CHAPTER – 3

DISTANCE EDUCATION: A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 HISTORY

The term ‘distance education’ probably appeared first in 1892\(^1\) in a catalog of the University of Wisconsin. It is not yet clear, when distance education was formally offered yet the earliest mention so far known of it, is found in the Boston Gazette of 20th March 1728\(^2\). In this gazette Calev Philips, teacher of the new method of shorthand, advertised that any person in the country desirous to learn this art, may, by having several lessons sent weekly to her/him, be as perfectly instructed as those that live in Boston. About a hundred years later we find more conclusive evidence of distance education with the advertisement in English in “Lunds Weckoblad” no.30 1830\(^3\) a weekly published in Old Swedish University City of Lund offered to ladies and gentleman an opportunity to study composition through the medium of post. “The most widely known use of distance education was by Sir Issac Pitman in1840 when the penny post started in the United Kingdom.”\(^4\)

The first organized distance education was introduced in Germany in 1856\(^5\) by the Frenchman Charles Toussaint and German Gustav Langenscheidt who formed and organised a school in Berlin for language teaching by correspondence. The University of London was the first university in the world to
offer distance learning degrees – more than a century before the open universities were founded – through its External System established in 1858. Another claim that distance education invented in Japan in 1882 was made in 1898 through an advertisement but this is not confirmed and the solid documentary proofs regarding distance education are related with University of London. In Britain three universities, that firstly, started distance education programmes were, University of London, The Royal University of Ireland and the University of St. Andrews.

In the USA, a number of developments led the way for the adoption of correspondence studies by the extension departments of American universities. The mother of American correspondence study was Anna Eliot Picknor, daughter of a Harvard University Professor, who founded and ran the Boston based society to encourage study at home from 1873 to 1897. By the end of 19th century, correspondence education was popularly practiced and accepted as valid means of studies. It paved the way for education to a scattered population over vast distance and to the deprived and disadvantaged sections of society. Australian correspondence school system originated in 1914 and the University of Queensland spread correspondence education in Australia. During the 1920’s the Soviet Union begin to use correspondence education and established a central institute for correspondence education in 1927. Introduction of correspondence higher education in India was largely influenced by the Soviet correspondence education. In India distance education started first in University of Delhi through its department known as School of Correspondence Courses and continuing
education in 1962 with initial admission of 900 students\textsuperscript{5}. Now this department has been renamed as School of Open Learning (a part of Campus of Open Learning). The school offers undergraduate and post graduate degree courses in the subject of arts, humanities and commerce. In the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, distance education improved quantitatively and qualitatively because of the developments in communication technology, sophisticated means of print materials, improved design of instructional materials, better support services for students and establishment of the British Open University in 1969\textsuperscript{9}.

3.2 CONCEPT AND MEANING

Distance education originated as correspondence education. People used to call it correspondence education because the printing materials were distributed to the students by post and later the students also sent their assignments to the tutors by post. Correspondence education is teaching, by means of, so called self-instructional texts, combined with communication in writing as the basic element of teaching. Later the printed material was also supplemented by the other mediums of communication like audio cassettes etc. As a result of other supplemented mediums of communication in distance education and its wide scope and popularity the term correspondence education was felt to be narrow. Distance education was designed and adopted in United Kingdom, North America, Australia, and New Zealand. It is a generic term which includes a wide range of teaching-learning strategies. It is also known by many other names such as home study, independent study, external study, extra mural system and off campus programme, distance teaching, distance learning, open
learning, flexible learning, material based learning, computer assisted learning, self managed learning, supported self study, resource based learning, technology based learning, distributed learning, independent learning, independent study, flexi study, self managed learning etc.\textsuperscript{10}

