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# UNIT 1 DISTANCE EDUCATION: CONCEPT AND SCOPE

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## Structure

- 1.0 Introduction
- 1.1 Objectives
- 1.2 Defining Distance Education
  - 1.2.1 Wedemeyer
  - 1.2.2 Moore
  - 1.2.3 Dohmen
  - 1.2.4 Peters
  - 1.2.5 Holmberg
  - 1.2.6 Keegan
- 1.3 Relevant Terms Explained
  - 1.3.1 Non-formal Education
  - 1.3.2 De-schooling
  - 1.3.3 Correspondence Education
  - 1.3.4 Open Education
- 1.4 Lifelong Education
  - 1.4.1 Concept
  - 1.4.2 Principles and Characteristics
  - 1.4.3 Implications for Implementation
- 1.5 Scope of Distance Education
- 1.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 1.7 Answers to Check Your Progress
- 1.8 References

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

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We all know that in conventional system of education at any level — primary, secondary or tertiary — teaching-learning takes place in classrooms where the students and teachers meet regularly at fixed timings. You are now in the second year of your B.Ed. programme through distance education, and you all have been involved in learning activities from distance by using self-instructional (study) materials in different media. The teacher is built in the material itself. The teacher has been definitely outside the classroom, there are no regular meetings between the teacher and you and yet you are able to learn at a time convenient to you all. Also you have become familiar with some of the activities and ways of working through the system. I assume that you do not hold the assumption anymore that the regular meetings of students and teachers are essential for teaching-learning process to take place. What you would have learnt in a face-to-face situation you have been able to learn at a distance too, if proper arrangements are made.

Distance education was an educational mode supplementary, complementary and alternative to conventional/traditional system of education, depending on the situation it was practised. Today it has evolved into an independent system of education, thanks to the growth of communication technologies and the cognitive sciences which are flexible enough to use the technologies for pedagogic purposes. It is an educational innovation to meet the ever increasing and diversified educational needs and demands of the society which are sequel to changing social, economic, and other conditions on one hand and technological developments on the other. Communication technology has widened the scope of educational technology and enhanced the efficiency of educational communication coupled with accuracy and speed of feedback. As a result of this, it has become possible to offer a variety of educational programmes to different sections or groups of people through various media of communication. Alternatively, we can even offer the same in one medium only or in each of the available media, or through a media mix to a particular target group or to different groups.

Distance education is innovative in the sense that it sets up its own norms, approaches and methodology which are different from the face-to-face system of education. It can be non-conformist and non-traditional in nature. It makes adequate provision to impart instruction to learners at a distance by incorporating a variety of means for didactic interaction between its students and the teachers and/or the institution. In this unit we will be discussing the concept of distance education and the related terms in use, including lifelong education and the scope of distance education.

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## 1.1 OBJECTIVES

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In this unit we attempt to give you an overview of the concept and scope of distance education. In order to arrive at a satisfactory definition of the term 'distance education' the views of various thinkers in the field are presented to you in brief. An attempt is also made to explain certain related terms such as non-formal education, de-schooling, correspondence education, open education, lifelong education with the purpose of dispelling the misconceptions of distance education and to develop clear and comprehensive understanding of the concept and its scope.

After having gone through this unit, you should be able to:

- i) explain the concept of distance education;
- ii) distinguish the term 'distance education' from other related terms; and
- iii) explain the scope of distance education.

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## 1.2 DEFINING DISTANCE EDUCATION

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Distance education is a broader term both in terms of its denotation and connotation. Depending upon the knowledge, perceptions and points of view different people have defined distance education in different ways. It is, therefore, very difficult to arrive at a comprehensive definition that embraces all its connotations and denotations. Though it is difficult to come out with a succinct and universally acceptable definition of distance education, a few definitions offered by different people on different aspects of distance education would give us a comprehensive picture of the concept of distance education.

Staff Training and Research Institute of Distance Education, IGNOU (1995) presented the definitions of distance education given by Wedemeyer, Moore, Dohmen, Peters and Holmberg along with a brief and precise comment on each of these definitions. Let us look at these definitions and the comments as they present broader aspects forming part(s) of definition of distance education.

