



## DISTANCE LEARNING AS INTEGRATION

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“It does not matter where you come from, what really matters is where are you going” (Brian Tracy)

### Abstract

*This conceptual paper deals with the theme of ODL (Open and Distance learning) as an instrument for integration. Integration of the very important asset that the world has today that is 'Humans'. Open and distance learning will bring about benefit to society, nations and eventually the world. It would higher the literacy rate to a great extent. Education, knowledge and learning in any form brings development and progress. It gives an equal opportunity to all people to attain knowledge, convert it to wisdom and utilize it to enhance their talents or become independent and self-sufficient. The following are the reasons that suggest that Open or distance education is a means of integration. Studying by distance learning has the benefit of allowing you to develop your career without having to leave employment. It also means that you can apply new knowledge and insights to your working life while you are still studying, with many students choosing to tackle work-related topics in their dissertations. Distance learning isn't just about career progression. It can also be to deepen your knowledge of a favourite subject or simply for the pure enjoyment of learning. Self-study is central to any distance learning course. However, should you need it, support is always available from your tutors at the University.*



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**Traveling:** A huge advantage to getting an online education is that there is no need to travel to and from class every single day. Someone who doesn't drive or want to spend money on the costs of public transportation every single day will likely choose to get an online education over the traditional classroom.

**Selection of Professors:** Distance learning enables students to learn from some of the most prestigious professors and guest speakers in each field.

**No classroom sitting:** Sitting in the classroom is not the best way for every student to learn. A student may learn better at his own pace and in a different format than traditional schooling options offer.

**Effective:** Online classes are just as, if not more, effective at teaching students than the traditional classroom style of learning. With a wider range of study material and variety to choose from.

Distance learning may not be the ideal option for everyone but should be considered when looking at options for education.

- Learning can be accessed at any place and any time due to the technology.
- Cost-effectiveness
- Multiple ways of curriculum-transaction
- Flexible approach (Openness)
- Skill Development Programmes
- No-profit policy
- Fee very less as compared to face-to-face courses
- Study-material cost included in programme fee
- No fee from Jail-inmates throughout India

Multiple ways of curriculum-transaction:

- Printed Self-learning Material
- Audio-Video Material
- Face-to-face interaction through Counselling
- Teleconferencing (Gyandarshan)
- Interactive Radio-Counselling (Gyanvani)

Flexibility Approach:

- No age limit for admission
- Concept of minimum and maximum duration
- Opportunity to give examination as and when required
- A variety of courses to choose from

There are also tailor made courses to suit the need of the learners.

- In-service Teacher Training Programmes like D.El.Ed., B.Ed., etc.
- Need based programmes for NVS, KVS and other organizations
- PG Diploma Programmes for Higher education Teachers, Principals, Management Functionaries
- ODL is the option for ensuring equity in higher education and with technological initiatives in digital age, it is going to transform the face of higher education in India.

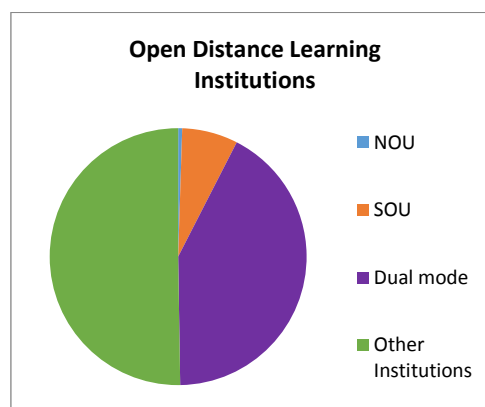
Distance Learning enables a person to build up confidence, competitive spirit and a professional competence. The distance education regards Equity and Quality as inseparable terms. It is the Open and Distance education that gives more meaning and helps to overcome challenges likely to be faced in Inclusive education. It removes all barriers in the teaching learning process. It builds a strong foundation for the Boosting Higher education in India. Due to the availability in all possible places it gives equal opportunities to all kinds of learners. Distance education is doing the same work of imparting knowledge in a more

conducive, comfortable and convenient manner so in my opinion it should not be regarded as an alternative option.

- You can usually also set your own pace of study.
- It is your decision as to when and where you study.
- It doesn't matter where you live – you can gain a degree from anywhere in the world.
- As with a full-time degree, students may find that they gain useful, transferable skills, such as planning and research.
- A distance learning course often costs less than a full-time degree.

Distance education is seen as a flexible and appropriately inclusive to deliver inclusive education. Technology could be used to support inclusion. The advent of technology and open and distance learning could go a long way in widening accessibility to education for the majority of children and or people with disabilities, flexibly so that the learning process can go on. These groups may be able to access materials from home, which is seen as the safest, least expensive environment. This could be incorporated with occasional attendance at local study centers and a form of blended learning that incorporates Open Education Resources (OERs) such as OpenLearn (Khokhar, 2007).

Hurley (2001) suggests that, “best practice suggests that guidance and support should be matched to the needs of the student population and be sufficient for that population (p. 22). This describes very well the challenge for institutions to implement distance learning into excluded communities in an effort to allow them to participate in a supported environment. Distance education experience needs to be inclusive and relevant to the needs of the learners with disabilities. Furthermore, distance education should widen and create access to learning and training opportunities that are tailored to meet the needs of the individual (Walken, 2000, p.60).



Although the four terms are often used to mean the same thing, there are significant differences.

### Open learning

Open learning is primarily a goal, or an educational policy. An essential characteristic of open learning is the removal of barriers to learning. This means no prior qualifications to study, and for students with disabilities, a determined effort to provide education in a suitable form that overcomes the disability (for example, audio tapes for students who are visually impaired). Ideally, no-one should be denied access to an open learning program. Thus open learning must be scalable as well as flexible. Open-ness has particular implications for the

use of technology. If no-one is to be denied access, then technologies that are available to everyone need to be used.

More recently, the move to open content has widened the meaning of open learning. The open content movement would like to see all digital learning materials available free of charge to anyone with access to the Internet

### **Distance education**

Distance education on the other hand 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.

However, distance education programs may not be open.

### **Conclusion / Summary**

The applications for Distance Learning are potentially limitless. Educators are finding that even subjects that seemed beyond its scope, such as surgery, are now being successfully taught in Distance Learning programs:...even some aspects of medicine and surgery have proved to be subjects suitable for this form of education. The distance education work done by the Centre for Medical Education of the University of Dundee in Scotland testifies to this. (Holmberg, 1995: 14)

Distance Learning is an education delivery system that has come of age. The technology now exists to provide an effective and efficient distance education delivery system that overcomes the barriers that prevent individuals from achieving all they can through education: The barriers of distance, time, educational resources, and cost are being overcome with the continued refinement of distance learning programs.

Dr. Garrison, in his research paper conclusion of distance learning states that distance education through online means may be collaborative learning, the challenge lies in understanding the technology in order to apply it to create new and more effective learning situations.

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