

## **WOMEN EMPOWERMENT THROUGH OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING IN INDIA**

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### **Abstract**

*Change is the law of nature .Equality for all; is an essential process to bring structural change in the system of education .In developing countries gender equality is a major problem. Its found from studies women are behind men in every aspect such as social, cultural, political and environmental impacts of development .To bring all equal education role as a common factor. India is a developing country. As it is moving towards 21<sup>st</sup> century with an eye amongst superpowers. In this respect, Education for all is a prime criteria to be amongst the developing nation. Open and Distance Learning is the key solution for the disadvantaged group women. ODL is a tool for accessing higher education for women. ODL provides all divisions of the education system based on gender, age, race, space, income, time etc. This writing highlights on the nature of open and Distance Learning and its access top women education. It also evaluates and helps in the process of women empowerment. It's a noble step to explore and its role in bringing gender equality and empowering women.*

**Keywords:** *Women Empowerment, Open Learning, Distance Learning, Equality.*



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### **Introduction:**

Open and Distance Education is a generic term that includes the range of teaching and learning strategies referred to as correspondence study in both developed and developing countries. Its treated as home study or independent study.

Education is powerful instrument to grow individual capabilities to achieve derived objectives for social and economic progress of a country. Education helps in large scale for individuals by providing new information and opportunities to raise their voice for decision making. But its found women in india get minimum benefits from thw present system of education.

Distance teaching refers to the role of educational institutions in providing education at a distance, where as distance learning refers to role of the student in the learning process of education at a distance . in 1969 the first open university was established in united kingdom and students enrolled into it in 1971. It brings high quality in learning for the people who are debarred from studying in formal universities. These Universities provides diplomas and

depress in education through their open enrolment, distance and internet based education programme . In india Dr. B.R. Ambedkar University was the first of its kind in the year 1982 hyderabad. In modern times, open universities became an invaluable part of National Educational Programmes and policies in both developed and developing countries. Information and communication Technologies(ICTs) plays an important role in empowering women in the developing countries of the world. Now it becomes an important gateway for women to furnish them through acquisition of knowledge leading towards new ways to thinking and to be autonomous and liberated.

As a fundamental right the gate of education is open to all individuals and everyone in society irrespective caste, creed, religion as sex. But as far as data concerned its found that there is a significant difference between men and women with regard to education. The report of UNESCO reflects the literacy rate of women are very lower than the literacy rate of men. Looking in the matter government explores the use of distance education to provide education at large scale because of expensive conventional educational methods. This results in excluding marginalized groups i.e. women who can not cope up with regular campus based leaning because of their productive and reproductive roles(Janki,2006) According to Malik, Belawati, and Baggalay(2005) Distance education has made possible to impact education all Levels particularly tertiary education can be helpful in maximizing economic wealth of a Nation. Open Universities are powerful instruments for equalizing opportunities for higher education and also for Levelling educational imbalances.(Plummer,2000,Satyanarayana and Meduri,2013) Learning takes place outside the schools, colleges and University campuses in Distance education and communication is provided through Radio, Television, Print Media, Internet, Whatsapp, Skype etc. and these is absence of formal lectures(Janaki,2006). According to Kwapong(2007) Distance mode of study helps women because of their roles as mothers, housewives and moreover the distance mode provides flexible time and presents them from regular classroom attendances. Kwapang (2007) also observed that distance mode attracted women students as they get second chance to pursue their studies.

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**Generation Of Distance Education In India**

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Generations of distance Education	Delivery Model
First Generation	Print based system
Second Generation	Multi-Media system
Third Generation	Interactive media system
Fourth Generation	Virtual Learning system

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**Concept of Open learning and distance learning**

According to common wealth of learning (COL) an inter-governmental organisation has differentiated open learning and distance learning. Open learning is an approach which provides learners flexibility and choice i.e. what they learn, how they learn, where they learn and at what pace. Distance learning is one form of open learning in which the learners and tutors are separated by geographical distance. The students are not present in person at site in distance mode of learning. In Distance learning, various modes like e-learning, video-conferencing, email etc are used to access education whereas in open learning students are provided with study materials for the courses through study-centers. It is an economical way to pursue higher education. There are no affiliated colleges to an open university whereas the distance education can be provided by either an open university or a traditional university. Open learning permits learning with minimum barriers related to age, gender and time constraints. Open and distance learning (ODL) is a term used to describe learning that uses ICT to enhance learning. It is a system of learning which includes the following :

- Students support
- Flexible of learning
- Removes barriers to access
- Provides curriculum and instructions design
- Credit to prior learning
- Provides programme delivery
- Meet the diverse needs of the students

**Reason for open and Distance Learning for Women and ALL**

- The need felt in many countries to increase the offer of university education
- A realization that women adult people with jobs, family and social commitments constituted a large group of prospective part time university students.
- A wish to serve both individuals and society by offering study opportunities to adults, among the disadvantaged groups.