### 1.2.1 Wedemeyer

Wedemeyer (1977) has used the terms 'open learning', 'distance education' and 'independent study' in his works, but favours the last term consistently. He defines independent study as follows:

"Independent study consists of various forms of teaching-learning arrangements in which teachers and learners carry out their essential tasks and responsibilities apart from one another, communicating in a variety of ways. Its purposes are to free on-campus or internal learners from inappropriate class placing or patterns, to provide off-campus or external learners with the opportunity to continue learning in their own environments, and developing in all learners the capacity to carry on self-directed learning, the ultimate maturity required of the educated person "

Notice that there is a suggestion for two kinds of 'independent study'. One for the on-campus learner who may not want to and/or need to attend lectures regularly; the other for the off-campus learner who in any way is on his/her own. But, both these kinds are subordinate to the overwhelming idea of the ultimate social purpose of education - liberal education for social welfare. It is, therefore, not difficult to appreciate why in the United States of America, the expression 'independent study' is extensively being used to mean both 'correspondence' and

'distance' education. Besides, the expression does connote 'open learning' too, as one needs open access to education in order to become a truly 'educated' person.

### 1.2.2 Moore

Moore (1972 and 1973) is more explicit in his views on the characteristic features of distance education. According to him distance teaching may be defined as "the family of instructional methods in which the teaching behaviours are performed apart from learning behaviours, including those that, in a contiguous situation, would be performed in the learner's presence, so that communication between the teacher and the learner must be facilitated by print, electronic, mechanical or other devices."

At least three features of distance education are clearly discernible in his definition.:

- i) the teaching behaviour remains separated from the learning behaviour (e.g. correspondence courses);
- ii) fact-to-face teaching and learning forms a part of the system (e.g. contact programmes); and
- iii) electronic and other media may be used to effect learning and teaching (e.g. use of audio and video cassettes).

The first two of these features are similar to the ones which Wedemeyer has pointed to. And if we interpret Wedemeyer's expression, 'communicating in a variety of ways', broadly even the third feature listed above finds a place in his (Wedemeyer's) definition. Whereas Wedemeyer focuses on the sociological aspect, Moore highlights the communicational (pedagogic) aspect.

### 1.2.3 Dohmen

Dohmen (1977) defines distance education as "a systematically organised form of self-study in which student counselling, the presentation of learning material and securing and supervising of students' success is carried out by a team of teachers, each of whom has responsibilities. It is made possible at a distance by means of media which can cover long distances".

This definition places emphasis upon the importance of self-study. This feature of distance education is emphasised in Wedemeyer's definition too. Like Wedemeyer and Moore, Dohmen also emphasises correctly the use of the media which enables distance education to reach out to the consumer of education.

We notice that all the three thinkers quoted above focus, either explicitly or implicitly, on these two aspects of distance education:

- i) self-study, and
- ii) the use of media for educational communication.

The point being made is that as against the oral communication used in the conventional classroom type of teaching, which is not a process of self-study, distance education uses print, electronic media and oral face-to-face situations for purposes of self-study which is the basis of distance education.

Now, we shall turn to a definition that presents a theoretical frame for the entire process of distance education.

### 1.2.4 Peters

Peters (1973) defines distance education as "a method of imparting knowledge, skills and attitudes which is rationalised by the application of division of labour and organisational principles as well as by the extensive use of technical media, specially for the purpose of reproducing high quality teaching material which makes it possible to instruct great numbers of students at the same time wherever they live. **It is an industrialised form of teaching and learning.**"

Peters' definition is interesting because, besides the use of technical media and mass education, he emphasises a specific ethos which relates distance education to the nature of the industrial society. It is also possible to view distance education as a system arising from the new and specific needs of an industrialising society in which almost all activities, including education, have to fit into time-schedules that are geared to more rigid working and learning conditions.

### 1.2.5 Holmberg

Holmberg (1981) defines distance education as the kind of education which covers "the various forms of study at all levels which are not under continuous, immediate supervision of tutors present with their students in lecture rooms on the same premises, but which, nevertheless, benefit from the planning, guidance and tuition of a tutorial organisation".

