

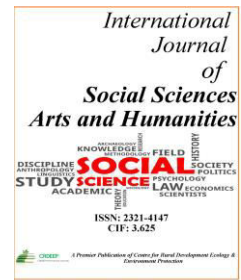
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**Full Length Research Paper**

Open and Distance Learning (ODL) Education System: A Systematic Study of an Alternative Education System in District Dhar, Madhya Pradesh, India

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ABSTRACT

Distance education is a planned education that normally occurs in a different location from teaching. It provides student with a second chance at a college education. It can reach those who are disadvantaged by limited time, distance or physical disability. Over the years, Distance Education has seen a large increase in the number of individuals opting for it, which in turn has highlighted the reasons behind its growing attraction. The objective of the paper is to analyze the status of open and distance learning (odl) education system: a systematic study of an alternative education system in district Dhar (M.P.), India. Dhar is a tribal district, education with literacy rate, gross enrolment ratio, dropout rates and Gender Parity Index in India.

Introduction

Distance mode of Education helps to update the knowledge base of professionals at their working places. So it always requires special techniques of course design, instructional techniques & methods of communication as well as organizational and administrative arrangements. In this mode students are offered study material. The students can also attend the class in regular intervals which is optional. Due to continuous increase in the population and scarcity of infrastructure, financial, and personnel resources, distance education systems helps million of students to full fill their educational aspiration Saima Ghosh, et al. (2012). But among the various method of education this mode has inherent potentialities to curb our national problem of illiteracy. Getting education through Distance learning is Economical and less time consuming. Distance Education mode paves way for an access to latest technologically-rich environment. Students can determine place and time of class in this Distance mode of Education. Students in the Distance Education are always in the advantage of getting exposed to the latest study material developed in high academic atmosphere. Distance Education offers lots of flexibility, now a person can design his/her own schedule to learn and simultaneously work. They can also learn at their own pace since the books and study material, lecture videos are all saved online. One of the merits is, it also offers you the chance to choose from different colleges that offer various courses. These colleges not only include in the country but also almost all Ivy league colleges of the world. This gives an individual a chance to study from a college that he/she could not get into for regular courses. The appearance of distance education is connected with the changing conditions in economical, social and technological aspect. Better literacy and more comprehensive education are needed. Distance education gives an opportunity to everyone to learn throughout their entire life. The means of communication – mail, mass media, Internet are necessary for its existence. Distance education depends on development of information and communication technologies. It can be as efficient as traditional education when there are appropriate methods and technologies about its realization Bizhan, (1997).

Nature of Distance Education*History*

The idea of distance education originates from the nineteenth century. Distance education used available communication technologies in these years – correspondence via mail. The mail services were inexpensive way of communication and they were at the root of

distance education. Teachers sent materials such as lectures, instructions, assignments to learners by mail. The learners returned completed assignments to the teacher. He corrected, evaluated and sent them back to the participants in the course. In 1840 in Great Britain Isaac Pitman implemented distance education shorthand via correspondence. During the same time language courses were carried out in Germany via correspondence. In 1873 in the USA Anna Ticknor created a society, which provided learning opportunities to women in their homes (1). The introduction of new technologies such as radio and TV set a new stage for the development of distance education. Audio and video materials became part of education along with printed materials. This allowed for visualization of education and increased its effectiveness. The third stage in the development of distance education is based on the development of digital technologies and usage of Internet as an educational environment. The interaction and communication among participants in education are widely used and as a result we observe more effective learning.