- The need found in many professions for further training at an advanced level.
- A wish to support education innovation .

### **Literacy Rate : Female in India**

Constitution provides equal opportunity of education for all irrespective of gender, states are also directed to take steps to provide free and compulsory education until completion of 14 years of age .Still then all these provisions didn't help in respect to female education in India. There <sup>is</sup> a large disparity between male and Female which reflects gender discrimination in the field of education. In our society now also, girls are kept away from getting education. This is due to poverty, conservative parents and cultural values and beliefs.

### **Women Empowerment**

Women empowerment is the strengthening of women to resist community patriarchal forces, social stigmas of society. This ensures their full participation in all aspects of national development. It is said that if a woman is educated, she will educate generations to come which in turn helps in the progress of community, society and Nation at large .Empowerment helps women in gaining self -confidence and gives strength to confront gender inequalities in the home, community ,society national and at international levels. Empowerment is a process of changing the nature and direction of individuals in favour of the marginalized sectors of the society. It is a process to develop confidence of individuals. Empowerment helps individual to think to decide and to take action in an autonomous way, Empowerment of women helps them to identify their strength, opportunities for them and their true role in self making.

Open and Distance Learning provide a conducive learning environment to women learners, Delivery of content is also user friendly and self-learning materials are available in printed and electronic modules.

### **Characteristics of ODL**

Student support services are provided in distance education system because of the peculiar nature and characteristics of students are as follows:

- They are isolated learners.
- They come from diverse background educational ,economic ,social and occupational
- They lack study skills and
- They are highly motivated, committed nature and responsible.

### **Benefits of Open and Distance Learning**

- Improvement in women's social esteem by earning degree.
- Provided second chance to continue their education.
- No requirement to stay on campus to learn degrees.
- Allowed Women to study at their own place time and pace.
- Enhanced the means of empowering women.
- Enabled women to pursue education along with household task.
- Provided flexible system to complete their education.
- Enabled women to earn income.
- It's become education and housework for women
- Flexible system to complete education
- Make women's financially independent
- Respect in community and society.
- Knowledge about the world community
- Make them attached to a larger world.
- Provide carrieropportunity for them

### **ODL: its role in enhancing Education of women in India**

ODL empowered women by easy access to education .The structure of Education of ODL meet the dements of women Education. The system provides various opportunities in benefiting the education for women. According to Choudhary(1995)educated mothers are able to contribute the quality education to their children mere efficiently. ODL allowed all women i.e. especially there in purdah ;allowed them to learn.They study from their homes through ODL and helps in nation building .India from developing to developed Nation only possible by educating women and making them self-dependent .Women who are house wives for years and least hope for further education .ODL system kindle a joy in their eyes to pursue education through ODL.After completion of undergraduate degree those women who are working and Like to pursue their study further they can take help of ODL system. ODL provides women an opportunities for disseminating educational benefits to all and helps in empowerment of women at large.

### **Opportunities through ODL for women-**

Various universities provide vocational Education programme to enhance knowledge and skills of students for their employment. This has been worked out at vocational programme centres. This helps the underprivileged section. By learning some skills like weaving, preparing of food materials, day to day requirements(papad, badi,pickle etc. help them to earn and made them empowerment in the large motive behind the system. Internet, web access also empowered women, to learn different skills. Through twitter, facebook, whatsapp etc. Women frame online Activism which empowered them to organize campaigns and demand for their rights e-learning also another access for women as they study from their homes.

Now women world wide opt for ODL system. This brings their self confidence, better decision making capacity and respect in family and community. ODL helps in updating their skills, improve career opportunities and attained more degrees for satisfactions. Also helps in facing the challenges of life for women. ICT plays an important role for bridging the gap in society. The use of ICT; plays an unique role in making education at distance mode and improve access of women to education with less money and time. Msoffe(2016) concluded that open and Distance Learning provides flexibility of studying while working to the students and also in handling family matters. IT has been playing a great role in empowering women as 33.4% women are employed in Infosys, 30% in TCS and 29% in Wipro(Saroj,2015) MOOCS( Massive Open online Courses) are also changing the paradigm of education that enabled women with adequate skills and knowledge. Increased the literacy rate of the country and state and leads to empowerment of women.

### **Conclusion:**

Women worldwide increasingly opt for distance education. It is an uphill task to educate and empower all women. Still government take initiatives to improve the situation through ODL. Centre for Distance Education lead to empowerment of women especially among rural and tribal region. ODL enabled the women to have access of functional training , made them self sufficient and demand of the social system. It is an opportunity for provide equal opportunity for women and access towards higher education. It helps women to meet challenges and educational aspiration of women. Its an instrument for change not only educationally and economically but in the end process a drastic step towards empowering women.

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