What is interesting about Holmberg's definition is that distance education is being looked upon as an **organised educational programme**.

Let us now look at the definition offered by Keegan who culled out different aspects of distance education as found in different definitions and put them together in one.

### 1.2.6 Keegan

Keegan (1986) offers a comprehensive definition of distance education that encompasses all the essential elements. He defines distance education as a form of education characterised by

- the quasi-permanent separation of teacher and learner throughout the length of the learning process; this distinguishes it from conventional face-to-face education;
- the influence of an educational organisation both in the planning and preparation of learning materials and in the provision of student support services; that distinguishes it from private study and teach-yourself programmes;
- the use of technical media; print, audio, video or computer to unite teacher and learner and carry the content of the course;
- the provision of two-way communication so that the student may benefit from or even initiate dialogue; this distinguishes it from other uses of technology in education.
- the quasi-permanent absence of the learning group through out the length of the learning process so that people are usually taught as individuals and not in groups, with the possibility of occasional meetings for both didactic and socialisation purposes.

This comprehensive definition of Keegan includes all the essential elements, aspects or characteristics of distance education as can be found in different definitions given above. As Keegan (1986) points out it is important to be able to say whether distance education is to be regarded as the same or different from University without walls, extra-mural studies, experiential learning, off-campus education, open learning, extended campus, etc. You will know, in brief, about these terms and few other related terms in the following section. Keegan takes into account all the recent developments in communications and also theory building in this field.

#### Check Your Progress

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

b) Check your answers with those given at the end of this unit.

1. i) Which thinker said that there is a need for human support in an industrialised teaching-learning system?

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ii) What is common in the definitions of Wedemeyer, Moore and Dohmen?

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## 1.3 RELEVANT TERMS EXPLAINED

The term 'distance education' has been misunderstood by many people as a synonym to terms such as non-formal education, non-traditional education, open education, correspondence education, and so on. Here, you may recall the other terms used by Keegan and other thinkers in the previous section as well. All these terms currently in use create confusion regarding their precise meaning. This happens, particularly, when the terms are inadequately defined and/or improperly understood.

I believe you are, perhaps, clear about the concept and use of the term 'distance education' and not confused with related terms in the above paragraph. If you are still confused do not worry. The following brief discussion on related terms will clear your confusion.

### 1.3.1 Non-formal Education

Non-formal education, as implied by the term, is supposed to be available outside the formal or conventional system and with enhanced access to many learners. It indicates that it is an education free from formalities or with relaxed formalities to make education more accessible to different kinds or types of learners.

Some call non-formal education non-traditional education. According to Hartnett (1972) **non-traditional education** is a set of learning experiences free of time and space limitations. Coombs et. al. (1973) define non-formal education as "any organised educational activity outside the established normal system - whether operating separately or as an important feature of some broader activity - that is intended to serve identifiable learning clienteles and learning objectives". To clarify this definition further, the same authors distinguished between informal and formal education. **Informal education** is "the truly lifelong process whereby every individual acquires attitudes, values, skills and knowledge from daily experience and the educative influences and resources in his or her environment - from family and neighbours, from work and play, from market place, the library, and the mass media". **Formal education** is defined by them as "the hierarchically structured, chronologically graded 'education system' running from primary school through the university and including, in addition to general academic studies, a variety of specialised programmes and institutions for full-time professional education and training.

However, Radcliffe and Colletta (1989) maintain that "in practice no hard lines of demarcation exist between formal, non-formal and informal education: while many activities may be perceived as falling exclusively into one category alone, many share aspects of two or all of them". In other words it is implied that the theoretical distinctions between the concepts of formal, non-formal and informal education are accepted.

Non-formal education can be organised at any level, ranging from primary education in schools to higher education in Universities or institutions of higher learning. Open University is more current term coined to an institution providing the higher education in non-formal and open manner. It enhances possibilities for providing relevant, flexible, systematic and diversified education for the learners of diverse needs and interests.

