



## TEACHER EDUCATION THROUGH DISTANCE EDUCATION

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### Abstract

*The teacher is the most important element in any educational program. It is the teacher who is mainly responsible for implementation of the educational process at any stage. Teacher education is a continuous process and its pre-service and in-service components are complimentary to each other. It is necessary to raise the skills of the existing teachers. There are many teachers many who are untrained and unqualified. Teachers therefore need more opportunities than ever before to go on learning throughout their careers. One of the ways of strengthening the teaching profession is to use distance education or open and distance learning.*

**Key Words:** *Instructional systems, Accessibility, Mobility, Interactivity, Measurement, Communication.*



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### Introduction:

Teacher education refers to the policies and procedures designed to equip prospective teachers with the knowledge, attitudes, behaviors and skills they require to perform their tasks effectively in the classroom, school and wider community. It is also known as preservice teacher training. Teacher performs a significant function of providing learning experiences to lead their students from the darkness of ignorance to the light of knowledge. They play an important role to bring about this transformation are teachers. The teacher is the most important element in any educational program. It is the teacher who is mainly responsible for implementation of the educational process at any stage.

### Meaning of Teacher Education:

The National Council for Teacher Education has defined teacher education as a programme of education, research and training of persons to teach from pre-primary to higher education level. Teacher education is a programme that is related to the development of teacher proficiency and competence that would enable and empower the teacher to meet the requirements of the profession and face the challenges therein. According to Goods Dictionary of Education Teacher education means, all the formal and non-formal activities and experiences that help to qualify a person to assume responsibilities of a member of the educational profession or to discharge his responsibilities more effectively.

In 1906-1956, the program of teacher preparation was called teacher training. Its focus was on skill training. Teacher education encompasses teaching skills, sound pedagogical theory

and professional skills. Teacher Education = Teaching Skills + Pedagogical theory + Professional skills.

Teaching skills included providing training and practice in the different techniques, approaches and strategies. It helps teachers to plan and impart instruction, provide appropriate reinforcement and conduct effective assessment. It includes effective classroom management skills, preparation and use of instructional materials and communication skills. Pedagogical theory includes the philosophical, sociological and psychological considerations that enable the teachers to have a sound basis for practicing the teaching skills in the classroom. Professional skills include the techniques, strategies and approaches that help teachers to grow in the profession and also work towards the growth of the profession. It includes soft skills, counseling skills, interpersonal skills, computer skills, information retrieving and management skills and above all lifelong learning skills.

Pedagogical theory includes the philosophical, sociological and psychological considerations that would enable the teachers to have a sound basis for practicing the teaching skills in the classroom. The theory is based on the needs and requirements.

Professional skills include the techniques, strategies and approaches that would help teachers to grow in the profession and also work towards the growth of the profession. It includes soft skills, counseling skills, interpersonal skills, computer skills, information retrieving and management skills and above all lifelong learning skills.

#### **Nature of Teacher Education:**

Teacher education is a continuous process and its pre-service and in-service components are complimentary to each other. It is based on the theory that Teachers are made, not born, in contrary to the assumption, Teachers are born, not made. Since teaching is considered an art and a science, the teacher has to acquire not only knowledge, but also skills. 3) Teacher education is broad and comprehensive. Besides pre-service and in-service programmes for teachers, it is meant to be involved in various community programmes and extension activities, viz adult education and non-formal education programmes, literacy and development activities of the society.

As in other professional education programmes the teacher education curriculum has a knowledge base which is sensitive to the needs of field applications and comprises meaningful, conceptual blending of theoretical understanding available in several cognate disciplines.

The Teacher Education Policy in India is based on recommendations contained in various Reports of Committees/Commissions on Education, the Kothari Commission (1966), the Chattopadhyay Committee (1985), the National Policy on Education (NPE 1986/92), Acharya Ramamurthi Committee (1990), Yashpal Committee (1993), and the National Curriculum Framework (NCF, 2005). The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009, which became operational from 1st April, 2010, has important implications for teacher education in the country.

The broad objective of improving the learning achievements of school children, is to (a) prepare teachers for the school system (pre-service training); and (b) improve capacity of existing school teachers (in-service training).

### **Need of Teacher Education:**

The American Commission on Teacher Education rightly observes, “The quality of a nation depends upon the quality of its citizens. The quality of its citizens depends not exclusively, but in critical measure upon the quality of their education, the quality of their education depends more than upon any single factor, upon the quality of their teacher.”

Clinton indicated that ‘Every community should have a talented and dedicated teacher in every classroom.’ We have enormous opportunity for ensuring teacher quality well into the 21<sup>st</sup> century if we recruit promising people into teaching and give them the highest quality preparation and training”.

