
UNIT 3 GROWTH OF DISTANCE EDUCATION

Structure

- 3.0 Introduction
- 3.1 Objectives
- 3.2 Historical Overview
- 3.3 International Scenario of Distance Education
- 3.4 Distance Education in India
 - 3.4.1 Distance Education through Institutes of Correspondence Education at University Level
 - 3.4.2 DE through Open Universities
 - 3.4.3 Present Status
- 3.5 The Future of DE in India : A Perspective
- 3.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 3.7 Answers to Check Your Progress
- 3.8 References

3.0 INTRODUCTION

Distance Education (DE) has passed through different stages over almost one century. Its concept and function have been very much related to the development of communication technology in general, and educational technology in particular. Because of the efforts for democratisation of education after the Second World War, DE as a system has expanded in almost all the countries of the world. In this unit you will be presented with an historical overview of DE, its international scenario, a detailed scenario of DE in India and its future perspective.

3.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you will be able to:

- describe genesis and growth of DE in India and abroad;
- depict scenario of DE at national and international level;
- explain future perspectives of DE in India.

3.2 HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Distance Education (DE) had its roots in the correspondence courses which simply mean study materials, usually lecture notes, sent by tutors to the students by post. The idea originated in the nineteenth century in England.

Correspondence studies took formal shape in Bath, England, 1840 when Isac Pitman started offering his course in shorthand via the New Penny Post. The International Correspondence School, the oldest correspondence education institution of U.K. was established in 1880. A number of correspondence education institutions came up during the 20th century in U.K. These institutions mainly helped the external degree students who studied at home with the help of correspondence courses. However, for various reasons these institutions did not have equal status of affiliated colleges or an university.

With the establishment of open university of U.K. in 1969 followed by establishment of open universities in different countries across the world the distance education grew at a faster rate and assumed a gigantic position at international level. Let us look at its international scenario now.

3.3 INTERNATIONAL SCENARIO OF DISTANCE EDUCATION

The creation of the first Open University in the world in 1969 at Milton Keynes, U.K., was a major development in the history of DE. In fact, the then Labour Prime Minister, Harold Wilson got the idea of starting a University of the Air after his visit to the erstwhile Soviet Union in the 1950s. It took another two decades to give a definite shape.

Open entry, multimedia based teaching-learning, credit system and credit transfer, unconventional courses, and strong support system are the unique features of the Open University, U.K.

The American experience of DE reveals a different picture. It is variously named as home study, external study, correspondence study, etc. Different universities started correspondence education programmes mostly during the 20th century viz., University of Chicago, University of Wisconsin, Illinois Wesleyan University, University of California, University of Nebraska, The University of Florida, Pennsylvania State University etc. There are more than 60 universities offering correspondence courses in the USA. The universities offering independent study programmes are affiliated to the independent study division of the National University Continuing Education Association (NUCEA).

Another leading country in promoting DE is Australia. The basic reason behind popularisation of DE in Australia is identified with geographical distances of the territory with many islands. A very small population scattered over a wider territory does not suit the functioning of formal educational institutions. Australia has long standing experiences of providing correspondence education programmes at Primary Stage, Secondary Stage and Tertiary Stage. For instance, the Western Australia Correspondence School provides correspondence courses to the children from 1 to 10 years of schooling. At higher secondary stage there exist isolated students under matriculation scheme. At tertiary stage, one of the oldest institution offering correspondence education is the University of Queensland, since 1911. The Australia model of DE adopts dual mode of functioning. The faculty members of Australian Universities teach on-campus regular courses' students as well as external (off-campus) correspondence courses' students.

DE in Russia has added a new dimension to workers' education. DE played a major role after the 1917 revolution in the building of a socialist economy and society. The Educational Reform Act of the erstwhile USSR (1958) gave sound base for correspondence courses, part-time/external courses. In Russia correspondence education is offered at the levels of Secondary Schools, Universities, Polytechnics and other institutions. Correspondence education programmes are quite popular in almost all the Russian universities. Around 30 to 50 percent students of total strength of state universities get enrolled in correspondence courses. They make use of multimedia instructional programmes inter-linked with short-term campus studies in the universities.

The Asian experience of DE spans over three decades mainly being influenced by the experience of the OUUK. The Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) of Pakistan, established in 1974, is the pioneer of DE at tertiary stage. It offers a large number of courses in the OUUK model. The Open University of Sri Lanka (1980) functions with the objectives of upgrading educational status of employed persons, providing opportunities for life long and continuing education, etc.

