Chapter: 1

Introduction: Distance Education System

In the today’s world, Open and Distance Education (ODE) system has been gaining widespread popularity. India possesses a developed higher education system, which offers facility of education in almost all aspects of human creative and intellectual endeavors. The institutional framework consists of Universities established by an Act of Parliament as Central Universities or of a State Legislature as State Universities and, Deemed Universities, Institutes of National Importance, Institutions established under State Legislative Act and colleges affiliated to the University both government-aided and unaided, As on 31st March 2016, in India 749 University level institutions including 46 Central Universities, 345 State Universities, 123 Deemed Universities and 235 private Universities and Institute of National Importance (INI) is a status that may be conferred to a public higher education institution in India by an act of parliament. As of 23 April 2015 the Ministry of Human Resource Development has listed 74 institutions under this category.[1] There are at present one National Open University, 13 State Open Universities and 98 Directorate (DEIs/DDEs) as on 16 September 2016, set up by the respective state grants, are single mode institutions, which means they provide education only in the distance mode. These universities cater to people who are unable to pursue regular courses due to various reasons.[2] The top 7 States in terms of highest number of colleges in India are Maharashtra, Karnataka, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Telangana.

1.1 Education System in India

1.1.1 Primary Education

Primary education starts from 6-14 years with Middle and Upper Primary school education. Schooling is offered at state and private schools, however, a private school often have good facilities and infrastructure than government schools. Education in

[1] All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) 2014-15 ministry of human resources development department of higher education

India is provided by the public sector as well as the private sector, with control and funding coming from three levels: central, state, and local. Indian Constitution, is providing free and compulsory education as a fundamental right to children between the ages of 6 to 14. At the primary and secondary level, India has a large private school system complementing the government run schools, with 29% of students receiving private education in the age of 6 to 14. [3]

**Figure 1.1-Indian Education System at a glance**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education</th>
<th>School/Level</th>
<th>Grade From</th>
<th>Grade To</th>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Elementary School</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Includes Primary and Upper Primary Schools</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tertiary</td>
<td>University/College Level</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tertiary</td>
<td>Technical Institutes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Undergraduate degree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.1.2 Secondary Education

Secondary education begins from grade 9 and lasts until grade 12. The secondary stage is broken into two year cycles, generally referred to as Lower Secondary School, or Standard 10\textsuperscript{th}, and Upper/Senior Secondary School, or Standard 12\textsuperscript{th}. Education continues to be free at government schools, although private education is more common at the secondary level. Public examinations are held at the end of both cycles and grant access to grade 11 and university level study respectively. General curriculum for lower secondary school in India consists of three languages including the regional language, an elective and English language, Mathematics, Science and Technology, Social Sciences, Work/Pre-Vocational Education, Art, and Physical Education. Secondary schools are affiliated with Central or State boards which administer the Secondary School Certificate at the end of grade 10.

Based upon performance in the first two years of secondary school, and upon the SSC results, students may enter Senior/Upper Secondary School. Upper Secondary School offers the students a chance to select a ‘stream’ or concentration of study, offering science, commerce, and arts/humanities. Education is administered both in schools or two-year junior colleges which are often affiliated with degree granting universities or colleges. Although the HSCE is the most common Standard XII examination, the All India Senior School Certificate, Indian School Certificate, Certificate of Vocational Education, Senior Secondary Certification, Intermediate Certificate and the Pre-University Certificate are also offered. UGC, NCERT and CBSE directives state qualifying ages for candidates who wish to take board exams.

1.1.3 Vocational Education:

Young people who do not wish to go on to tertiary education, or who fail to complete secondary school often enroll at privately-owned vocational schools that specialize in just one or only a few courses. Unlike in the United States, vocational and technical education is not highly specialized and is rather a broad overview of knowledge applicable to employment. The curriculum offered is composed up of a language course, foundation courses, and electives, of which half of electives are practical in nature. Examinations at
the end of vocational education are conducted by the All India and State Boards of Vocational Education.

1.1.4 Tertiary Education

India’s higher education system is highly centralized and undergoing large changes since its inception in 1947. Largely based upon the British system of education, educational policy is ever-developing. The Indian higher education system is one of the largest such systems in the World. There are also new challenges of management and regulation being faced by these institutions, which require serious attention, both at the institutions in the public sector and also those in the private sector now growing at a fast pace. As a result, the old structures of management established in pre-independent India and working during most of the twentieth century are now required to undergo drastic changes. Besides, the demands of the society for equity and accommodation cannot be neglected any more.