Generally, people regard the terms open learning and distance education synonymous. “Distance Education has been defined as an educational process in which a significant proportion of the teaching is conducted by someone removed in space and/or time from the learner. Distance education programmes have often used a combination of educational media, old and new, varying from print to broadcasts to audio and video recordings, and included opportunities for face to face study as well as learning from recorded material.”\textsuperscript{11} The term ‘Open learning’ has been used to refer to the process of making learning available to learners no matter who they are or where or when they wish to study. The term ‘Open’ has been taken to imply open access for students regardless their previous qualifications or age.”\textsuperscript{12} Open learning describes the ways of helping individuals to take responsibilities of their own learning. It gives more freedom to the students. Distance education stresses the means by which education is achieved whereas open learning emphasises on the objectives and character of the educational process. “Distance Education symbolises the transformation of education from the stage of craft of technology, enduring it with high flexibility and vastly increased productivity, by transforming knowledge to the people, in place of transporting people to the place of knowledge”\textsuperscript{13}
Distance education, formally as well as non-formally includes three kinds of activities by the organization that operates it. These are (a) The development of self-instructional study material; (b) Teaching at a distance by comments in writing on students work submitted and (c) Counselling and students support through contact programmes etc.

To define distance education is a difficult task because the word distance has different meanings with reference to its contents. It does not merely give an idea of physical distance from the location of teaching but also the transactional distance. The diversity of practices, systems and projects which are covered by the term distance makes it difficult to define. A rapid evolution of methods and structures in the recent past contributed greatly to diversity in the field of distance education.

DEFINITIONS

Some of the important and popular definitions given by Dohmen, Peters, and Moore are as follows:

“Distance education is a systematically organised form of self-study in which student counselling, the presentation of learning material and the securing and supervising of students’ success is carried out by a team of teachers, each of whom has responsibility. It is made possible by means of media which can cover long distances. The opposite of distance education is direct education or face-to-face education: a type of education that takes place with direct contact between lecturers and students.”

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“Distance teaching education (Fernunterricht) is a method of imparting knowledge, skills and attitudes which is rationalised by the application of division of labour and organisation principles as well as by the extensive use of technical media, especially for the purpose of reproducing high quality teaching material which makes it possible to instruct great numbers of students at the same time wherever they live. It is industrialized form of teaching and learning”\(^{15}\)

“Distance teaching may be defined as the family of instructional methods in which the teaching behaviours are executed apart from the learning behaviours including those that in a contiguous situation would be performed in the learner’s presence, so that communication between the teacher and the learner must be facilitated by print, electronic, mechanical or other devices”\(^{16}\)

A comprehensive and general definition of distance education was first proposed by Keegan in 1980\(^{17}\). He tried to synthesize most of the definitions with the following seven elements of distance education:

1. The quasi-permanent separation of the teacher and learner throughout the length of the learning process.

2. The influence of an educational organisation both in planning and preparation of learning materials and in the provision of students support services.

3. The use of technical media, print, audio, video or computer to unite teacher and learner and carry the content of the course.
4. The provision of two way communication so that the students may be benefited from or even to initiate dialogue.

5. The quasi permanent absence of the learning group throughout the length of the learning process so that people usually are thought as individuals and not as groups.

6. The presence of more industrialised features then in conventional oral education.

7. The privatisation of educational learning

The definition of Keegan indicates middle ground between the extremes of defining distance education so narrowly that it becomes an abstraction which does not correspond to existing reality or defining distance education so broadly that it becomes meaning less. Keegan does not include the concept of:

(a) The use of printed, audio based, video based and computer based learning materials in classroom lectures, theaters, seminars, tutorials and laboratory sessions for on campus programmes.

(b) The use of printed, audio based, video based learning material and computer in private study, in his definition.