Nature and characteristics of distance education

Distance education is a form of education in which the participants in educational process – teacher and learners are physically separated and communicate by different means and at different times. From this definition we can differentiate the main characteristics of distance education: • Separation of teacher and learners in space and time; • Use of different media to realize the interaction among teacher, learners and educational content; • The provision of two-way communication between teacher and learners; • Control of the learning process by the learners rather than the teacher. Examining the nature of distance education we can indicate its special features, which distinguish it from traditional education (2): • **Sociability** –distance education satisfies the continuously changing needs of society for educated staff in different fields of human activities; • Flexibility and independence –distance education gives an opportunity to learn independent from time and place. The learners define self-paced learning. • **Individuality** – the teacher personalizes the distance education courses in keeping with characteristic features of learners. He chooses suitable technologies for distance education. Participants in distance education are teachers, learners and learning content. In distance education teachers are assigned a new role. In contrast to traditional education where the teacher is a main figure in the education – he presents the lectures and controls the degree of assimilation of the content, in distance education his participation is reduced to a management adviser and coordinator to the learning process. The control over the whole process of education is shared between teachers and learners. As a result the learners have a new role. From passive participants in the educational process, they take a central position in distance learning. The learners are those who determine the speed of learning and preparation. Self-control and the self-evaluation are very important. The learning content is composed of materials already used in traditional education or specially created for distance education. The existence of modern information technologies allows for diversification of the learning content with voice, pictures, and videos. The learning content is dynamic – it can be renewed continuously. Materials are delivered to learners by using new communication technologies – mail, mass media, Internet. Distance education requires interaction between participants in the learning process. The interaction determines to a certain extent the effectiveness of distance education. Moore specifies three types of interaction (3): • **Learner-teacher interaction:** provides motivation for education, feedback, and dialog between these participants. Learners consult teachers in various ways. The feedback is very important and gives teachers indication about the level of learning. Feedback should be timely in order for the teachers to be able to correct and adapt the learning content based on the circumstances and the needs of learners. • **Learner-learner interaction:** includes formal and informal communication between learners. Isolation is an essential problem in distance education. It can be overcome by exchange of information among students: exchange of ideas and dialog through discussions, working together and solving issues. • **Learner-content interaction:** includes the methods of delivering content, various ways for navigation through it, and searching for specific information. According to some scientists the use of new information and communication technologies in distance education is related to the emergence of a new type of interaction – learner-technology interaction. They note that this interaction is an important component which influences the effectiveness of education. If a technology which delivers instruction is complicated and learners do not have the basic skills required to use it they will spend inordinate amounts of time to learn to interact with the technology and have less time to learn the lessons. Communication between participants in distance learning is synchronous and asynchronous: • Synchronous communication allows participants to take part in learning at the same time. Feedback is immediate. Synchronous communication is realized by telecourses, teleconference, chats, etc. • Asynchronous communication gives an opportunity to learners to connect to the teacher or connect with each other at a convenient time and place. Asynchronous communication is realized by email, audio courses, discussion boards, etc.

ODL System in India

Open and distance learning in India started around 1960s. By the 1980s there were 34 Universities offering correspondence education through departments designed for that purpose. The first single mode Open University was established in Andhra Pradesh in 1982, followed by the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), and subsequently in Bihar, Rajasthan, and Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Karnataka, West Bengal, and Uttar Pradesh (established throughout the 1980s and 1990s). The establishment of these single mode distance education universities was stimulated by the government's intention to democratize education and make it lifelong. The initiative did not discourage the expansion at the same time of correspondence programs in dual mode universities. The year 1995 witnessed the enrollment of 200,000 students in open and distance learning, accounting for 3% of total higher education enrollment. Most open and distance learning universities in India follow the model of the UK Open University. They co-ordinate communication and collaboration through the Distance Education Council (DEC), founded in 1992. DEC is responsible for the promotion, co-ordination, and the maintenance of quality and standards. A range of factors including emerging ICTs, liberalization, privatization and globalization have amplified the demand for open and distance learning. While the government is responsible for more than 90% of open and distance learning funding, plans are underway to involve the private sector more closely, especially through permitting.

Materials and methods

Study area

Dhar district is a district of Madhya Pradesh state in central part of India. Dhar district is divided into 5 sub-divisions: Dhar, Sardarpur, Badnawar, Manawar and Kukshi. These sub-divisions are further divided into 7 tehsils: Dhar, Badnawar, Dharampuri, Sardarpur, Manawar, Kukshi and Gandhwani. There are seven Vidhan Sabha constituencies in this district: Sardarpur, Gandhwani, Kukshi, Manawar, Dharampuri, Dhar and Badnawar. All of these are part of the only Lok Sabha constituency in this district: Dhar. This study carried out 6 admission cycles of IGNOU at Study centre 15233 Dhamnod, January 2015 to July 2017.