University education is overseen by the University Grants Commission, which is responsible for the development of higher education, allocating funds, and recognition of institutions in India. The National Accreditation and Assessment Council (NAAC) were established by the UGC to assess universities and college based upon an alphabetical ranking system ranging from A++ to C. The assessment and Accreditation is broadly used for understanding the Quality Status of an institution and indicates that the particular institution meets the standards of quality as set by the NAAC. Participation in the accreditation process of NAAC is voluntary. [4]

The All-India Council of Technical Education was also established to oversee the quality control of technical education and to regulate the establishment of new private professional colleges. All recognized universities are members of the Association of Indian Universities, which is integral to the dissemination of information and serves as an advisor to the government, UGC, and the institutions themselves.

There are various types of tertiary institutions in India, namely Universities (Central, State, Open), Universities of National Importance, and Deemed universities. Instruction of the majority of students, almost 80 per cent, is completed at affiliated colleges with the curriculum, examinations, and final degree being designed and granted by the university. Constituent and Autonomous colleges also exist; though less common although they do enjoy greater autonomy in regards to curriculum development and assessment.

Admission to undergraduate courses generally requires completion of the Standard XII years of schooling and admittance to university depends almost exclusively upon performance on the examination. Bachelor’s degree in the field of art, science, social studies, and commerce are almost exclusively three year programs. Diploma programs exist and range from 2 – 3 years in length and are provided at polytechnics, usually in a specialized engineering or technological field, and culminating in an Advanced or Post Diploma. Professional Bachelor’s degrees, in the fields of Medicine, Architecture, Law, etc., vary from 4 – 5.5 years depending upon the discipline.

Admission to graduate (Master, Post Graduate Diplomas, MBA, etc.) programs is dependent upon completion of a bachelor’s degree (3 or 4 years, depending upon the subject) with a Second Class pass or higher. Non-university education in Management is popular in India, with many institutions offering Post Graduate Diplomas in Management, lasting 2 years and generally equivalent to an MBA. Doctoral level degrees require a minimum of two or three years and consist of research and a thesis or dissertation.

Beginning in 2015, the Choice Based Credit System \[5\] was introduced by the UGC in attempts to encourage a more interdisciplinary approach to education and offer more flexibility and choice to students. The reform also introduced a standardized assessment

\[5\] Mohammad Hasan at al.,2015, Choice-Based Credit System in India: Pros and Cons, Journal of Education and Practice, Vol.6, No.25
and grading plan based upon a 10 point scale. Since its inception, the system has faced scrutiny by students and administrators, noting that although the system promises choice and flexibility, the infrastructure of the educational system now may be too weak yet to support the overhaul.

1.2 History of Distance Education

Open Learning System in the international arena began at the school level. The first three Open Learning Institutes were set up in Australia, Canada and New Zealand in 1916, 1919 and 1922, respectively. The establishment of the Open University in the United Kingdom, in 1969 encouraged several countries to deliberate on the new concept and its potential in making higher education more accessible, flexible and innovative. India was one of those countries which searched the possibility of establishing an open university in the early seventies. This influenced a few universities like University of Mysore and Andhra University to adopt open education policies in the mid seventies.

Distance Education for higher education in India was initiated in the form of Correspondence Courses in 1962, in response to the ever-increasing demand for higher education which could not be met by the conventional system. The Delhi University established a School of Correspondence Courses and Continuing Education in 1962. Encouraged by the success, the Education Commission in 1964-66 recommended the expansion of correspondence education for various purposes. Consequently, the University Grants Commission formulated guidelines for introducing correspondence courses in Indian Universities. Three more Institutes of Correspondence Studies were established in the late sixties. Twenty one more universities introduced correspondence programmes during the seventies. In the early eighties seven more universities started institutes of correspondences studies.