Sri Lanka also makes use of distance education facilities to school learners preparing for public education. The Ministry of Education of Sri Lanka adopted DE models for in-service teacher education programmes.

Bangladesh established Bangladesh Open University in 1990.

Thailand took a major step in establishing Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University in 1976. Almost 90 percent of its students are employed adults. It makes use of self-instructional print based materials accompanied by audio cassettes. Radio and TV programmes supplement such materials. Certain degree of personal contact facilities are provided through study centres.

Check Your Progress

Notes: a) Space is given below the question for your answer.

b) Check your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

1. Describe the major developments in the growth of DE at international level since 1969.

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3.4 DISTANCE EDUCATION IN INDIA

In India, DE system originated at the university level and moved towards school. This is, of course, a general feature in the history of DE internationally. In the Indian context, the inception of DE through correspondence education programmes had dual purpose. One is to divert the pressure group of aspirants of higher education to correspondence education programmes which made it cost effective. Two, democratisation of higher education. A brief exposure to the recommendations and expressions of various educational bodies and documents will substantiate these backgrounds. (A detailed account of the policy perspectives is given in Unit 2, Section, 2.4.)

a) Expansion of Higher Education vis-a-vis DE Programmes

The background can be traced to the fifties. The post independence era made an uneven expansion of higher education system in terms of enrolment, institutional establishments, varieties of programmes, etc. The rate of expansion of higher education did not match with the rate of growth of economy. Gradually the focus of expansion shifted from higher education to expansion of school system. Meeting heavy expenses involved in establishment of universities and colleges for exorbitant number of needy students was a complex and difficult task in Indian System. The heavy pressure on the formal system of higher education paved the way for opening up of correspondence courses. The Planning Commission of India (1960) had pointed out.

In addition to provision in the plan for expansion of facilities for higher education, proposals for evening colleges, correspondence courses, and the award of external degrees are at present under consideration.

The then Union Minister of Education justified diversion of student masses to correspondence courses as follows:

We in India have to see that the maximum possible effort is undertaken for the expansion and the improvement of educational facilities in the country, but this has to be done within the broad framework of our limited resources. Obviously, it is not possible to find the money for buildings, improvement of staff, pupil teacher ratio, and the provision of proper equipments, libraries, laboratories, etc. For all the increasing number of students who come to our universities and colleges The way out of this dilemma is through non-formal educational techniques which have been used in other countries and have to be thought in this country in order to meet this rising demand for higher education.

The Education Commission (1964-66) popularly known as Kothari Commission too had supported the idea of encouraging correspondence courses. According to the Commission.

One solution to this is to keep full time seats strictly limited on the basis of resources available and to institute correspondence courses, part time courses, evening courses, etc. for those who aspire for university degree but are not able to get admission to the regular courses.

These two situations talk enough about the creation of correspondence courses as a secondary means for diverting the pressure of formal education programmes offered by universities and colleges.

b) Democratisation of Education vis-a-vis DE Programmes

The constitution of Indian union adopted democracy as the core of social system. A democratic system can survive in society through democratisation of education system. As a principle it was emphasised that education in the country, including higher education, should adopt the means of democracy in providing equal opportunities to those who are aspirants for higher education. The Education Commission (1964-66) recommended the promotion of correspondence courses on the basis of reasons like social responsiveness, economy of the system and continuing nature of education. The Commission recommended that:

The opportunities for part time education through programmes like evening colleges, and correspondence courses, should be extended as widely as possible and should also include courses in science and technology (either at the degree or diploma level) And also make accessible higher education to those who desire to study further but are compelled, on economic grounds, to take up employment after school education.

Following the recommendations of the Education Commission (1964-66) the First National Policy of Education (1968) highlighted that, "education through part time and correspondence courses should be given the same status as full time education". The hidden motive behind promotion of DE during the sixties had a strong linkage with Indian Polity.

In the democratic republic the increased rate of students participation in campus politics had started intensifying altogether in different forms than those of pre-independence era. The growing consciousness about youth's participation in national politics and patronisation by different political groups became gradually complex in terms of management of educational institutions. The campus based students' movements with the support of millions of students started becoming a headache for the establishment at state and central levels. Because of this there might have been apprehensions on the part of establishments to divert the overflow of entrance through the creation of non-residential studies like correspondence courses at university stage (Sahoo, 1993).

3.4.1 Distance Education through Institutions of Correspondence Courses at University Level

The University of Delhi was the first one to introduce correspondence courses as a pilot project during 1962. It was introduced on the basis of the report of the Expert Committee in March 1961. Subsequently the University of Delhi had appointed a sub-committee to recommend different courses at the first degree level. The success of the Delhi University's DE courses motivated other universities and institutions of national importance to introduce several kinds of programmes through correspondence.