### **The objectives of teacher education are to:**

- Provide opportunities for self-learning, reflection, assimilation and articulation of new ideas; developing capacities for self directed learning and the ability to think, be self-critical and to work in groups.
- Provide opportunities for understanding self and developing the ability for self analysis, self-evaluation, adaptability, flexibility, creativity and innovation.
- Provide opportunities to develop professional skills in pedagogy, observation, documentation, analysis, drama, craft, story-telling and reflective inquiry.

### **Distance Learning:**

Distance learning is a term that describes instructional systems which allow learners to participate in learning activities from locations other than that of the instructor or other learners. While the term was first used to describe print based courses (also known as correspondence courses), today the term is used as a synonym for online learning. Today, many instructional technologists prefer the term distributed learning over distance learning since the same learning activities work regardless of the physical distance between learners and instructors. Many distance learning courses are combined with classroom-based learning activities. Such courses are typically referred to as hybrid or blended learning experiences. Distance learning is used from everything from high-schools to continuing education, to getting a doctorate degree online from an accredited university.

The University of London was the first university to offer distance learning degrees, establishing its External Programme in 1858.

Distance education is less a philosophy and more a method of education. Students can study in their own time, at the place of their choice (home, work or learning centre), and without face-to-face contact with a teacher. Technology is a critical element of distance education.

Distance Learning is learning by correspondence courses. Distance education or distance learning is a field of education that focuses on teaching methods and technology with the aim of delivering teaching, often on an individual basis, to students who are not physically present in a traditional educational setting such as a classroom. It has been described as "a process to create and provide access to learning when the source of information and the learners are separated by time and distance, or both.

Distance education means you pursue your educational course say a degree course without attending the college or university. It is done thru correspondence and at final phase thru certain contact programmes.

Distance learning programs originated in nineteenth-century and were conducted through regular mail. Today's distance learning courses tend to be predominantly web-based, taking advantage of discussion forums, video conferencing, and document via wired and wireless mobile learning devices. Currently, just about every major public and private university, and corporate and government training institutions offer distance learning programs. Levels of quality of distance learning vary greatly depending on the sponsoring institution.

**Methods:**

In Distance Education, students may not be required to be present in a classroom, but that also may be a question of option. As for an electronic classroom or Virtual Learning Environment, it may or not be a part of a distance education set up. Electronic classrooms can be both on campus, and off campus. We would call such institutions as using a 'flexible' delivery mode.

Distance Education may also use all forms of instructional technology, from print to the computer. This range will include radio, television, audio video conferencing, computer aided instruction, e-learning/on-line learning etc. (E-learning/online-learning are largely synonymous). A distinction is also made between open learning and distance learning. To clarify our thinking we can say that 'open' education is the system in which the student is free to choose the time and place, but distance education is a teaching methodology used when the student and teacher are separated by time and place. Thus it follows that not all open-learning institutions use distance education and not all organizations that use distance education are open learning institutions. Indeed there are many cases in which students are in traditional classrooms, connected via a video-conferencing link to a teacher in a distant classroom. This method is typical in geographically dispersed institutions. Conversely, the term virtual university is sometimes used to describe an open-learning institution that uses the Internet to create an imaginary university environment, in which the students, faculty, and staff can communicate and share information at any time, regardless of location.

**Five steps for effective Distance Learning:**

**Accessibility:** The most important thing to remember about on-demand learning is that content needs to be easily accessible for everyone.

**Mobility:** Training materials should also be accessible from any device, including different types of smart phones and tablets. Mobile learning content should be presented in short, easily digestible segments.

**Interactivity:** It's also important to keep distance learners engaged with on-demand content. Because instructors won't be there for face-to-face interactions, it's essential to find different strategies for holding learners' attention. One simple way to do this is to include periodic "check-ins," or interactive elements that require an action on the part of the learner.

**Measurement:** Once a company gets started with on-demand distance learning, it's critical to monitor and track the program's performance. Again, learning and development representatives won't be present to observe the audience or to instantly adjust parts of the training that learners are having difficulty with, so real-time tracking data is invaluable.

**Communication:** Finally and probably most important of all a successful on-demand distance learning program relies on strong communication. It's important that they can contact the right people quickly and easily to get the answers they need. Oftentimes, learning

and development representatives should be able to help. But subject matter experts should also be available to provide the audience with more detailed explanations when necessary. Various studies have shown that **distance learning programmes can be as efficient and valuable as regular classroom programmes sometimes even better!** Sometimes the learning material for distance learning programmes by certain universities {eg: Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU)} can be way superior to that of a regular classroom course.