Andhra Pradesh government gave a lead to the country by setting up the Andhra Pradesh

Open University now known as Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University in 1982. In 1985, the Govt. of India, passed an Act of Parliament established the Indira Gandhi National Open University, which is responsible for maintaining standards of distance education and bringing about coordination among all distance education institutes including the open universities all over the country in addition to functioning as University for open learning and distance education.\[7\]

The committee established by UGC stressed that the provision of access to higher education could be enlarged by an action on a variety of fronts like, its greater accessibility, course structure, organisation of learning activities, new teaching methodologies, transferability between institution and courses, the flow of publicity material, student finances and the availability of the new technologies like radio, television, audio visual aids and effective and efficient organization of regional and study centers (Government of Andhra Pradesh, 1982). On the basis of the recommendation of the expert committee the Government of Andhra Pradesh established Andhra Pradesh Open University (later renamed as Dr. B R Ambedkar Open University in 1991) in 1982; Prof. G. Ram Reddy led the first Indian Open University as its vice-chancellor. In 1985, a committee was constituted by the Ministry of Education to develop a project report on Indira Gandhi National Open University. Prof. G. Ram Reddy was called upon to develop the project document. On the basis of that project report, the Union Government introduced a bill in the Parliament in 1985 and the National Open University came into existence in September 1985. Encouraged by the success of IGNOU and BRAOU, many other states established State Open Universities.\[8\]

The establishment of IGNOU in 1985 has proved to be a change in the development of distance education in India. It provides a central organisation for guiding and


coordinating the activities of all distance education institutes and state open universities in the country. From just a handful of students in 1962-63 the enrolment in correspondence courses increased to about 65,000 students in 1975-76. During the last fifteen years the annual growth rate of enrolment in open universities and the institutes of correspondence studies attached to conventional universities has been appreciably higher than in the conventional universities and in 1990-91 it was approximately 600,000. The proportion of students enrolled in distance education has steadily increased from 2.6% of the enrolment in higher education in 1975-76 to 11.5% in 1990-91. During 1992-93 the enrolment for distance education programmes was over eight lakhs. The University of Delhi was the pioneer to introduce correspondence courses as a pilot project in 1962. Subsequently, the University of Delhi appointed it a sub-committee to recommend different courses at the first-degree level. The success of Delhi University’s endeavor in distance education motivated other universities to introduce several kinds of programmes through correspondence courses. In 1970, the Ministry of Education and Social Welfare, in collaboration with the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, the University Grants Commission and the Indian National Commission for Cooperation with UNESCO organized a seminar on Open University. The seminar recommended the establishment of an open university in India on an experimental basis. Subsequently, the Government of India appointed an eight member working group under the Chairmanship of G. Parthasarthy to consider the establishment of Open University. The group opined that the University should have jurisdiction over the entire country so that when it is fully developed; students even in the remotest corner of the country can have access to its instruction and degrees. In 1982, an expert committee under the chairmanship of Prof. G Ram Reddy prepared a project proposal on an Open University in Andhra Pradesh. Following the footsteps of Delhi University, several conventional universities have set up Distance Education

[9]. Report to the Nation 2006-09, National Knowledge Commission, Government of India Pg No.203-205
Institutions (DEI) and O/o Correspondence Courses Institutes (CCI). Presently, there are more than 112 conventional universities which are offering correspondence courses. More and more such universities are coming forward to adopt Open Distance Education methodologies.\[10\]

1.3 Distance education in India –Introduction

Distance or Open Learning is a methodology of imparting education wherein the direct physical interface of teacher and student does not transpire at a predetermined time and place but is flexible as regards to time, place and method of admission without diluting the qualitative content. Various terminologies are used to describe this mode of education viz., correspondence, open and virtual. This procedure of dissemination of education is gaining popularity as it allows the unhindered continuation of the education process, skill updation and up-gradation of the working class, thereby imparting quality education to the needy residing at educationally disadvantageous locale.

For the co-ordination, promotion and determination of the standards of Distance Education and Open University, Distance Education Council (DEC) was constituted under “The Indira Gandhi National Open University Act 1985”\[11\]. The duty of this institution was to set the parameters for the education standards, co-ordination, evaluation and research, besides encouraging greater diversity, mobility, flexibility and accessibility in the process and exploiting the latest scientific knowledge and technology in synchronization with existing universities for the education of the needy. University Grants Commission in 2013 took over Distance Education Council by establishing Distance Education Bureau which shall henceforth oversee distance education in India.