In the meanwhile the University Grants Commission (UGC) had taken initiative in streamlining the guidelines for correspondence courses. The Ministry of Education, Government of India had deputed three successive delegations to the then USSR to study the system of correspondence education during the years 1967, 1968 and 1971 respectively. The UGC came out with the guidelines for correspondence courses during the year of 1969. It specified the aims of correspondence courses as providing educational opportunities to:

- Students who had to discontinue their formal education owing to pecuniary and other circumstances;
- Students in geographically remote areas;
- Students who had to discontinue education because of lack of aptitude and motivation, but who may later on become motivated;
- Students who cannot get admission or do not wish to join a regular college or university department, although they have the necessary qualification to pursue higher education;
- Individuals who look upon education as a life-time activity and may either like to refresh

their knowledge in an existing discipline or acquire knowledge as a new area (UGC, 1988).

As a consequence of the above developments, a number of universities introduced correspondence courses in different fields leading to degrees, diplomas and certificates. You can notice from the following Table that besides 8 open universities there are as many as 66 universities / institutions of national importance which have established correspondence courses units during past thirty years (1968-97) (See Appendix - I). The units continue to function with dual system of education i.e. offering face-to-face campus based programmes and correspondence / DE programmes. These universities cover all the zones of the country viz. East, West, North and South. A few Institutions like Regional College of Education discontinued their programmes. In the case of Rajasthan and Karnataka the traditional universities viz., Rajasthan, Udaipur and Mysore discontinued DE programmes in view of creation of State Open Universities.

Check Your Progress

Notes: a) Space is given below the question for your answer.

b) Check your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

2. What prompted the Education Commission (1964-66) to recommend in favour of correspondence courses?

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3.4.2 DE through Open Universities

The introduction of open university system in the country has been linked with creation of open university in UK in 1969. During the International Education year (1970) the Ministry of Education and Social Welfare in Collaboration with the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, the UGC, and the Indian National Commission for cooperation with UNESCO organised a seminar on 'Open University' in December, 1970. The Seminar recommended the establishment of an open university in India on an experimental basis. Subsequently, the Government of India had appointed eight member working group on Open University under the chairmanship of G. Parthasarthy to consider the establishment of open university. The working group had submitted its report in 1974, after having studied thoroughly the pattern of the open university, UK and the possibility of creating a open university in India. The working group recommended that

The Government of India establish, as early as possible, an open university by an act of parliament. The university should have jurisdiction over the entire country so that, when it is fully developed, any student, even in the remotest corner of the country, can have access to its instruction and degree.

On the basis of the recommendation of the working group a draft bill was prepared by the Union Government for the establishment of a National Open University. However, the process was delayed. In the meanwhile, the Government of Andhra Pradesh took initiative and established a state open university on May 25, 1982, following the recommendations of an Expert Committee under the chairmanship of G. Ram Reddy. The Andhra Pradesh Open University was later renamed as Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, Open University (BROU).

During January, 1985 the Union Government made a policy statement for establishment of a national open university. Subsequently a committee was constituted by the Ministry of Education (Ed, CIL, 1985) to chalkout the project report on IGNOU, and on the basis of the project report

the Union Government introduced a Bill in the Parliament. The national open university named after late Prime Minister Smt. Indira Gandhi came into existence on September 20, 1985.

The main aims of IGNOU as highlighted in the preamble of the IGNOU Act, 1985, reads as:

- introduction and promotion of open university and distance education system; and
- co-ordination and determination of the standard in such systems.

The Open University system occupies unique position in DE today because of its autonomous character in the field. The instructional system of the National Open University has incorporated the use of self-instructional multi-media packages, facilities for intensive student support services and extensive use of modern communication technologies like Educational TV telecast, Video films, teleconferencing, Video conferencing, and computer networking and so on. The impact of IGNOU on open learning system in India is substantial, and the future of the university shall determine the future of the system as a whole.

3.4.3 Present Status

Let us have a glance through the status of distance education system in India

a) DE at Open University Level

Encouraged by the success of IGNOU and BRAOU other states like Rajasthan, Bihar, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Gujrat and Karnataka have established open universities. At present there are eight open universities in the country. These are:

- National Level : Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), New Delhi, India (1985).
State Level :
1. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University, (BRAOU), Hyderabad, A.P. (1982).
 2. Nalanda Open University, Patna, Bihar (1982).
 3. Kota Open University (KOU), Kota, Rajasthan (1987).
 4. Yashwant Rao Chavan Maharashtra Open University (YCMOU), Nasik, Maharashtra (1989).
 5. M.P. Bhoj University, Bhopal, M.P. (1992).
 6. Dr. Baba Saheb Ambedkar Open University, Ahmedabad, Gujrat (1994).
 7. Karnataka State Open University, Mysore, (1996).