3.3 GENERATIONS OF DISTANCE EDUCATION

Distance education is one of the areas of education where communication technology has been in focus in the task of teaching for over thirty years. Distance education institutions are deliberately designed and structured to exploit the educational benefits of technology. Kaufman characterizes the three
generations of distance education as a progressive increase in learner control and opportunities for dialogue. The first generation is characterized by pre-dominant use of a single technology and lack of direct student’s interaction with the teacher originating instruction. Correspondence is the typical form of first generation of education. The second generation of education is characterized by integrated multi-media approach, with learning material especially designed for study at a distance with two way communication mediated by a third person. Autonomous distance teaching universities belong to this second generation. The third generation of distance education is based on two way communication media which allow direct interaction between the teacher and the remote learner individually or as groups. Third generation technologies resulted into a much more equal distribution of communication between learner and teacher and also between students. Third generation distance education is paving the way for a new type of educational organizations.

James and Gardner¹⁹ have characterised the detailed below generations of distance education on the basis of technology used for delivery of instructions to the learners:

**Generation 1:** Technology of Correspondence study: Print materials.

**Generation 2:** Technology of Teleconferencing: audio and Video-tapes, Satellite-based communication.

**Generation 3:** Computer-based Technology

**Generation 4:** Technologies of the future: video-desktop.
Taylor (1998) identified four generations of distance education with reference to the development and use of delivery technologies.

**First generation** – The Correspondence model: Print


**Third generation** - The Tele learning model: Audio teleconferencing, Video teleconferencing, Radio/TV Broadcast Audiographic communication.

**Fourth generation** - The Flexible learning method: Interactive multimedia, Internet-based access, Computer mediated communication.

Powar analysed four generations of distance education as indicated below:

**Generation 1**: Technologies of correspondence education: print, audio-tape, video-tape.

**Generation 2**: Through the air technology: Radio and TV broadcast, interactive TV, Teleconferencing (video and audio)

**Generation 3**: Computer-based technologies: Software packages, CD-ROM, multi-media, e-Mail, Internet

**Generation 4**: Technologies of the immediate future: video desktop, virtual classroom.
3.4 COMPONENTS OF DISTANCE EDUCATION

Every teaching system requires certain inputs to ensure that the teaching imparted through that system satisfies the needs of the learners. There are a number of basic components that go to make the distance education system. These constitute the most essential aspects or inputs for imparting education through the distance education system. These components are as follows:

3.41 Course material
3.42 Staff
3.43 Student support services
3.44 Communication media
3.45 Evaluation of response sheet, assignments
3.46 Learners

3.41 Course Material

Course preparation in distance education includes its planning and development. It covers the production of radio and television programmes, audio cassettes, video cassettes, computer software and print and non-print material. The steps at the course planning level are:

- “Assessment of needs
- Defining objectives
• Analysing resources and limitations
• Selection of criteria from alternatives
• Development trials
• Evaluation and feedback."^{22}

3.411 **Self Learning Instructional Material (SLIM)**: SLIM form the base for teaching and learning. In distance education system learners are away from the teachers, therefore, the teacher’s role is performed by SLIM. SLIM is totally different from normal text books. This material is brief and summarised, objective, written in personal style, addressing learners’ difficulties and designed for identified groups. Normally it is self-explanatory, self contained, self directed, self motivating, self evaluating, and self learning in nature. While preparing SLIM, special care is taken to ensure the quality of the course material. It is normally divided into a number of units. The prevailing SLIM are mainly designed on the basis of behavioural and objective-rational approach in which absolute knowledge is presented in a linear manner. According to constructivism, knowledge in the form of concepts and content should be presented from multiple perspectives.^{23}

In this dynamic age of information we are having the ICT facilities, even then we can not deny the importance of printed material. Maintenance of a course material and its renewal are important because of new developments in the subject matter of the course. To renew the course material the following considerations are taken care of:
• “Age of the course,
• Degree of its success,
• Duration of its operation,
• Stock position,
• Life expectancy,
• Student body,
• Availability of work force on resources and institutional priority.”