There are two types of distance education methodologies currently prevalent - correspondence courses and open universities. Though both systems are currently in

\[10\]. Sri. Udayakumar.K,2010,"Making Of Indian Nation" ,University Of Calicut School Of Distance Education, Computer Section, SDE

\[11\]. Report to the Nation 2006-09 ,National Knowledge Commission, Government of India Pg No.203-205
vogue, but the latter has gained much popularity as it has radically improved upon the shortcomings of the former. One of the reasons for the expansion of this education system is also the shortage of resources and qualified teaching personnel available to the state. In the open or non formal education process the key component is the existence of flexibility, in the domain of admission, place of instruction, mode of instruction, duration and curriculum.

Distance education in India has become so popular that the student enrolment has crossed the 10 million mark. Much stress is being laid on this mode for increasing the enrolment in higher education to 30% by 2020. As on 16th September 2016 a total of 112 institutions Universities/Institutions were approved by the Distance Education Council with an estimated student enrolment of 36.6 lakh. At present close to 10 per cent of all enrolments are in the open distance learning mode. The contribution of distance learning to gross enrolment ratio in the higher education sector has risen to 22 per cent. The distance education market of India was to be of the value of Rs 8700 crores in 2015 – 2016.[12] The general aversion towards open distance learning has started to wane, which some experts believe to be the main factor contributing to the growth of skilled labour force in the country. The fee structure of the courses offered by the Open Distance Learning institutions are guided by various factors viz., cost recovery, cross subsidising, social causes, professional orientation and occupational orientation. However the main consideration remains the recovery of the delivery cost of the programmes through tuition fee.

1.4 Distance Education in India – Current Scenario

Distance education in India requires US $200 billion to upgrade capacity in traditional infrastructure if we are to meet demand in the conventional manner. That is mammoth tasks to accomplish for a sector keeping in view the government spend and it’s galloping popularity as compared to formal education system.

[12]. Wei Y. Zhang, V. Venkaiah,2000,“A Preliminary Study of Current State of Distance Education Research in India”The Malaysian Journal of Distance Education.
Those who thought that distance education was passé are in for a surprise as close to one-fourth of the country's students are getting educated through the distance mode. “At present, close to approximately 10% of all enrollments are in the ODL system because of the reach of this mode and the opportunities it gives to those who are already employed and seek to enhance their qualifications,” Prof V N Rajasekharan Pillai, former vice chancellor of IGNOU and member of the committee told FE. Interestingly, the contribution of ODL to gross enrolment ratio (GER) in higher education has risen to about 22%. Numbers favour distance education despite the general mind block against it something that experts say is developing a skilled labour force in the country.\[13\]

“Distance education is challenging the tyranny of conventional education system of 10+2+3. It is a very good vehicle for motivated people who want to re-enter the work force or the education system by getting certified. Distance education needs wide open entry gates, but tight exit gates,” said Manish Sabharwal, chairman, Team Lease Services.

A TeamLease study recently said 58% of India's youth suffer some degree of skill deprivation as the higher education system lacks flexibility.\[14\] This, can be scaled up in quality and reach only by creating competition with transparent regulation, legitimising distance education, legitimising private ownership, creating, recognising and legitimising vertical mobility among short-term certificates and medium-term diplomas by paying more attention to school-level education, fostering PPP models and deregulating higher education and study centre frameworks.

1.5 DISTANCE EDUCATION vs. TRADITIONAL EDUCATION

Distance education, in comparison with the conventional educational system, is a wider system in terms of both connotation and denotation. Its connotation is wider because it


works in a much larger learning situation: a situation in which many factors remain indeterminate and inchoate. It has a wider denotation in that it covers a considerable distance in order to effect academic communication. However, this does not mean that open/distance learning can be defined in any precise manner. It has as many critics as it has enthusiasts. It remains imprecise and that perhaps enables it to accommodate many different ideas and aims. Perhaps as Keegan (1986) suggests, it cannot be used in an administrative context. It can be carried out both in face-to-face encounters and at a distance.

Distance teaching distinct is perhaps the fact that educational technology plays a major role in distance education. Education technology itself is a developing field which today includes audio-visual, aids, the computer, the mass media, etc. It is this fact (i.e. educational technology is a developing field) that helps make distance education dynamic and exciting. Along with distance education, one can also list various other non-traditional forms of education. These are extension programmes which make available the expertise of a university or of a college to new populations; adult education programmes which provide non-traditional learning to adults in selected areas, and extended campuses that provide lectures at various locations which are far removed from the official campus. Nevertheless, following Keegan, one can use „distance education“ as a generic term. It would then include a range of teaching/learning strategies referred to as correspondence education, home study, independent study, external studies or teaching at a distance.