The universities have established a wide network of Regional Centres and Study Centres for providing students support services. They have adopted consortium approach under Distance Education Council (DEC) of IGNOU to share study materials, electronic media based inputs, teleconferencing, etc. and to share such facilities at their university level.

b). DE through Open School System

As stated above introducing DE at school level followed developments of DE at university stage. The idea of starting DE at school stage was originated in 1964 through recommendation of conference of Boards of Secondary Education. The National Policy on Education, 1968, promoted this idea. Initially its main purpose of DE at school level was to give opportunity to school dropouts / external candidates to appear in the Secondary / Higher Secondary Certificate examination through different inputs of correspondence courses. The Boards of Secondary Education of different states and union territories started offering correspondence courses in Delhi, UP, Rajasthan, Orissa and MP.

In August 1974, a working group was appointed by the NCERT to explore the pluasibility of setting up the open school. In November, 1978, the CBSE and NCERT organised an international seminar on open schooling. As an off-shoot of recommendations these agencies / organisations the open school was set up by CBSE, New Delhi, in July 1979. In 1989, the Ministry of Human Resource Development established the National Open School (NOS) and the open school was amalgamated with NOS. Subsequently the Andhra Pradesh Open School (APOS) was created in the year 1991. The initiatives during 1995-96 led to creation of open schools in UP, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan as well. National Consortium of Open School in India (NCOS) has also been set up by NOS.

The major objective of the NOS is to provide opportunities for continuing and development education to interested learners, through courses and programmes of general education, life enrichment modules and vocational courses. It also aims at identifying and promoting standards of learning in DE systems and Open Schools which may be set up in different parts of the country.

The NOS offers a number of programmes at different levels viz., Bridge Course (who have completed class V); Secondary Course, Senior Secondary Course, and Vocational and life enrichment courses. More courses for the specific priority groups are being planned. The NOS adopts print based materials, audio-video materials and personal contact programmes as components of instruction. It has more than 160 accredited institutions all over the country for providing various kinds of services, e.g., admission, conduct of personal contact programmes, guiding and counselling the students, distributing study materials and evaluation activities.

Unlike other DE institutions at school level which restrict their focus on secondary stage, the Andhra Pradesh Open School (APOS) focusses on elementary education. The APOS project intends to motivate and bring back to school the dropouts (from the formal stream who dropped out because of educational factors) and provide academic support to the boys and girls of the village as a whole. The APOS concentrates on village level operation of selected districts in the state. It provides learning packages of print and audio materials and facilities of instructor-guided activities in the village level centre on regular basis according to convenience of students.

The correspondence education programmes of other states aim at giving opportunity to secondary school dropouts (higher secondary in UP). They follow the same syllabi as offered by respective state boards of secondary education. All the institutes use their respective print-based materials as principal medium of instruction. They have provision of assignments and personal contact programmes.

c) Teacher Education Programmes through DE

The Education Commission (1964-66) had also suggested offering of correspondence courses in Science and Technology and facilitating professionalisation of teachers in remote areas. The National Policy on Education, 1968, had also highlighted such ideas stating, "Part-time education and correspondence courses should be developed on a large scale at the university stage. Such facilities should also be developed for secondary school students, for teachers and for agriculture, industrial and other workers". (Govt. of India, 1968). Moreover, during 1967 the first delegation of UGC was sent to the erstwhile USSR to study their system of correspondence courses. The delegation recommended its adoption on restricted scale for clearing the backlog of untrained teachers already in regular service and also for improving the level of education of trained teachers with varying qualifications.

On the basis of education commission recommendations and the UGC delegation report wider discussions took place. As a result the NCERT started correspondence courses in 1967 to provide B.Ed. degrees to untrained teachers through four Regional Colleges of Education located at Ajmer, Bhopal, Bhubaneswar and Mysore respectively. Afterwards, the scenario changed in Regional Colleges of Education. There was heavy rush for B.Ed. Distance Education / Correspondence courses offered by different open universities, and Directorates of Correspondence Courses of traditional Universities. During 1995-96 as many as 13 universities were offering B.Ed. programme through correspondence courses and 3 state open universities were offering B.Ed. programmes through Distance Education in respective states. The Universities included : Andhra, Annamalai, Bhopal, Berham Pur, Kakatiya, Kashmir, Kurukshetra, Maharishi Dayanand, Madurai Kamraj, Mysore, Osmania, Shivaji, Sri Venkateswara, Baba Saheb Ambedkar Open University (Gujrat), YCM Open University (Maharashtra) and Kota Open University (Rajasthan). Of late the IGNOU has made a headway to start DE programme for B.Ed. at national level.