3.42 Staff

Staff development is one of the priority activities of a distance teaching system. There are several theoretical and practical objectives of staff development. The Commonwealth of Learning (COL) Round Table Conference on Training, 1990, emphasising the importance of adequately trained manpower, stated that training programme should suit needs of the institution; it should be available to all categories of staff according their own experience with providing a sequence of training opportunities for career advancement. In higher distance education system several categories of staff perform various tasks e. g. personnel finance, building, estates, public relations, library services, broadcasting, printing, teaching and assessment of assignments etc. Broadly the staff can be grouped together in three basic categories like (a) Facilitators: who are the bridge between the students and the instructor. They set up equipments, collect assignments and they act as the instructor’s on-sight eyes and ears. (b) Supporting staff: these
people provide the support services like student’s registration, material duplication and distribution etc. (c) Administrators: these are decision makers and referees. These people work closely with technical and support personnel, ensuring that technological resources are effectively deployed to carry on the institutions academic mission.

3.43 Student Support Services

In distance education system the student and teacher are separated from each other because of many factors. The role of the conventional classroom teacher is performed by SLIM in distance teaching. Self instructional print and non-print materials are not fully supported for independent learning and the learners face three basic problems in distance learning mode These are: (a) problems relating to study techniques and learning difficulties: (b) problems because of interaction with a remote and impersonal institution, and (c) personal problems which affect the students work. As per another classification the barriers of students progress are study related, time related, institution related and personal.

The development and maintenance of student support services is of vital importance in distance education. Many of the distance teaching institutions acknowledge the need of student support services. In plain words, it has no matter how good teaching materials are and how efficient the distribution system of distance organization is, distance learners have to work by themselves with the support that comes from counsellor or through personal contact programmes. We need to consider how we can give them the individual encouragement, help, and
guidance which they need and to overcome the barriers and distance so that the learners do not feel loneliness. Student support services are related with admissions, registration and records, examinations, information services, advertising and counselling and instructional support. The popular and important forms of student support services are

- Information support
- Guidance support
- Counselling support
- Tutorial support and
- Library support

3.431 Information Support: The learners in distance education system may require many types of information because of separation from teachers and the institutions. Some time the distance students/learners have several wrong notions about the systems that are prevalent in the society. Therefore, proper information to the students as well as prospective students is to be provided through a variety of literature on the institutions’ goals, functions and processes.

3.432 Guidance Support: Guidance is a continuous process of helping individual’s development to the minimum of his/her capacity in the direction most beneficial to himself/herself and to society. According to G.E. Smith “The guidance process consists of a group of services to individuals to assist them in securing the knowledge and skills needed in making adequate choices, plans and interpretations essential to satisfactory adjustment in a variety of areas”\(^\text{25}\).
Guidance is provided by a wide range of media i.e. self-directed materials, on campus provision, telephone counselling, referral to local agencies, local advisors and local workshops etc.

3.433 **Counselling Support:** Counselling is an advice, help and support given to the students to enable them to make satisfactory progress in the system. Counselling is provided to the learners on matters important to their success. It is helpful to solve their problems and arising the feeling of mutual understanding between learners and the teacher. It is also useful to work out a plan for solving difficulties and to help the learners know better their interests, abilities and aptitudes. It also inspires them for successful career and further planning for educational and vocational choices. The media for providing counselling services are many, like face to face, group counselling, by telephone, by letter, hand book, audio and video cassettes, broadcasting and computers.

3.434 **Tutorial support:** Tutorial is a course related support provided for a particular learner or group of learners. It is generally provided at local level where the learners and tutors are in direct contact. The tutorial provides appropriate help towards mastering the academic context of the course units by providing explanation and clarification of the teaching materials. It also offers opportunity for and assistance towards improving basic and course specific study. It also enables students to express, explore, modify, balance and test their knowledge through group activities. The students are encouraged for academic progress and becoming independent learners.
3.435 **Library Support:** The library is an essential component of a distance education system. A good library with reading room, postal library facilities, mobile library, book bank etc. with efficient and prompt services are essential requisites for the success of distance education system. The library can facilitate the students through material, information services and user services. An ideal library in distance education system should have reference books, text books, self-instructional materials, and audio-visual equipments including computers, photocopiers, lecture halls and rooms for learners to meet and use audio-visual materials. The library can support the learners in the matter of how to use the library collection, providing reprographic services, guidance on the suitability of material to support their courses and assistance in developing reading skills. For the guidance of the librarians of distance teaching institutions some of the documents guidelines have been published by the Association of College and Research Libraries in the United States, Canadian Library Association and equivalent professional organizations in Australia. For library support to distance and distributed learning, these guidelines are very important as they assert the rights of distance learners to equivalent levels of library support as traditional students.