This has also led to differential perception of distance education. Mukhopadhyay (1998) stated that distance education “reminds the incidence of the five blind men describing an elephant.” This is because there are different terms used for distance education by different people.  

[15]. Sadhasivam Panchabakesan ,2011,” Problems And Prospectives In Distance Education In India In The 21st Century” Problems Of Education In The 21st Century. Volume 30,  
These terms are
- Correspondence Education,
- Independent Study,
- Distributed Learning,
- Flexible Learning,
- Open Learning, etc.
- Mooc’s

1.6 Nature and Characteristics of Distance Education

The term “distance education” is known in different names, such as; correspondence education, open learning, home study, off-campus based study, flexible learning, resource based learning, etc. (Lockwood & Gooley, 2000). But all these names are compressed and further divided into three major divisions. These are; correspondence education, distance education, and open learning.\cite{17}

**Correspondence education:** This is a teaching-learning situation where learners are found in a distant place, there were no face-to-face interaction existing between teachers and learners. Learners receive the study materials from the institutions through postal services. In this case, print is the only medium of instruction and printed lessons are the only source for the learner to learn.

![Figure 1.1 Correspondence education](image)

**Distance education:** In this case, learners are staying in distance places and continue their programme of studies in Distance Education (DE) institutions. It is teaching-learning situations where along with print medium various technological media are used to deliver study contents to learners. These media are; radio, television, telephone, audio and video cassettes, computer, mobile, and may be a few other electronic media. In this situation, two-way interaction takes place between learners and tutors both in synchronous and asynchronous forms because of the media intervention. Learner support services play a major role in this situation.

![Figure 1.2 Distance Education](image_url)

**Open Learning:** Open learning is a philosophy rather than a method of distance learning. On the account of Perraton (1997),[18] “Open learning as an organized educational activity, based on the use of teaching materials, in which constraints on study are minimized either in terms of access, or of time and place, methods of study or any

combination of these”. As it is a philosophy in its approach, it suggests removal of the barriers and restrictions from learners in contrast to the conventional educational setup. Open learning is opening up learning opportunities to a wider range of people and enabling them to learn more efficiently, effectively and productively.

At present state, there are various evaluation patterns available on an offered programme by the DE institutions. For example; „on-demand examination” where learners can ask the Institution to appear for the examination of his/her programme at any time. „Online examination” is also available to the learners where they can sit at their home with all the necessary technological equipments and can appear the examinations. Hence, writing examination on papers is not the only way to appear the examination and receive the certificate. With these features open learning is familiarized among learners across the globe.

![Figure 1.3 Open Education](image-url)
Mukhopadhyay (1998) described distance education and differentiated it from open education as “Distance education is a mode of delivery and not an educational system; open education is a system -- distance education is often the delivery mode of open education”. Keegan (1986) identified seven principal characteristics of distance education. Keegan’s definition provides a synthesis of most of the definitions.[19] The characteristics are:

- Separation of teacher and student
- Influence of an educational organization
- Use of technical media
- Provision of two way communication
- Absence of group learning
- Participation in the most industrialized form of education.
- Distance Education plays a vital role in the development and access to education. It is less expensive than the conventional system though the cost per student differs among the distance education institutions. The cost variations are due to the expenditure pattern and the enrolment trend. The fixed cost for the Open University is high because it has to create physical infrastructure and appoint teaching and administrative staff. But the CCIs utilize the physical infrastructure of the concerned university and hire the services of the resource persons from the formal system. Hence, the fixed cost is comparatively low in the correspondence course institutions. As far as the variable cost is concerned, where the enrolment is more, the per capita cost tends to reduce. This is due to large scale production of learning materials, and other expenditures like remuneration to lesson writers, payment to resource persons, rent and other expenditures to conduct PCPs. Hence, the per head cost is low in the institutions where the enrolment is high. To determine the cost in any distance education system following four factors needs to be considered:

Compare the cost per student in distance education system with the cost per student in the formal system.

- Quality of equipment/material used.
- Number of students enrolled in each system.
- Students’ private costs.

Massive online open courses (MOOCs) [20]

The UGC has made it mandatory for all universities to bring amendments to their respective ordinances and rules by August 19 to facilitate transfer of credits of their students for the degree programmes to be offered under Swayam, a massive online open courses (MOOCs) platform.