As an outcome of National Council of Teacher Education (NCTE) guidelines (1996) several universities, correspondence course Institutes/ Directorates had offered B.Ed. programmes. During 1996-97 on the basis of recommendations of UGC, NCTE-DEC joint committee improvements are made in B.Ed. through DE mode. The State Open Universities will promote their B.Ed. programmes as per the guidelines set by University Grants Commission, NCTE and Distance Education Council (1997) in respective states. The UGC has also set norms for introducing B.Ed. through correspondence courses during 1997. Besides B.Ed. programmes

M.Ed. programmes have also been offered through a number of DE Institutions since 1971. The universities are Andhra, Annamalai, Himachal Pradesh, Kurukshetra, Madurai Kamraj, Osmania, Punjabi and Kota Open University.

Besides B.Ed. and M.Ed. programmes, the institutions like IGNOU and the Central Institute of English and Foreign Language (CIEFL), Hyderabad offer a number of programmes through DE for professional growth of University / College teachers and School level teachers in the country. Certain States like Madhya Pradesh offer DE programmes for untrained in-service Primary school teachers for certificate courses. The experiment of teleconferencing programmes of Central Institute of Educational Technology (CIET) in collaboration with IGNOU for In-service orientation of Primary School teachers during 1996 became a landmark in using DE for Primary teacher training programme. As a part of District Primary Education Project the IGNOU has launched a nationwide project for continuous orientation of Primary School teachers in regional languages through teleconferencing mode.

Check Your Progress

Notes: a) Space is given below the question for your answer.

b) Check your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

3. i) Write the sequence of development of OU system in India.

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ii) What are the common features of OUs in India.

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iii) Give reasons for creation of DE programmes at school level?

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iv) Why should teacher education programmes be organised through DE?

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3.5 THE FUTURE OF DE IN INDIA : A PERSPECTIVE

There is a great scope for quantitative expansion of DE in the country. The beginning of 21st century will witness tremendous expansion of DE at elementary, secondary, tertiary and quaternary levels. The open schools will have to expand their scope from elementary to higher secondary stage. The vocational education, functional literacy and continuing education would be given high priorities.

The university level programmes will undergo a phase of transformation. The rate of expansion of enrolment is likely to be accelerated. Almost 50 percent of the total enrolment of higher education system can be accommodated through DE programmes. Besides emphasis on quantitative expansion, DE system would need to be strengthened qualitatively.

At dual mode institutional level the correspondence education mode will be transformed to DE mode giving more emphasis on multi-media based self-study materials, students support services, adoption of telecommunication based media facilities, continuous evaluation system etc., which are prevalent in the open universities.

While traditional universities will expand their bases of DE programmes there will be gradual expansion of open universities at every state level. The IGNOU will play a major role in the co-ordination and maintenance of standards of DE at higher education level all over the country. There will be consortium approach for sharing resources of DE education at all India level. A number of innovative and need-based programmes will be introduced through this approach.

There will be better co-ordination among different DE institutions, Media Institutions, Door Darshan, Indian Space Research Organisation and Commonwealth of Learning for further expansion of multi-media based learning programmes leading to further strengthening of open learning system.

3.6 LET US SUM UP

This unit has acquainted you with the genesis and expansion of DE programmes in India and abroad. You can analyse how DE institutions have expanded their scope over the past three and a half decades in India. It describes the changes in the structure and functions of DE institutions. It concludes that DE will have a bright future as a system in the country.

3.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. Major development in DE at international level are the use of multi-media-based self-instructional materials and openness in opportunities for entrance into various programmes through different kinds of DE Institutions.
2. Two factors prompted the Education Commission (1964-66) to recommend in favour of correspondence courses. They are :
 - Democratisation of Education
 - Diversion of pressure groups of students in higher education from conventional universities to correspondence course group of students.
3. i) Creation of APOU followed by IGNOU and other state universities.
 ii) Autonomous structure of higher education functioning in a 3 tier system ; wide network of Head Quarters, Regional Centres and Study Centres.
 iii) Alternative opportunities of schooling to deprived sections, drop-outs and external candidates.
 iv)
 - For continuous professional growth of in-service teachers, and
 - For charging backlog of untrained teachers.

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