### 1.3.2 De-schooling

De-schooling is the philosophy that underlines the concept of non-formal education. In simple terms it means bringing education out of the formal confines of the school. In other words, it espouses free education shorn of all rigidities of formal system like one point entry or single point admission, definite classroom, regular attendance, definite and common syllabus, rigid timings/ periods of teaching and learning, examinations and so on.

What then is the difference between non-formal education, de-schooling and open learning? In fact, these terms are synonymous and espouse the same philosophy. Open learning/education emphasises openness of learning/education opportunities; the non-formal education emphasises on freeing of educational process from the formalities/rigidities; while 'de-schooling' emphasises on bringing the education outside the physical environs of the school which, in broad sense, includes all the educational institutions. Though non-formal education and de-schooling have the same aims as distance education, it has emerged historically as distinct form of institutionalised education.

### 1.3.3 Correspondence Education

Prior to making an attempt to distinguish correspondence education from distance education we shall consider a few definitions of correspondence education. Correspondence education consists of "batches of study materials sent by post to the student who then completes the required reading and exercises, and returns the latter to the college for assessment by an appointed personal tutor. The exercises are marked and the student receives comments, advice and general guidance" (Legge, 1982).

From the above definition, the following essential elements can be observed:

- i) supply of study materials to students by post;
- ii) reading and writing exercises/assignments by students; and
- iii) assessment and feedback by tutor on exercises/assignments to students.

Though this definition ignores the need for face-to-face contact it indicates that there is organised instruction and education through post.

Correspondence education is the education conducted by the postal services without face-to-face contact between teacher and learners. Teaching is done by written or tape-recorded material sent to the learner whose progress is monitored through written or taped exercises sent to the teacher who corrects them and returns them to the learner with criticism and advice. It is also called correspondence study (Titmus, 1989).

We can observe that this definition is also silent on face-to-face contact and human element. Yet it is slightly more advanced in the sense that it brings in electronic media within the purview of correspondence education.

One thing that is very clear about the correspondence education is that it is a means of education for those who are literate with mastery over written language and with some educational qualifications already possessed by them. Usually these literate are relatively more mature and would be in a position to learn on their own through self-study or self-understanding of the materials supplied to them and there may or may not be a provision for face-to-face contact between the teacher and the learner. Generally, these printed learning materials are prepared by a few trained subject experts and are supplied to the learners by post for reading, alongside giving them some reading and writing assignments. In general and in order to develop in the students the feel of formal school/classroom atmosphere, contact classes/programmes are conducted at some convenient places where the learners and the instructors will have the chance for mutual interaction. Towards the end of the course, examinations will be conducted and the certificates, diplomas and/or degrees are awarded to the qualified candidates/learners.

Shall we now attempt to distinguish correspondence education from distance education? In correspondence education, print is the only medium of instruction and the printed lessons/materials are the only source of learning with or without provision for face-to-face contact between the students and teachers and among students. In distance education, besides the print medium, audio, video, radio, television, telephone, the computers, etc., form the instructional media. In both correspondence and distance education printed materials are sent by post, but distance education employs a multimedia approach including human (face-to-face) contact for instructional purposes. The student support services are more improved in distance education than in correspondence education. Both, correspondence education and distance education impart prescribed knowledge for issuing of certificates, but distance education aims at varied goals including training for better job prospects and job enhancement, change in attitudes, personal growth, etc. Though procedure of admission and examination are same in both correspondence education and distance education the former is usually offered as an extension of conventional college/university education, while the latter is offered by institutions which are mostly independent and autonomous. Thus, you have noticed that distinction between correspondence and distance education lies in their aims, approaches, methods and orientation.

We are all aware that formal educational institutions have their formalities and restrictions which are related to admission, number of seats, course duration, instruction, examination and the procedures. If these restrictions and formalities are relaxed or removed learning and education become more flexible and open.