Figure 1.4 MOOC Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Massive_open_online_course

The higher education regulator has notified the UGC (Credit Framework for Online Learning Courses through Swayam) Regulation, 2016, recently to ensure that Swayam takes off soon after it is launched as the Human Resources Development Ministry races against time to complete all preparations for the roll out of India first Moocs platform next month. The programme, which seeks to fill the gap created by the acute shortage of quality teachers in the country’s higher educational institutions, is likely to be dedicated.

to the nation by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on August 15. The Swayam will offer a virtual class room to students with structured lectures by subject experts. “An institution can only allow up to 20% of the total courses being offered in a particular programme in a semester through the online learning courses provided through Swayam platform,” the UGC regulation stipulates. Students, registered with the “SWAYAM”, can complete their entire programme by attending classes online and take proctored examinations at the end of each semester to move to the next stage. For the proctored examinations, centers with adequate facilities will be opened in universities. The credit earned by the students will be transferred to their mother university by the one conducting the programme at the MOOCs platform.

1.7 Scope of Distance Education \(^{[21]}\)

After food, it is education that has posed as the second greatest challenge for modern India. It is a sector where the government should have pumped in more funds but unfortunately didn't. The consequences were disastrous. On the one hand we have some of the most outstanding men in fields such as literature, software technology, engineering, management, medical, biotechnology; on the other we also substantially inhabit some of the most illiterates in the globe today. What a striking contrast! But there is no point in shying away from the stark reality. How can the problem of illiteracy be overcome? There are many who wish to Join in the mainstream of Distance Education. The fire to study and educate oneself is no doubt a healthy indication but that often gets drained due to lack of proper facilities. It was a stumbling block that was removed with the emergence of distance education. Distance education has opened a new window of opportunities for those who craved

\[\text{[21]. Dr. Santi Kundu,2014, Open and Distance Learning Education Its Scope and Constraints in Indian Scenario, IOSR Journal Of Humanities And Social Science (IOSR-JHSS) Volume 19, Issue 4, Ver. IV (Apr. 2014), PP 01-05, p-ISSN: 2279-0845}\]
for further studies. In a way it has helped numerous professionals, dropouts (school & college), housewives, etc to accomplish their unfinished dreams. It has immense relevance, particularly in a country like India, where pursuing education is a costly affair. Even we at APEX are already in the mainstream of disseminating the education information to all users at free of cost. We receive scores of career queries everyday, which again is a shining testimony of the great curiosity among the discerning users to know about the various options that education has to offer.

Distance Education is meant for people from under privileged section of the society or for working class as they cannot go to the conventional colleges. This mode of education has helped millions of students as its fee structure is economical and there is flexibility in the system. In a developing nation like India, distance education has an enormous scope.

- Distance Education has opened a new gate of opportunities for those who go for higher studies. It has assisted numerous professionals, dropouts, housewife etc. Today numbers of such institutions have crossed 850 which offer more than 16,000 courses to over 15 million learners of the world.
- If one wishes to get the maximum benefits of distance education then they must get a job and work side by side because work experience counts allot.

Distance education is when a student is not required to be physically present to attend regular classes and can appear for exams only. In certain cases, the student can attend weekend classes (if provided by the university). In other words, Distance Learning is more like self-study, relying on course material sent from the University itself. Distance education is basically designed keeping in mind the off-campus students, who unable to attend regular classes.

Distance education comes as a boon not only for young aspiring students, but for many working professionals, housewives, school drop-outs as well. Distance education is the obvious solution for not just those mentioned above but for a whole
lot of others like those with financial constraints, any kind of impediment or for those who are just plain lazy. Whether you live in a metropolis like Delhi or in a small town tucked in any part of India, you can benefit immensely from Distance Education.

1.7.1 Advantages:

- A student can work according to his/her schedule. There are no rigid study timings.
- A student can get a degree of his/her choice from anywhere in India.
- The less advantaged sections of the society have an advantage to get educated.
- Migration from one city to another city does not happen while pursuing distance education.
- A student can work and earn side by side.
- Distance education saves travel time; students do not have to travel to and fro from campus Institutes.

However, everything has its pros and cons and the concept of Distance Education is not without this vice. Even though there are some drawbacks set in the system of Distance Education, what you need to see is whether, in the larger picture you benefit from it or not. And if you can handle the disadvantages, then there is no reason to worry. Because we all know that these hurdles are nothing, compared to the value that you will earn through distance education.