3.44 **Communication Media**

Personal/direct contact between the teacher and the learner was the only media of communication since time immemorial. Printed material facilitated the learners at large but it could not play the role of the teacher, as a result teachers retained their role in educational process. The introduction of postal service
helped in the inception of correspondence education. As the technology advanced, postal service was followed by wireless, which gave birth to the radio broadcast. With the passage of time after the invention of television, the electronic media helped institutes of distance education throughout the world for quick and effective dissemination of information to the learners. According to Bates the technologies which were being used in teaching up to 1980 were book, postal service, radio, film, and television and after 1980 the technologies are audio and video cassettes, telephone teaching, Computer based learning, cable and satellite T.V., tele text, video conferencing, e-mail, computer conference and remote interactive databases.

James Taylor presented distance education generations with reference to the development of technologies and their characteristics of delivery. The characteristics features of these generations are presented in Table 3.1.

Media and technology both have different meaning with particular context to communication. Each medium has its own unique way of presenting knowledge. A single medium may be carried by several different technologies for example television can use satellite, cable, video cassettes and VCDs etc.

The technologies which are popularly used in the distance education system are interactive and non-interactive. In the group of interactive technologies telephone, television, cable T.V. and computer assisted instructions are mainly used while in the group of non-interactive technologies radio, television telecast (one way), and satellite television are used.
Table 3.1: Models of Distance Education: A Conceptual Framework

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Models of Distance Education and Associated Delivery Technologies</th>
<th>Characteristics of Delivery Technologies</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Flexible Access</td>
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<tr>
<td>First Generation - The Correspondence Model</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Print</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Second Generation - The Multimedia Model</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Print</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Audiotape</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Videotape</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Computer-based learning (eg CML/CAL)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Interactive video (disk and tape)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Interactive multimedia (IMM)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Third Generation - The Telelearning Model</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Audio-teleconferencing</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td>- Videoconferencing</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td>- Audiographic Communication (eg Smart 2000)</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Broadcast TV/Radio + Audio-teleconferencing</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fourth Generation - The Flexible Learning Model</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Interactive multimedia (IMM)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>(eg Email, CoSy etc)</td>
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3.441 **Radio**: Interactive radio is defined as “an educational methodology that actively engages learners in learning through carefully designed audio programs, such as radio or cassette.” Radio technology in the distance education system is time and cost effective. It gives local touch to the learning programmes. It is useful in reaching isolated rural audiences quickly and inexpensively. Radio can be used to enrich the material delivered to the learners. The only limitation of radio technology is that the learners must be available at the scheduled broadcast hours. Radio broadcast services are basically to support the learners’ knowledge which s/he acquired through the printed course material or any other media.

3.442 **Television**: T.V. is the upgraded technology of radio to all the television delivery systems in which programmes are transmitted to receivers without an interactive connection with the source. There are three principal types of delivery systems i.e. direct to home television telecast, broadcast satellite and cable. The broadcast transmission works on the principle of transmission of powerful electro magnetic waves through the air. The satellite transmission refers to an orbiting device in the space that receives signals from stations on the earth and re-transmits them to distant locations. The cable transmission is a television distribution system consisting of a closed circuit and wired network for transmitting signals from an origination point to the members of the network. Direct to home television telecast is a new emerging technology that works on the principle of direct broadcast by satellites. This is a system of television programme distribution in which programmes are transmitted directly from a satellite to the homes. This transmission uses digital technology to compress a
decoded satellite signal. Open universities all over the world make use of television technology for providing educational facilities to their learners. In India IGNOU is using this media effectively since 1991.