According to Jarvis (1990) **Open learning** is the title given to more flexible methods of study and teaching in which there is openness in access, content, delivery system and assessment. There are colleges or provider-based systems in which learners attend centres; local-based systems with 'flexi-study' and support but at which the learning is undertaken in the learners' homes, and 'distance learning systems'. Openness is, in fact, characterised by relaxed or no rigid entry qualifications, learning according to one's own pace and convenience, flexibility in the choice of courses, and use of modern and appropriate educational and communication technology. Open learning/education can be offered through distance learning systems or the contiguous/conventional system by introducing an element of openness or flexibility. It refers to the philosophy or the approach which can be practised in both the situations.

Escotet (1983) distinguishes open education from distance education. For him, open education is particularly characterised by the removal of restrictions, excursions and privileges; by the accreditation of students' previous experiences; by the flexibility of the management of the time variable; and by substantial change in the traditional relationship between professors and students. On the other hand, distance education is a modality which permits learners to learn from their own places of living or work. Distance education, thus, tends to encourage open education.

You are, perhaps, clear now about the two concepts - 'distance' and 'openness'. While 'distance' refers to the mode, 'openness' refers to the philosophy. Openness is seen in terms of flexibility or relaxation in or lack of restrictions. Whereas the formal/conventional education is not necessarily closed, distance education may or may not be open. Open education is possible by both conventional and distance education institutions. But, in practice, it is true that due to their inherent character the formal institutions could not relax the restrictions to the extent that the distance education institutions could in matters of admission, curriculum, choice of courses, course combinations, examinations, evaluations, etc.

There are many terms used to represent or indicate individualised, off-campus study, learning and instruction. But these terms are often loosely used as synonymous of distance education or open education. They are: home study, independent study, off-campus studies, extra-mural studies, and external studies/system. These terms are briefly explained below.

- i) **Home study:** It is an education designed for students to undertake study at home and to be away from the educational institution. This term is localised mainly in Europe, probably under the influence of Swedish schools of correspondence courses. However, it is being used at a few places in Canada and the USA also.
- ii) **Independent study:** We have read about Wedemeyer's definition of independent study which is very clearly described. In fact, it is through his writings that this term has become current in North America.
- iii) **Off-campus studies:** To denote a contrast with on-campus traditional type of studies the expression 'off-campus studies' is widely used in the Pacific region - Australia and South-East Asian countries.
- iv) **External studies:** This is in use in Australia. It does confuse one when one thinks of the 'external system' as it functioned in London years ago. The London model of 'external system' makes it possible for learners to sit for recognised examinations, but teaching is not associated with the system necessarily. Australia adopted the term for obvious reasons and it is obvious too that the term does not connote all that is meant by the term 'distance education' today.
- v) **Extra-mural studies:** This expression is used in New Zealand to convey what distance education means to most of us.
- vi) **University without walls:** This is an 'open learning' movement in America which gives academic credit for career and life experiences and organises 'teaching' and 'learning' courses.

With due regard to the local currency of these terms, there is no doubt that they are all part of internationally known terms referring to distance education and open education.

### 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. How is distance education different from correspondence education? Explain the terms 'distance' and 'open' in this context.

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## 1.4 LIFELONG EDUCATION

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The belief that education is a lifelong process, not limited to childhood and youth, is not new. This is because of the fact that an individual spends more number of years in his adulthood than the childhood and youth and his performance in all the activities he is engaged in depends upon the nature and quality of his education in the functional areas. And, the conventional system of education has failed in many aspects and rendered itself inadequate to meet the changing educational needs and demands of different kinds of individuals. The important among these are: the limited aims and objectives, inconveniences and shortcomings in didactic process, irrelevant curricula, and failures of the conventional system as a whole. This has led to 'a crisis of education' and the system could not enable the individuals to face the challenges of modern and changing life. In the process of finding solutions to the crisis and to strive towards a learning society or an educative society, the concept of lifelong education found and increasing recognition and acceptance all over the world.