Sampling area

Around 70 kilometers area of IGNOU regular study centre 15233 Dhamnod. We have contacted all students those have been enrolled in IGNOU programme. The author asked the region why you choose the distance education. Student reply Distance education can also provide a broader method of communication within the realm of education. With the many tools and programs that technological advancements have to offer, communication appears to increase in distance education amongst students and their classmates. The distance educational increase in communication, particularly communication amongst students and their classmates is an improvement that has been made to provide distance education students with as many of the opportunities as possible as they would receive in in-person education. The improvement being made in distance education is growing in tandem with the constant technological advancements. Present-day online communication allows students to associate with accredited schools and programs throughout the world that are out of reach for in-person learning.

Sample collection method

Data Collection Methods in this study we have collected data from two main sources that is primary data and secondary data. Research emphasis and motive is on the results of IGNOU study 15233. The data collected through secondary sources whereas primary data have collected through Interview observation & Schedule from a group of students. In the present study research, more than 500 students from different program have enrolled in different session. The present study is descriptive type in nature. The researchers have used the descriptive type survey method during the present study period. Therefore, naturally the investigators have used different tools, techniques, strategies and method of descriptive survey research to collect, analyze and interpret the data.

Sampling population

All the students who were enrolled their IGNOU from different program at IGNOU Regular Study centre 15233 Dhamnod Tehsil Dharampuri, Dist. Dhar Madhya Pradesh during the academic session 2015 to 2017 in the population of nearby villages (around 18000) of Dhar district for the present study.

Data analysis

The present investigators have used Percentage of variables; Mean and Graph for analyzing the data will be computed to find out the different dimensions of students enrolled in different session

Result & discussion

Session wise admission during study period is shown in Fig.1,2,3,4,5,& 6 and major issues of drop off students after 12th class to continue their higher studies is shown percent wise in table 1.

The Major challenges of the study area are :

- *Low socio-economic status:* - Dhar is a rural & tribal region. Most of peoples enjoy low socio-economic status. Miller (1988) has identified four major classes of variables such as cognitive variables, physical variables and motivational variables where disadvantaged learners show poor performance as compared with the advantaged groups.
- *Work related Migration* 40-58% (depending on quality of monsoon) of the working population has to migrate for one to eight months during a year. The latter ones only come back for the big festivals.
- *Child labour:* mainly domestic-girls in household (mothers tend to leave their household duties completely on adolescent daughters), boys in agriculture. Many children migrate with their parents; when share cropping or on construction sites they also work with them - sometimes for free but also for their own earnings (a 4-year old girl was reported to have worked in a cotton field earning Rs 1 000.-- during the season).
- *Poverty* 53% BPL (Census 2003); therefore community demands such interventions, which take care of their basic needs.
- *Psychological problems:* - Financial problems of the tribal region always make the tribals in a very depressed condition. They have lots of wants and but the means to satisfying them is very less. It leads to many psychological issues
- *Academic and administrative problems:* - Even though the number of programmes for the upliftment of tribal education is many, the percentage of people receiving these benefits is very less. Administrative authorities are always showing very neutral attitude towards the education of the tribals.

Session wise admission details at IGNOU Regular Study Center 15233, AIMS, Dhamnood :



Fig 1: IGNOU Admission Detail Session – Jan- 2015 (Total Admitted Students 325)

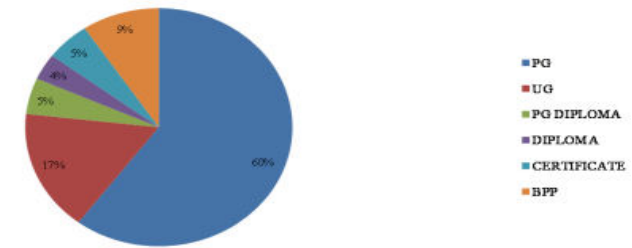


Fig 2: IGNOU Admission Detail Session – July- 2015 (Total Admitted Students 224)