3.443 **Audio-Video Cassettes:** Video cassette is an educational media used in the distance learning system. It is a child of broadcast television with same features as that of television technology. These cassettes can be played independently at predetermined transmission times. Video cassettes provide full control of the medium over television broadcast. The learners can view these cassettes whenever they want. The audio cassettes are replacing the radio programmes because these pre-recorded cassettes can be played anytime, anywhere with the use of audio cassettes player. These cassettes are ranked as the most useful component of the distance education system.

3.444 **Telephone:** It is a powerful educational tool. Teaching by telephone has been used in a number of distance education contexts. It offers two way interactive communications across distance. Through telephone the learner/student can be helped in clarifying the difficulties of course materials. The learners can discuss specific issues and topics. They can discuss problems of recent written assignments or strategies for the forth coming difficulties with the counsellors or the coordinators of the study centre. An instructional telephone conferencing network can be helpful to the learners as a supplement to the printed course material for their study. The learners can also use the facility of telephonic conversation to analyse, clarify or making simple explanation of lessons in the
printed course material. The use of telephone is economical, popular, convenient and cost effective in distance education.

3.445 **Computers:** Computers have been in use for more than twenty years in the field of education. They are used in the off-line and on-line mode in distance education. In off-line mode the computers are used as stand alone mode or as an independent system and on-line computer is a concept of creating a complex learning network which theoretically links all distance learners with their teachers and with a central institution. Computer is a powerful text processing tool used by authors and editors creating the manuscripts for study material before the production. The writers and editors of the course material can be facilitated by the computer network and video-conferencing, etc.

Computers are the dynamic force in distance education system because of the rapid development of computer networks. It is a new means of over coming time and distance to reach the learners. The use of computers in distance education system can be in the following ways:-

**Computer Assisted instruction (CAI)**\(^{29}\) : Computers are used as self contained teaching machine to present discrete lessons to achieve specific and limited educational objectives.

**Computer Managed Instruction (CMI)**\(^{30}\): In CMI computers storage and retrieval capabilities are used to organize instruction and track student records and progress.
Computer Mediated Communication (CMC): It describes computer applications that facilitate communication viz e-mail, computer conferencing and electronic bulletin boards.

Computer Based Multimedia (CBM): The development of hyper card, hyper media and other powerful and sophisticated computing tools have gained importance in the field of distance education. CBM integrates voice, video, and computer technologies into single and easily accessible delivery system.

Internet is the largest most powerful computer network, connecting personal computers, sophisticated main frames and high speed super computers around the globe. The following services on internet can be used for distance education:-

- **Electronic mail**: It is a quick and cheap means of delivering the messages to the people through a computer network to a computer e-mail address.

- **Bulletin boards**: Bulletin boards can be accessed through Internet. The Usenet is a collection of thousands’ of news groups organized topically and LISTSERV provides discussion forums on a variety of topics.

- **World Wide Web (WWW)**: Hyper text was developed to over come the problem of incompatibility. It permits the information to be linked in web like structure. WWW is an exciting and innovative front for the Internet users. The WWW has made the Internet more user friendly with the integration of graphics, text and sound in one single tool. It can be used by the educators to build a classroom homepage covering information about the class syllabus, literature references and exercises. The
instruction can also provide various useful links on web to the students like wikis, Blogs etc.

Computers and IT have revolutionized the whole world in distance education and e-commerce. Every development whether in IT or in any sphere of life, brings challenges and difficulties. The application of computers in distance learning system is limited because the computer networks are costly to develop; the technology is changing too rapidly, computer illiteracy still exists widely and the learners need motivation and proficiency in computer operation before they can successfully function in a computer based distance learning environment.

