

INSIGHTS ON GENERATIONS OF DISTANCE EDUCATION WITH REFERENCE TO LEARNING MATERIAL

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Abstract

Learning is a lifelong and continuous process. It is a process of resultant changes in behaviour and this is brought out with teaching. The learning process has got no boundaries of age and becomes a lifelong process. It cannot be restricted to the four walls of schools or training institutes but can be taught according to the convenience of the learner. The distance education concept comes with an emphasis of planned with opportunities for learning at the student's convenient time and location. Distance education is two-way communication between the learner and facilitator for providing opportunities to the learner to engage in self-study with the freedom of time, space and pace. Education takes place throughout life in many forms.

Today, Distance education is equipped through technological advances. It took many generations for education, which is now imparted through distance mode of education. This research paper highlights the generations of distance education.

Keywords: DE: Distance Education, DeG: Distance Education Generations, SLM: Self – learning material



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Introduction

Distance education effectively eliminates obstacles in terms of time and space making the learning process comfortable for distance learners. The methodologies, tools and techniques, used aid in increasing productivity and flexibility of learning processes. According to Rowntree, Derek 1986, (2020), 'Employing the techniques and media technologies like radio, television, video, audio, a computer system with variable complexity and interactive software, inter alia, constitute new signs of the validity and origin of the principles that support

education for all, the learning to learn, personalized teaching-learning, the essential lifelong education that, ultimately, contribute to materializing, in a concrete and effective way, permanent or continuous educations. It took about three generations for distance mode of education which is seen in today's world.

According to Peters O. (1973), Distance Education is a method of imparting knowledge, skills and attitudes which is rationalized by the application of division of labour and organisational principles as well as by the extensive use of technical media, especially to reproduce high-quality teaching material which makes it possible to instruct a great number of students at the same time where ever they live. It is an instructional form of teaching and learning.

Generations of Distance Education

Distance education is going through a paradigm shift from one generation to the next generation. Distance education has evolved through many technologies which are stated as distinctive features of each generation. According to the research article by Anderson T and Dron J, in 2011, distance education can be classified into three generations.

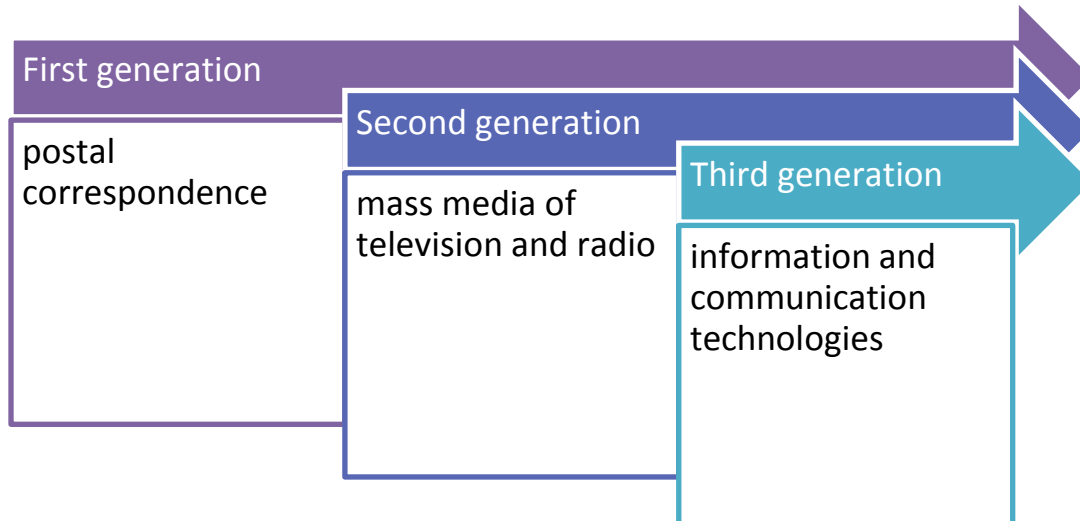


Fig 1: Generations of Distance Education

Printed learning material and communication between students and their teachers and tutors via postal mail have been the fundamental elements of first generations. The first generation of distance education was through postal or mail correspondence. The learning matter was posted to the learners, who would studied and mailed their feedbacks as doubts and difficulties to the teachers. In the first generation, also termed as ‘correspondence’ education,

the teachers transformed the traditional learning materials into self-learning materials. Such teacher-prepared learning material is mailed to the learners who learned at a distance.