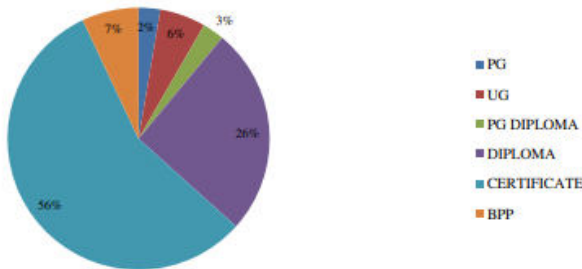


Fig 3: IGNOU Admission Detail Session – Jan- 2016 (Total Admitted Students 300)

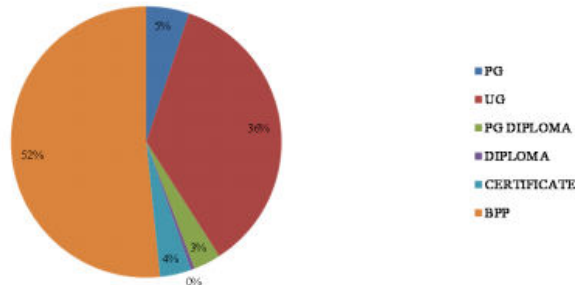


Fig 4: IGNOU Admission Detail Session – July- 2016 (Total Admitted Students 215)

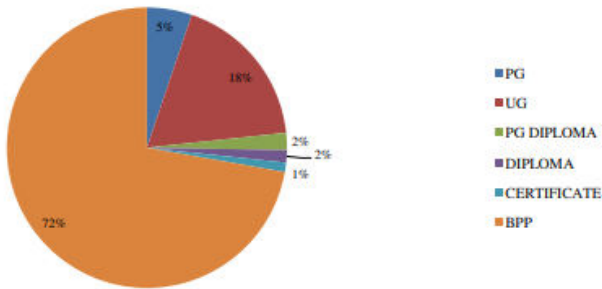


Fig 5: IGNOU Admission Detail Session – Jan- 2017 (Total Admitted Students 558)

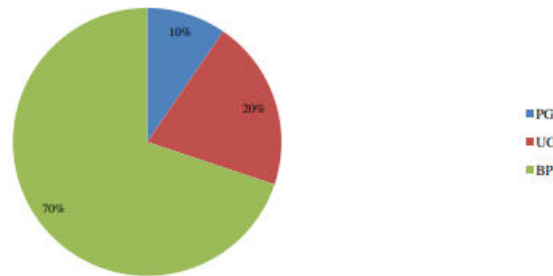


Fig 6: IGNOU Admission Detail Session – July- 2017 (Total Admitted Students 73)

Table 1: Causes of drop out of students in School Education

S.No.	Reasons	Boys	Girls	Total
1	Not livelihood in studies	30.2	22.3	29.8
2	Costs too much	18.9	18.6	18.8
3	Required for household work	7.8	16.1	11.9
4	Required for outside work for payment in cash/kind	9.2	3.4	6.3
5	Repeated failures	6.3	5.7	6
6	Required for work on farm/family business	7.6	3.3	5.4
7	School too far away	1.2	5.9	3.5
8	Further education not considered necessary	2.8	4	3.4
9	Got married	0.2	5.6	2.9
10	Did not get admission	2.1	2.2	2.1
11	Not safe to send girls	0.2	2.7	1.4
12	No proper school facilities for girls	0.2	1.9	1.1
13	Transport not available	0.3	1.6	1
14	Required for care of siblings	0.2	0.7	0.5
15	Difficulty of the course	0.1	0.3	0.2
16	Other	5.2	5	5.1
17	Don't know	0.5	0.5	0.5

Placement of IGNOU students form study center 15223.

Distance learning courses have been a popular demand of students for quite some time now and their relevance is only increasing. In the present scenario due to the outbreak of the corona virus pandemic in the country, all the universities and institutes have shut down their campuses and classes, if conducted, are being delivered in the online mode. The current situation has increased the popularity and demand for distance learning courses manifold. Students all over the country are switching to the digital methods of completing their education and obtaining degrees as uncertainty prevails throughout the Indian educational system as of now.