**Advantages of Studying through Distance Learning:**

1. **Its Flexible**
2. **Saves Time & Energy**
3. **Study at your own Pace**
4. **Saves Money**
5. **Convenient**
6. **Access to Study Material & fellow Students**
7. **Study any Topic You Want.**

**Disadvantages of Studying through Distance Learning:**

1. **No Direct Contact with faculty**
2. **Overdependence on Technology**
3. **Lack of Discipline**
4. **It can get Lonely**
5. **Not All Courses are Available/ Taught**
6. **Not valued by all Employers.**

UNESCO October 2001 has conducted the case study on TEACHER EDUCATION THROUGH DISTANCE LEARNING.

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**Its report in brief:**

**Teacher Education through Distance Education:**

There is a need of the world for better and more teachers. The Dakar conference revealed that there were still more than 100 million children out of school. They need teachers as the world moves towards the 2016 target of education for all. It is necessary to raise the skills of the existing 60 million teachers; there are many teachers many who are untrained and unqualified. Teachers therefore need more opportunities than ever before to go on learning throughout their careers. One of the ways of strengthening the teaching profession is to use distance education or open and distance learning.

**Educational needs and problems:**

Many countries still do not have enough teachers. Teacher quality is an issue in most countries. Many teachers are untrained or under qualified or teaching subjects in which they are not qualified or trained. In addition, teachers face a widening range of demands and roles.

The attention given to teacher education and their continuing professional development has in many cases lagged behind that given to other parts of the education system. Some countries lack a policy for it, though the importance of teachers is emphasized in many international reports (e.g., UNESCO 1998, UNESCO 2000, and OECD 2001). Although there is wide recognition that teacher education, training and professional development need to be integrated, in ways that operationalise lifelong learning for teachers, the resources allocated to it are usually inadequate and the opportunities too few. In some countries teachers can expect one week's in-service professional development once every five to ten years. On average, countries spend around one per cent of their annual education expenditure on the continuing professional development of teachers.

All of this creates new challenges for teacher education and continuing professional development: the need to find ways of using existing resources differently, of expanding access to learning opportunities at affordable cost, of providing alternative pathways to initial teacher training, of drawing on new constituencies of the population to work as teachers, of using technologies appropriately to enrich a teachers' context and support practice, of stimulating and supporting teachers' active learning and of reconceptualising the traditional organization of initial teacher education and continuing development.

Initial teacher education and training is the programme of studies which leads to qualified teacher status according to the official standards of a country. It is the basic or first level of qualification for a teacher. It may be taken as a pre-service programme (before a trainee teacher begins work as a teacher) or an in-service one (while an untrained teacher is working as a teacher). Continuing professional development enables teachers to extend existing knowledge and skills and develop new ones. Some of this takes the form of long structured courses leading to formal qualifications diplomas or bachelors or master's degrees). In some countries, qualified and unqualified teachers alike participate in continuing professional development. It may be provided as in-service activities (on-the-job learning) or out-of-school courses of varying length (off-the-job or in vacations).

Some countries have used distance education to provide a route to initial qualifications for significant numbers of teachers, both new entrants to teaching and experienced unqualified teachers. Teachers College and the National Teachers' Institute in Nigeria have long experience of this approach and have become a recognized and institutionalized part of the regular education system in their countries. In a programme that reflects an official policy shift towards more school-based training, the Open University in Britain has run a school-based qualifying programme for graduates who want to enter teaching but have had no professional teacher training.

Distance education is being used to raise the skills, deepen the understanding and extend the knowledge of teachers. Indira Gandhi National Open University in India has a number of programmes of this kind of which its Certificate in Guidance is one. The University of South Africa also offers programmes on this basis. Their B.Ed. programmes are for experienced underqualified teachers and also new entrants to teaching, which serve to meet individual goals as well as contributing to the policy goal of a graduate teaching force. Some programmes are aimed at the upgrading of teachers' qualifications required by official policy as new standards are set in a country (as in China).

In South Africa, the Open Learning Systems Educational Trust is using radio to improve the teaching of English, and to support teachers in this work. In Mongolia, radio and print are used across large distances to re-orient teachers to official changes in curriculum and teaching methods within a country in transition. In response to policy initiatives aimed at establishing the use of ICT in schools, Chile is using ICT to support teachers who are teaching these subjects.

**Summary:**

We need qualified and well trained teachers. They have to develop their teaching skills through training and practice. Teacher education and training is the programme of studies which leads to qualified teacher status according to the official standards of a country. It is the basic or first level of qualification for a teacher. Distance education has been used for teachers' career development as they seek promotion, or aim for the next qualification level, or aspire to become a head teacher, or work in a teachers' college, or become an inspector, teachers need to acquire new skills. A multinational distance education project in West Africa has developed a training programme in school management for head teachers and aspiring heads.

In general, distance education programmes have been developed with varied intentions: of widening access to teaching qualifications; of disseminating good practice; of strengthening the education system as a whole by reaching not only teachers but the wider community; in enabling school-based training and professional development and as a means of strengthening the links between theory and practice, focusing on the school as a site of teachers' learning.

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