1.7.2 Disadvantages:

- Full time courses get an edge over distance learning courses.
- Classroom teaching is more effective as compared to distance teaching.
- Students in distance education do not get the practice of verbal interaction and they cannot communicate with the professors and teachers on 1 on 1 basis.
- In distance education, a student cannot be assessed immediately. In distance learning he/she will have to wait for the feedback which may take time.

[22]. Dr. Ajay Kumar Attri, 2012, Distance Education: Problems And Solutions International Journal Of Behavioral Social And Movement Sciences Issn: 2277-7547 Vol 1, Issue 4
• For theory type courses like Arts & Commerce, it is easy to study through distance education whereas for Science related courses, you cannot base your education on online study only, because it will be difficult to perform experiments. And provision of a lab will not be possible.

Distance education may not be the ideal or the most obvious form of education, but in a country like India, where the adult literacy rate is a struggle at 74.04%, distance mode of education has and will have a major role to play in bringing the literacy rate to a 100%. Besides the educational value, it makes people more independent and gives them a direction in life. No doubt, it requires a lot of self motivation but the results are really impressive and a really great idea for self improvement.

1.8 CONTROLLING AGENCIES FOR DISTANCE EDUCATION [23]
Since, distance education is practiced in almost all parts of the world and hence, there are large numbers of international and national agencies are involved in controlling distance education.

1.8.1 International Bodies: The major international agencies engaged in distance education are as under:

The International Council for Open and Distance Education (ICDE) [24] is the leading global organization for the open/distance education community, and is open to institutions, educational authorities, commercial actors, and individuals. ICDE is an NGO in formal consultative relations with UNESCO and shares its key value. “The universal right to education for all”. ICDE further derives its position from the unique knowledge and experience of its members throughout the world in the development and use of new methodologies and emerging technologies. ICDE was founded in year 1938 in Canada, today has members from over 50 countries worldwide. ICDE conducts world conferences on open and distance education.

The International E-Learning Association (IELA) [25] is dedicated to advancing the knowledge and practice of e-learning in the classrooms. With members from every

[23]. Sudarshana Rana, 2011, Policy Perspective and Controlling Agencies for Distance Education in India, Himachal Pradesh University Journal,
[24]. http://www.icde.org/what-is-icde
continent, and from the academia, business sector, industry and government the IELA is a diverse community of e-learning professionals, researchers, and students.

**Asian Association of Open Universities (AAOU)**[^26] is a nonprofit organization of higher learning institutions that are primarily objective with education at a distance. AAOU was founded in year 1987 by a number of open universities in the Asian region who realized the major contribution of distance education in democratizing the provision of learning opportunities to mankind.

**The Commonwealth of Learning (COL)**[^27] is an intergovernmental organization created by Commonwealth Heads of Government to encourage the enlargement and sharing of open/distance education knowledge, resources and technologies. COL is helping developing nations improve access to quality education and training. The Commonwealth of Learning helps governments and institutions expand the scope, scale and quality of learning by using new approaches and technologies, especially those subsumed under the general term of open and distance learning (ODL). These international bodies are basically coordinating agencies and hardly any role for controlling the functioning of distance education in the various countries. However, these agencies provide valuable guidelines for developing conceptual and theoretical models for distance education in the different parts of the world.

**1.8.2 National Bodies for Distance Education:**[^28] Apart from international bodies, there are large numbers of bodies have been created at the national level to control and monitor the distance education in India. In a huge country like India where fruits of development are not equally distributed, the importance of distance education is tremendous. It can significantly improve the quality of life of the people by making technology-mediated education accessible to the remotest corner of the country and all those who cannot afford to attend regular classes. But maintaining the quality of distance education is a hilarious task.

[^26]: http://aaou.ouhk.edu.hk/
[^27]: https://www.col.org/about/what-commonwealth-learning
[^28]: Sudarshana Rana, 2011, Policy Perspective and Controlling Agencies for Distance Education in India, Himachal Pradesh University Journal,
Therefore the Distance Education Council or DEC, as it is now popularly known, was established under the Indira Gandhi National Open University Act, 1985 primarily to determine the standards of distance education in India.