This was followed by second generation, defined by the mass media of television, radio, and film production. The learning matter instead of being mailed was telecasted through the mass media like radio or television. The recorded learning material was also used, in the form of recorded audio or videotapes. The learning material which was present in the postal form in the earlier generation was transformed into electronic format.

The third generation of distance education exploits information and communication technologies (ICT) to provide an interface with the students in addition to content delivery. The interactivity between teachers and students and among students took place due to the usage of technology in distance education. The third-generation of distance education introduced interactive technologies like the web, video conferencing, interactive chat sessions and video lecturing. The learning material which was telecasted through the radios or televisions was transformed into digital format with the use of the Internet. Hence the point which is distinguished is that the learning material remained constant even if the generations of distance education emerged.

The major disadvantage of radio and broadcast television for teaching was the lack of a 2-way communications channel between teacher and student. Synchronous communication between the teachers and students was absent. As progressively sophisticated interactive communications technologies became available. They were used by the teachers. This also changed the communication from asynchronous to synchronous communication.

Currently, the most popular media are digital based communication including electronic mail (E-mail), bulletin board systems (BBSs), and Internet, telephone-based audioconferencing, and videoconferencing.

Comparative Analysis of the Generations

It should be noted that none of these generations have been eliminated over time, rather, the repertoire or stock of options available to distance educators and distance learners has increased. Similarly, all three generations of distance education described are very much in existence even today. The participants in all three generations remain the same – teacher, student, and learning – content. With the emergence of the third generation, the distance learner studies from the Web sites, e-books, tutorial materials, videos and also through the printed hard copy learning material.

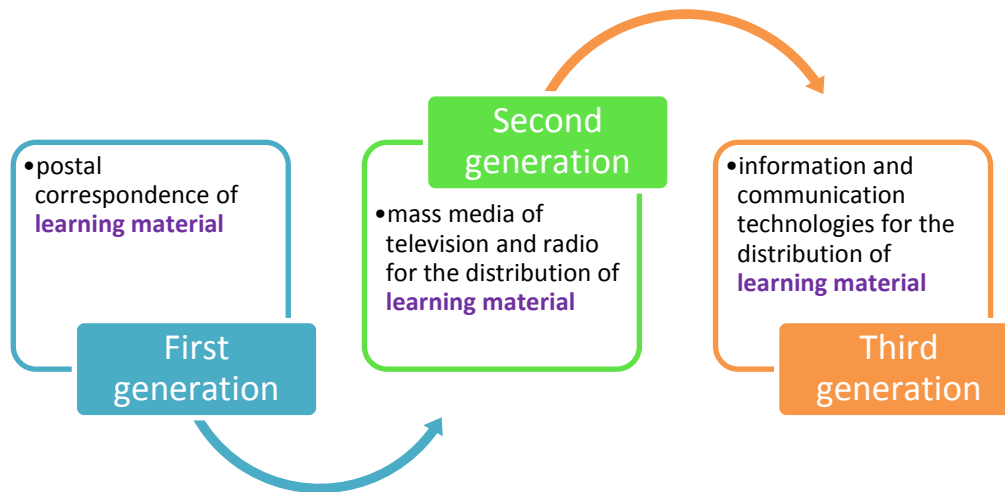


Fig 2: Learning material with generations of distance education

Hence, the self-learning material can be either in print form or in digital form, but it is an integral part of distance learning. It is clear that, even if the novel generations advance, the distance learner is the central part of distance education, and quality self-learning material should be provided to the distance learner for enhancement of knowledge and skills of the distance learner.

Conclusions

Post-Covid – 19, distance education evidenced to be a popularised mode of education, through all the levels of education, i.e. from Kindergarten (KG) to Postgraduate level (PG). With the above stated three generations of distance education, it is concluded that though the generations advanced the learning material remained an integral part of distance education.

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