The UNESCO report entitled "Learning to be" (Faure, 1972) is the leading policy document on lifelong education. It contains a coherent philosophy developed about man, education and society to which the idea of lifelong learning was related. It adopts an optimistic view of education to change society. Eagerness to learn, '*libido sciendi*' is deeply rooted in human nature and once external obstacles are removed it will provide the necessary motivation for lifelong learning. The society of the future will be a 'learning society' and the culture of future society will be 'scientific humanism'. According to the report "every individual must be in a position to keep himself learning throughout life. The idea of lifelong education is the key to the learning society. Lifelong education will be the master concept for educational policies in the years to come for both developed and developing countries".

### 1.4.1 Concept

Let us look through some of the definitions of lifelong education for a better understanding of the concept. UNESCO (1976) defines 'lifelong education' as a process that begins in childhood and continues throughout one's life. It includes formal, non-formal and informal education received by the individual. The educational and learning processes in which children, young people and adults of all ages are involved in the course of their lives, in whatever form, should be considered as a whole. Dave (1976) regards lifelong education as "a process of accomplishing personal, social and professional development throughout the life-span of individuals in order to enhance the quality of life of both individuals and their community. It is a comprehensive and unifying idea which includes formal, non-formal and informal learning for acquiring and enhancing enlightenment so as to attain the fullest possible development at the different stages of life. It is connected with both individual growth and social progress". According to Jarvis (1990) lifelong education is any planned series of incidents having a humanistic bases directed towards the participants learning and understanding that may occur at any stage in the life-span. Reviewing certain



approaches and underlying philosophies he expresses that the lifelong education is a concept and an ideal which remains rather meaningless unless it is actually implemented.

Though the terminology in the definitions is different, we can clearly understand lifelong education as a concept that:

- includes all types and processes of education of all people of all age groups;
- is not intended to cover a once for all experience confined to the initial cycle of full-time education that commenced in childhood, but a process that must continue throughout one's life;
- encompasses continuous learning process which needs to provide specific opportunities for further and new education, both vocational and general, to each individual throughout life;
- attempts to keep the individual abreast of technical and social change in order that he may adopt to changes in his own circumstance (marriage, parenthood, professional situation, old age, etc.) and may achieve his fullest potential for individual development; and
- embraces both individual's intentional and incidental learning experiences.

Cropley (1982) sums up "the emerging concept of lifelong education in three words indicating the main directions of change and emphasis: expansion, innovation and integration. *Expansion*, means, learning process in time, in the multiplication of learning situations covering entire life-span of the learner, in encompassing and unifying all its stages and forms and in offering all kinds of opportunities. *Innovation* finds alternative structures and patterns of learning, providing meaningful interrelationships between general and professional education, and adapting the present practices to new needs. *Integration*, refers to, apart from interdisciplinarity, the educative potentialities of the home, the local community, the larger society, the world of work and the mass media in order to make the educational process more effective and to create new learning situations.

We may now understand that lifelong education, in its broadest sense, includes all the processes by which an individual acquires education continually or continuously throughout life for necessary career development and valuable personal enrichment. It means far from being limited to the period of attendance at school education learning should extend throughout life, include all skills and branches of knowledge, use all possible means and give the opportunity to all people for full development of the personality.

However, 'education permanente' a French term for 'lifelong education' specifies that higher education must be open to former students as well as mature students who have not previously had the opportunity to have higher education, even if they do not have necessary entrance qualifications. It implies that the education system needs to be remade to meet people's lifelong but discontinuous needs, which might recur in personal, social, academic or vocational life.

There appears to be two approaches to lifelong education in contemporary literature. One that stretches 'initial education' to further it called further education and the other that stretches still forward throughout the life-span using the idea of 'continuing education'. The aim of lifelong education should be to increase "each individual's possibilities of expressing himself or herself on the intellectual, emotional, social and professional planes, as well as in relationship between the sexes, between the parents and children and so forth" (Titmus, 1989).

Lifelong education is, thus, the one where there is provision and utilisation of educational experiences throughout a person's life. It implies learning throughout life and, therefore denotes an overall scheme aimed both at restructuring the existing education system and at developing the entire educational potential inside and outside the education system. It intrinsically involves a radical reform of organisation; form and content of all other phases of education, and also implies a greater recognition of the educational functions of non-educational agencies such as business, industrial and agricultural firms.

