A THEORETICAL ANALYSIS OF INCREASE IN SOCIAL DEMAND FOR DISTANCE EDUCATION IN ASSAM

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Abstract

In the fast moving present age education is the main key for personal growth and the development of an economy which is the prime reason behind opting for education in various aspects by every individual. Due to various reasons many individuals cannot acquire education in formal education system, for which distance learning or distance education fulfill their need. Distance education also known as distance learning primarily focus on the students who are not a part of the traditional education system. It can also be described as open education, open learning, e-learning, correspondence education etc. Distance education is embraced by the students as well as the teachers with good reasons. The present study is about the need of distance education in the society and to highlight the consequences of distance education towards the society. The study will be based on secondary data only and descriptive in nature.

Keywords: distance learning, education, social demand

INTRODUCTION:

One of the most important aspects of human resource development is education since imparting education leads to the improvement in understanding, perception, attitude and efficiency of working population. It also helps in developing the quality of leadership among individuals, increases awareness among the people and helps in controlling population. Besides the most important education is the prime instrument for the improvement in the standard of living of the individuals. Distance education has different definitions and different names in different countries of the world. The distance education is an organized provision for learning opportunity on part time basis, outside the time table of formal education covering a person's life time in his own environment, more or less according to his own perception and at his own time. Thus it is a system as democratic as well as socialist in nature.

In the words of Prof. Broje Holmberg," Distance education is the various forms of study at all levels which are not under the continuous, immediate supervision of tutors present with their students in lecture rooms or on the same premises, but which, nevertheless, benefit from the planning, guidance and tuition of a tutorial organization."

NCERT(2007) has mentioned "Distance Education and Open Learning is a new system in the revolution of education with potential to bring about a major revolution in instruction and training using multimedia technology so as to take educational opportunities to places and people hitherto unreached, surpassing social, economic and geographical barriers for attaining the objectives of relevance, equity and excellence."

Distance education, simply and broadly defined as the system of education in which education is imparted to students from a distance. It contains two basic elements: (a) the physical separation of teacher and learner; (b) the changed role of the teacher, who may meet the students only for selected tasks such as counseling, giving tutorials or solving student's problems. (Manjulika and Reddy, 1996)

Distance education is considered as an effective alternative to formal education. It becomes a part of entire education system in our country as distance education has immense significance for the emerging learning society. It is very flexible education system where learner can progress at his own speed and is a source of inspiration for those who are unable to have formal education like service personnel, housewives, underprivileged people, disabled persons, school drop-outs etc. Development in IT sector provides new technologies which help in creating highly interactive environment. In the last few decades there is highly exploration of technology in education. Mainly distance education increasingly uses different communication tools like radio, television, internet, email, Gmail, Google-Classroom and other types of instruments to enhance the abilities of teachers and students to communicate with each other.

Features of distance education:

Correspondence education: The simplest form of distance education is correspondence education. In this system, the complete course of study prescribed is broken up into a number of modules or lessons which are posted to the respective students and the students also attending the periodic contract classes which are organized near their places of residence.

Distance education based on multi media: In this form of distance education electronic media is also used along with posting of materials.

Distance course on demand of the people: it is one of the systems which breaks away from the conventional established syllabus and content of the educational institutions and innovates with new learning contents.

OBJECTIVES:

I. To study the need of distance education in our society.
II. To highlight the various effects of distance education in our society.

METHODOLOGY:

The present study is wholly based on secondary data. The secondary data will be collected from various departments of government, journals, magazines, newspaper, reports, websites, articles etc. The study is descriptive in nature.

DISCUSSION:

Education and Society:

Education often regarded as a perpetual process and a channel of social change. Evolution from nomadic society to modern society, education plays a great role. Education surrounded through the nomadic skills for survival like hunting and riding; in agricultural society education helps in organizing to develop agricultural sector, like animal care, plantation etc.; in case of industrial revolution education was organized itself addressed to develop an industrial man. Presently in the age information technology most of the technological implications were used in the field of education. Thus in the changing scenario, education is not the only activities, but it is for the responsibility to take initiatives, to service, to cope up with the changing environment of our society. All the educational activities aim to develop responsible human being who will create a society that is full of holistic thinking and compassion. In other words, it is education which can change the attitude of the people in the field of socio-economic life.

Assam consists 2.3% of the total geographical area of our country where agriculture is the main livelihood of majority of the people. Generally speaking, the society of Assam is underdeveloped in respect of education. Therefore distance education can be regarded as an effective alternative for formal education in the society of Assam. It has own philosophy, own goals and methodology which can cater rural people of Assam which either being located in far-flung remote areas or because of economic compulsion cannot take the advantage of formal education. It will also be fruitful for those who have dropped out of educational track or other.