3.45 Evaluation of Response Sheets/Assignments

Teaching is a two way process. In the class room setting teachers directly deliver instruction by the word of their mouth. In distance teaching the teacher and the taught are spatially separated from each other. Thus face to face interaction is not possible. Therefore in distance learning the efficacy of instruction is judged through student performance in assignment. The assignment is the single most important mechanism for promoting and pacing the individual study and offers the only vehicle available to all the students for feed back and dialogue with a tutor about their individual progress. While framing the questions of the assignment the teacher must bear in mind that the questions are not the tricks of the trade or the rule of the thumb. Questions should be thought provoking and be able to stimulate thinking. Questions should be set keeping in view all types of students. The evaluation of the assignments may be done manually as well as mechanically. The assignments which carry objective type
questions are generally mechanically evaluated with the help of a computer. And the other response sheets having descriptive answers are evaluated manually by the teachers. Thus, the assignment on the basis of evaluation mechanism is categorized into Computerised Marked Assignments (CMA) and Tutor Marked Assignments (TMA).

There are various aspects of evaluation of the students assignments: - The tutors should give constructive suggestions which should be concrete, pointing to exact mistakes rather than just saying that one's performance was not up to the mark. The comments should be in relation to clarify expression, comprehension, encouraging to extra reading, related to earlier lessons and to encourage critical thinking.

The assignment should be returned back to the students in a definite time period without any delay in dispatch of these sheets which may be the cause of losing the interest of the students in their study. This time period is also important to motivate the students to send the next assignments. Response sheet assignments are essential for students and faculty both. However in practice this is neglected and the attitude of the students and teachers is causal. There is a need of educating the students about the utility of these response sheets.

3.46 Learners

Learners in distance education mode are an essential component of the system. Generally, the learners who enroll themselves for various programmes and courses through distance mode are supposed to be mature, independent and adult. But the learners always need to know some of the strategies and
technologies of learning, the characteristics of the learning environment and other requirements of the course and institution through which they have enrolled for the study. Distance learners can be divided on the characteristics of age, gender, social status, economic status, educational status and geographical location. Age is not a barrier in enrolling for a course in distance education. Gender is an important factor in providing the necessary support to distance learners. In distance education mode the learner of any gender is provided equal opportunities. A social disparity of class and caste also does not have any impact in distance mode of education. Educational and economic status of the learner does not pose any problem in distance education mode as there is no disparity between rich and poor. The institutions and learning centres are located in the city areas which are very far to the students who are away from the cities. Everyone can not afford to visit the city centres only for educational purpose, thus, the education through distance mode has abridged this gap of rural and urban. Learners may reside in any part of the country irrespective of the location of their university or the institution concerned.

3.5 NEED AND PURPOSE OF DISTANCE EDUCATION

It is a well known fact that education is a life long process, one is never too old to learn and there is no limit of knowledge and its attainments. Distance education emerges out of this principle. Distance education compensates those who are not able to attend regular institution and they are conscious to learn at all stages of life. They have the strength of learning at their own pace. Distance education is not only for poor countries but it is being popularized in the
advanced nations because it is no way inferior to any other format of education. There are various reasons for its popularity in the developed as well as other countries, the entire world over. The scientific and technological changes have produced so much of the knowledge, it is difficult for an individual to keep up-to-date with the recent developments, therefore the people for the purpose of keeping up to date knowledge select the distance learning mode.

Another important reason for introducing distance education is the increasing number of applicants in educational programmes. In Asia and other developing countries the population is increasing rapidly and the facilities for regular enrolment in the educational institution, is limited, therefore, the people choose the distance learning mode for continuing their education.

In addition to the updating knowledge and rapid increase of population the geographical distance is also one of the factors for the popularization of the distance education mode. As it is true that education is a life long process therefore one needs to study not only for the job but for the other problems of the life also. The thrust of learning more, gives an opportunity to the individual to keep abreast using the distance learning mode in their life.