#### 1.4.2 Principles and Characteristics

Lifelong education calls for substantial changes in objectives, structures, curricula and methods

within a global context of lifelong education. Since all aspects of education and life are interwoven in an organic whole, vital reforms are essential not only in the first phase but also in adult education to make it a well organised system.

Most of the people spend much more of their lives as adults than as children and learning in adulthood plays an essential role. Therefore, it is obvious that adult education would be a major element in any system or scheme of lifelong education. The key principles of lifelong education, according to Titmus (1989) are that:

- a) the procedures for fostering lifelong education should be integral part of any education system;
- b) all elements of education should have equal status as that of schools and universities; and
- c) learning should be naturally and normally engaged in by all adults - universal education for adults just as universal education for children.

All these principles call for a comprehensive and unifying or integrated system of education that can engage all individuals in continuous learning process to make the society a learning society.

An idea of the characteristics of lifelong education may provide better understanding of the concept. The relevant definitive characteristics of lifelong education have been summarised by Dave (1973). They include:

- a) totality and universality in settings covered and clientele served;
- b) dynamism and diversity in teaching and learning methods and materials; and
- c) focus on promotion in learners of the personal characteristics necessary for lifelong learning (motivation, self-image, values, attitudes, and the like).

But, Cropley (1982) puts major characteristics of lifelong education in an elaborated manner. According to him lifelong education provides for:

- i) continuous learning throughout life — to continue education beyond childhood and youth and throughout adulthood;
- ii) needs of the very young — with a concern for very young children as their education lays down a basis for the later psychological development;
- iii) needs of adults — to promote high levels of personal initiatives for continued development to meet needs of adults;
- iv) coordination of psychological domains — to follow the principle of horizontal integration to coordinate many domains of psychological functioning of a person;
- v) education for personal growth — to foster intrapersonal/intrapsychic growth;
- vi) education for social development — to educate on variety of roles and their changing nature, and to enhance ability to adopt to changed roles; and
- vii) education for equity — to provide equal access to education of all people at all stages.

From the above it is clear that lifelong education requires radical transformation of the concept of education, complete overhaul of all forms of education and training needed by modern human beings in all stages of their life. The process of reforming the entire education system is not an easy task, as it has many implications for different elements of the system. We shall consider some of them here.

### 1.4.3 Implications for Implementation

Though the concept has achieved wide acceptance in theory, in practice it still falls far short of theory. This is so because the implementation of lifelong education has sweeping implications for learners and learning processes, teachers and the instructional methods, educational institutions and evaluation of lifelong learning. Knapper and Cropley (1985) discuss these implications in detail. A summary of details of these implications are presented below.

**i) Learners and learning processes**

All learners acquire education through formal, informal and non-formal processes of learning, when they are engaged in different activities in their life, though the proportions of time spent on particular kind of activities may differ from learner to learner. Provision of such comprehensive activities or experiences requires curricular restructuring with proper vertical and horizontal integration of the curricular experiences covering all forms of education in the day to day life and across the life of all kinds of learners — full-time and part-time, conventional and non-conventional, old and young, and so forth.

**ii) Teachers and instructional methods**

For promoting lifelong learning among the heterogeneous group of learners the instructional strategies employed should be substantially different and diversified to suit to their age, background, experiences, knowledge, etc. Cheap, individualised and mass instructional strategies and methods that impose less physical constraints of time and locations of learning that link education and work needs to be used for instruction. In tune with these, redefining the changing roles and responsibilities of teachers and promoting the acceptance of these are very crucial in this context of reforms.

**iii) Educational institutions**

The change in the nature and character of teaching and learning processes and methods, the change in the roles and functions of teachers and learners have their own implications for educational institutions. This would involve a transformation of existing institutions and/or starting of new kind of institutions. Practical problems and difficulties in bringing about changes or in transforming admission policies and procedures, provision of teaching-learning facilities, achieving coordination among different units in the institutions and among different institutions, and in planning, financing and administering different tasks are to be taken into account.