**Distance Education Bureau (DEB):**[29] Formally known as Distance Education Council was constituted under statute 28 arising from Section 25 of the Indira Gandhi National Open University Act, 1985. In pursuance of the directions issued by the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Department of Higher Education, Government of India dated 29.12.2012, the regulatory functions with regard to Distance Education programmes in higher education have now been vested with the University Grants Commission. The Distance Education Council which was the erstwhile regulator of Distance Education programmes, has been dissolved and all regulatory functions are being undertaken by the UGC. The UGC is in the process of framing new Regulations for Distance Education. It has, however, been decided that till such time the new Regulations of the UGC are notified, the guidelines of the erstwhile DEC with regard to recognition of ODL institutions shall be implemented for the purposes of grant of permission to institutions for Distance Education programmes. The Distance Education Council (DEC) is responsible for the promotion and coordination of the Open University and distance education system and for determination of its standards. DEC helps in development of learner-centric open and distance learning (ODL) system and ensures high quality of education, meet challenges of access and equity to reach the un-reached, the Distance Education Council.

**University Grants Commission:**[30] after Independence, the University Education Commission was set up in 1948 under the Chairmanship of Dr. S Radhakrishnan "to report on Indian university education and suggest improvements and extensions that might be desirable to suit the present and future needs and aspirations of the country".


[30]. Kavita A. Sharma, 2013 Sixty Years of the University Grants Commission, Published by Secretary University Grants Commission, Deeya Media Art.
It recommended that the University Grants Committee be reconstituted on the general model of the University Grants Commission of the United Kingdom with a full-time Chairman and other members to be appointed from amongst educationists of repute. In 1952, the Union Government decided that all cases pertaining to the allocation of grants in aid from public funds to the Central Universities and other Universities and Institutions of higher learning might be referred to the University Grants Commission. Consequently, the University Grants Commission (UGC) was formally inaugurated by late Shri Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, the then Minister of Education, Natural Resources and Scientific Research on 28 December 1953.

1.9 Gender and Distance Education

In India women have a lower literacy rate than men. A small number of girls are enrolled in the schools, and many of them drop out. In the Indian family, girls have lower status and fewer privileges than boy children. A conservative cultural attitude prevents some girls from attending school. The number of literate women among the female population of India was between 2–6% from the British Raj onwards to the formation of the Republic of India in 1947. Concerted efforts led to improvement from 15.3% in 1961 to 28.5% in 1981. By 2001 literacy for women had exceeded 50% of the overall female population, though these statistics were still very low compared to world standards and even male literacy within India. Literacy rate of India in 2011 is 74.04%. The Male literacy rate is 82.14% and Female literacy rate is 65.46% according to Census 2011. The Indian government has launched Saakshar Bharat Mission in 2009 for Female Literacy. This mission aims to bring down female illiteracy by half of its present level.

In India, it was found that there is a large disparity between female literacy rates in different states. For example, while Among the Indian states, Kerala has the highest literacy rate 93.91% and then Mizoram 91.58%. Among the Union Territories, Lakshadweep has the highest literacy rate of 92.28%. Bihar has the lowest literacy rate in


[32]. Dr. Jitendra Kumar At Al., Status Of Women Education In India, EDUCATIONIA CONFAB, Vol. 2, No. 4, April 2013
The Male literacy is highest in Lakshadweep 96.11% and Kerala 96.02%. The Female literacy is highest in Kerala 91.98% and Mizoram 89.40%. Lowest male literacy is in Bihar 73.39%. Lowest female literacy is in Rajasthan 52.66%. These values are further correlated with health levels of the Indians, where it was found that Kerala was the state with the lowest infant mortality rate while Bihar and Uttar Pradesh are the states with the lowest life expectancies in India. In India, higher education is defined as the education of an age group between 18 and 24, and is largely funded by the government. Despite women making up 24-50% of higher education enrolment, there is still a gender imbalance within higher education. Only one third of science students and 7% of engineering students are women. Women constitute about 50% of the total population, but they form only 9% of the total productive work force. The main reason for this poor share is low literacy level among women. When this major chunk is educated, no doubt, they can contribute significantly for the development of the country and can thereby empower themselves. Women empowerment is a global issue. Empowerment is an active multi-dimensional process which enables women to realize their full identity and powers in all spheres of life.

Also literate women are able to constructively express their talents and give direction to their aptitude. This enables them to lead a life which is fulfilling and satisfying.