When someone is employed in the job and later he or she has some avenues of promotion with the improvement of qualifications or otherwise one needs to go for self learning process. Distance education provides him/her avenues to do so in an effective and convenient way.

Human life is very complex having various problems and to sort out those problems one may need different solutions of improvement of language,
socialisation, enlightenment, improvement of qualification and developing better understanding of the surroundings etc. All these multi-dimensional needs conveniently can be sorted out through distance education programmes.

In India after a definite period man is socially and educationally isolated. In such conditions to keep himself busy, updated and enlightened one should go for distance education mode as the books are the best friends of the man.

In the society those who do not get the opportunity of taking the formal education because of geographical distances, lower strata in the society or the traditional convention of lower section of the society, are provided the opportunity for education through the distance education mode, women, rural youth, part time workers and the daily wages labours, who do not have the time for attending the classes in the formal education system, need the distance education system.

### 3.6 INDIAN SCENARIO OF DISTANCE EDUCATION

In India the concept of distance education is not very old. It dates back to early 60s only. The central advisory board of education appointed a committee under the central chairmanship of Dr. S Kothari in 1961, which made significant recommendations regarding nature, scope and modes of organization of correspondence courses. This led to the establishment of the country’s first directorate of correspondence courses at the University of Delhi in 1962\(^3\), which was later renamed as School of Correspondence and Continuing Education with its nomenclature School of Open Learning [a part of the Campus of Open Learning]. Punjabi University Patiala was the second university in India to launch
correspondence courses in 1968 through its Directorate of Correspondence Courses. It was the first university to introduce the regional medium of instructions. In 1970 a national seminar on Open University was organized jointly by the Ministry of Social Welfare, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, UGC and UNESCO. A high powered committee was constituted to consider establishing an Open University in the country. Andhra Pradesh established the first Open University in 1982 which was named as Andhra Pradesh Open University and later renamed as Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University in 1991. Later on, the Indian Parliament passed the bill to establish Indira Gandhi National Open University in September 1985 and the university was established in November 1985 with the following objectives:

- To advance and disseminate learning and knowledge by a diversity of means;
- To provide opportunities for higher education to a large segment of the population.
- To encourage the open university and distance education systems in the country and to coordinate and determine the standards in such systems.

Presently, the following fourteen State Open University and one National Open University” are functioning in India.

1. Dr.B.R. Ambedkar Open University, Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh 1982 (Previously known as Andhra Pradesh Open University)
2. Indira Gandhi National Open University, New Delhi 1985
3. Vardhaman Mahaveer Open University, Kota, Rajasthan 1987 (Previously known as Kota Open University)
4. Nalanda Open University, Patna, Bihar 1987
5. Yashwantrao Chavan Maharashtra Open University, Nasik, Maharashtra 1989
6. Madhya Pradesh Bhoj Open University, Bhopal, M.P 1992
7. Dr. Baba Saheb Ambedkar Open University, Ahmedabad, Gujarat 1994
8. Karnataka State Open University, Mysore, Karnataka 1996
9. Netaji Subhash Open University, Kolkata, West Bengal 1997
10. U P Rajarishi Tandon Open University, Allahabad, U.P 1999
11. Tamil Nadu Open University, Chennai, Tamil Nadu 2002
12. Pt. Sunder Lal Sharma Open University, Bliaspur, Chhattisgarh 2005
13. Uttaranchal Open University, Haldwani, Uttarakhand 2006
15. Global Open University, Nagaland 2006

3.7 CONCLUSION

Distance education is a mode of learning in which technology plays an important role. With the help of technology a person can study at his/her own pace, according to availability of time at his/her end, his/her own facilities, sitting at any distance and at any age. It is more productive and economical and utilizes the under utilised resources of the formal educational sector. The institutions of learning through distance mode belong to all age groups, whether employed or non-employed and irrespective of geographical, cultural and economic barriers. Distance education is an innovative channel with a clear cut objective of equalisation of educational opportunity, promoting learning, learning together and breaking the walls of formal education.
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