.A. (USA), F.A.C.U. (LONDON)
- Pediatric-Gastroenterology: Kings College Hospital School of Medicine, University of London, London (U.K.)
- Pediatric Nutrition: Harvard University (USA),
- W.H.O. Fellow in Child Health in USA,
- Commonwealth Medical Fellow in London (UK)