**iv) Evaluation**

Since the lifelong education involves a transformation of educational institutions, more particularly institutions of higher learning, it calls for innovative approaches to evaluation of the learners, teaching-learning processes, programmes, procedures and the system/institutions as a whole. This would help in reviewing, redirecting and furthering reforms in the system of lifelong education.

We can understand that the instructional approaches such as distance and open learning with focus on individualised learning used by distance and open universities and other higher educational institutions of the kind all over the world embody some principles of lifelong education. Though it is a fact that the practice of lifelong education falls far too short of its theory, it is also true that, nowadays, lifelong education has become a reality to a certain degree, and a precisely identified guiding principle for educational policy. This you can notice from Units 3 and 4 of this block where the growth, organisation, development and current status with special reference to India have been discussed. All these form part of lifelong education/learning.

**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. How do you relate the term 'lifelong education' with the different terms you studied in previous section? Specify implications for implementation of lifelong education.

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## 1.5 SCOPE OF DISTANCE EDUCATION

Distance education made its humble beginning as correspondence education in the conventional/traditional institutions and used only print as medium of instruction. Now distance education institutions evolved into independent, autonomous organisations such as Open Universities offering open education through multimedia instruction. Distance education which was conceived and offered as a supplementary and complementary to conventional/traditional education evolved into an alternative and almost parallel means of education as well.

With advancements in communication and educational technology, and development of distance education system as a whole, there has been an enhancement in accessibility, equality and quality of education for all. Distance education at present has lot of potential and scope to provide for educational needs and demands of all those individuals:

- i) who do not have access to conventional education;
- ii) who are deprived of proper educational facilities;
- iii) who could not continue their education in conventional institutions;
- iv) who are unemployed and want to continue their education from their homes itself;
- v) who are employed and want to improve their educational qualifications;
- vi) who want to undergo professional training and orientation;
- vii) who want to pursue general, vocational or professional or technical education outside conventional system;
- viii) who are physically, economically, geographically and socially disadvantaged and the like; and
- ix) who are engaged themselves in organised or unorganised sectors.

It also can equally cater to professional, training and other human resource needs and demands of all sectors such as education, industry, health and welfare, engineering and technology, agriculture, etc. At present 103 countries are offering 34,000 courses of different types through 1117 institutions to 30 million students of all ages.

Distance education, thus, has ample scope to provide for lifelong divergent educational needs and aspirations of different sections of population and thereby pave way for learning society.

### 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.

4. Define the scope of distance education?

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## 1.6 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, we have presented to you an overview of the concept of distance education, certain related terms in use, the concept of lifelong education and the scope of distance education. The basic purpose of providing this overview is that you should be able to not only explain and distinguish the above terms and concepts but also to read and understand further the materials on these concepts with more clarity.

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## 1.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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1. i) Holmberg.  
ii) 'Independent study', 'learner autonomy' and 'self-study' All these are aimed at promoting individualised learning.
2. In correspondence education there is organised instruction and education mainly through written or printed material sent by post to the learners. There may or may not be a provision for face-to-face contact. Distance education employs multimedia - print, audio, video, radio, television, telephone, computers, etc. - approach to teaching-learning, including fact-to-face contact.

Open education is a philosophy that espouses openness in terms of relaxed entry qualifications, flexibility in choice of courses, learning according to learners pace and convenience of learning, use of multimedia for instruction, and so on. Distance education refers to a mode of education which may or may not be open.

3. Lifelong education is a broader concept and aims at education of all people of all stages engaged in all walks of life. In essence it aims at paving the way towards a learning society, a society in which every individual is engaged in learning activities throughout the life. All concepts and terms - formal, non-formal, informal, correspondence, distance and open education, etc., - form part of lifelong education.

Implementation of lifelong education requires radical transformation of the very concept of education and complete overhaul of the educational system. It has sweeping implications for learners and their learning processes, teachers and the instructional methods, educational institutions and evaluation of lifelong learning.

4. Distance education has enormous scope to provide education to the millions of people with diversified educational needs and demands. It has the potential to enhance educational access to different kinds and categories of people engaged in different sectors, to maintain the quality of education and to democratise education for all.

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