Role of media in distance education in the context of Assam:

Media plays a very significant role in distance education. It helps in creating awareness about the national policies and programs to the people by providing information. By using audio-visual materials, print materials etc. help the students in the field of education. Besides, media help in creating a more dynamic environment of learning in distance education. A multimedia approach is required in the preparation and presentation of self –instructional materials. The basic aim of media in distance education is to create an environment to provide maximum help to learners to learn effectively, in fact, to comprehend and to gather knowledge.

Scenario of Assam:

In terms of literacy rate Assam is lagged behind as this state suffers from a deep-rooted mass illiteracy problem. The distance education may create a new opportunity and expands the scope of education in Assam. Therefore, the necessity of distance education will be analyzed.

Table-1: Trend of Literacy Rate in Assam

Category	Year					
	1961	**1971**	**1981**	**1991**	**2001**	**2011**
Total Literacy Rate	33.0	28.7	-	52.89	63.25	73.18
Male Literacy Rate	44.3	37.2	-	61.87	75.23	78.81
Female Literacy Rate	19.6	19.3	-	43.03	51.85	67.27

The literacy rate in Assam has shown an upward trend and in 2011 population census it climbed to 73.18%, of which male literacy rate is 78.81% while female literacy rate is 67.27%.

Again in Assam there are few private and public institutions that provide distance education facilities:

- IDOL (Gauhati University)
- Directorate of Distance Education, Dibrugarh University
- Krishna Kanta Handique Open University (KKHOU)
- Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU)
- National Open School
- Centre for Distance Learning, Tezpur University

In Assam, distance learning, because of its cost effectiveness, flexibility, easy availability, has today become immensely popular. A look at the educational scenario of the state reveals that it in the above table -1.

Distance education in Assam- a raising social demand:

Social demand for education has been significantly increasing in India on account of various reason s. distance education seems to be the important way to meet social demand of the people. Currently the National Policy on Education also gives utmost importance to the distance education system to spread all over the country. However, there is insufficient support in the form of human physical infrastructure. Thus, an adequate support is needed from the government. Although there has been tremendous growth of the educational institutions at all the levels since independence in India, the prevailing enrolment ratio is still about 4.8 percent which is much less than that of many developing countries.

Assam is a developing state where a large number of people are below the poverty line and deprive of various basic amenities along with access to education. Hence in this situation distance education can helps the poor people since it is an economical method of teaching–learning compared to the regular education and also helps the socio-economically backward students to receive education.

In India the resources of government are inadequate to meet the highly increasing demand for higher as well as school education. Therefore, distance education has become an inevitable alternative to public efforts to overcome the budgetary constraints. Again, the insufficiency of infrastructural facilities in government sector can be solved by the system of distance education since it has low fees structure and the other factors are- distance education need not to provide high standard of laboratories, libraries, hostels, etc.

Distance education provide opportunity to those educated citizens and adults for further study while remaining at the place of work i. e. the persons who are employed in some government and non- government organizations. Because of less expensive in nature, the poor students are benefitted from it and in case of higher education the distance education makes it accessible to all the sections of society. Further, distance education has made the 'educational institutions go to the students' rather than the 'students coming' to the institutions, and the students are provided with the opportunity to learn according to their own pace and convenience.

Again, open and distance learning has the potential to generate new patterns of teaching and learning which is highly connected with developments in Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). Thus it is closely related with development new learning needs and new patterns of information access, application and learning. It is evident that distance learning can lead to innovation in mainstream education, as well as may even have effects beyond the realm of education itself.

CONCLUSION:

Although distance education is described in different ways like correspondence education, open education, open learning etc., it is a system of non-formal education with its own goals and methodology. It helps peoples in various fronts. The growth of distance and open learning system has drastically changed the education scenario everywhere in our state along with India. Distance education being an important milestone in the development Higher Education and has great potential to equalized opportunities and take higher Education to the doorsteps of each and every one.

To conclude, it can be said that in the view of its manifold advantages distances education can surely serve as an effective alternative way to the traditional formal education. The concept of distance education that is relevant in the context of Assam, where the formal education system is not sufficient to cater the needs of entire student population of the State. In comparison to formal education the distance education is most suitable for rural youth, who depend mostly upon manual works for their livelihood and no time to take formal education, part-time workers, self-employed persons, drop out students, homeless child, disable persons, child labours etc. Thus it can be said that distance education in Assam at present a raising social demand for all round development.

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