The career prospects after distance learning are innumerable and diverse. Once you complete a degree through the mode of distance education, you will get various opportunities to build your career in the field of your choice. Depending upon the course that you pursue, there are different job roles for which you can be hired by some top companies. Distance learning programme are not only accepted for recruitment at private companies but for government organizations as well. You can also apply at several start-ups if you wish to explore that area of employment. Some of the sectors which hire students who have a distance education degree have been mentioned below. Apart from these, there are countless other sectors of employment for which you will be considered eligible in different department like Architecture, Railways, Banks, Media & Communications, Management, Marketing, Advertising, Writing, PSUs, Finance, Software, Development, Information Technology, Human resources, Sales, Production, SEO Optimization, Call Centers, Product Design, Counseling, and Public Relations. UNESCO's role in international co-operation for spreading ODL system which consists of both intellectual co-operation and technical assistance. UNESCO (1985), Saima Ghosh et al.(2012). Great importance is given to international interregional and regional co-operation for the promotion of open and distance learning, such as awareness, confidence and capacity building, mapping of relevant experience, success and failures, networking between key players in distance education and educational technology, piloting and adapting educational technologies in different settings, shared development of learning systems programs, and learning materials involving inter-country and industry-country exchanges and joint ventures, technology assessment, examining the actual costs and impact of alternative delivery systems, and support for the development of system wide policy and planning on new technology in education. Co-operation is pursued with intergovernmental organizations such as other UN system agencies, the Commonwealth of Learning, the World Bank, the Commission of the European Union, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and development, regional development banks, private and public sector partners, non-governmental organizations, notably with the International Council for Open and Distance Education (ICDE),(Bhattacharya, M., (1999)Chou et al.(2000), Goirizelaia, et al., (2000) Saima Ghosh et al,(2012).

Which are competent to act in this field. With the advancement of technologies, learning and collaborative work in the future can become radically different from what it is today. Although no one can expect that educational networks will totally replace the traditional lecture. The traditional lecture has some drawbacks: students have to attend at a fixed time, the needs of students with different backgrounds cannot be met and students have no control of their learning pace or environment. Many web-based training and learning platforms have been developed. However, none of these platforms offer an integrated and open platform for learning according to our requirements. Some of them do not support all the necessary ODL services (synchronous, asynchronous and collaborative learning). The ODL system is now a fast growing subject. The time is not far from now when the entire education and training system will be fully controlled by ODL system. In India especially IGNOU is doing key role in this area.

Conclusion

The concept of open learning and distance education system focuses on open access to education and training to make the learners free from the constraints of time and place, and offering flexible learning opportunities to individuals and groups of learners. Open and distance learning (ODL) is one of the most rapidly growing fields of education now a days and it has substantial impact on all education delivery systems. The new ODL system is growing fast because of the development of Internet-based information technologies, and in particular the World Wide Web. The concept of ODL education came from idea where the learners and the teachers can not be in a class room and they should be separated by some geographical distance or maybe they cannot come close to each other to make the entire education system flexible. Day by day students are taking interest to join ODL education system in tribal and rural area and they wants to continue their higher studies and IGNOU is the best option for students .only need to organize awareness programme in rural and tribal region regarding ODL education system and their benefits.

Recommendations

- The courses in distance education should be more job-oriented.
- It should be shaped in such a way so that it becomes more interactive, keeps the learners engaged and counters issues like isolations and disconnectedness
- The study center should be well equipped so that a student feels good to visit it, spends more time and stay connected
- Provide study materials which are simple, easy to understand, have in depth discussion and provide all required information
- Increased number of full time faculties can help better engagement of the students through different course activities. Also it can help increase the duration of personal contact programme
- For building self-confidence among them, students from distance education should be allowed to take part in different on campus placement events.
- The duration of personal contact programme should be increased.
- The fee structure should be rationalized, should be as low as possible so that it does not hamper the students from continuing the courses and helps meeting the basic theme of distance education to enlighten as many people as possible.

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