

CONCEPT OF OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING (ODL) SYSTEM FROM HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE; ITS CHALLENGES IN INDIA AND SUGGESTIONS

¹Md Mahasin Ali, ²Priyanka Samanta

¹Ph.D. Research Scholar, Department of Education, University of Calcutta, Kolkata, India.

²Assistant Professor, Vidyasagar Teachers Training Institute. West Bengal, India.

Abstract- Education plays a very significant role in our society. Nowadays our society is too much informative and knowledgeable as a consequence of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), a new innovative form of technology. That is why, it is desirable for every person in society to be enlightened by the light of this knowledge. All over the world, it has been taken as a goal to bring the light of education to all people through the era of sustainable development. For the purpose of advanced learning for sustainable development, Open and Distance Education is considered as a significant medium. Open and distance learning (ODL) is a nature-wise non-formal form of the education system. Simply it is known as an open and distance education system. To spread 'Education' firstly established many formal institutions. But after sometimes, it was found that it was not becoming possible for everyone to access it. So, in this situation, to spread education properly to each individual, an Open and Distance Education System would be necessary. To develop our country's literacy rate open and distance education has been an important pillar always. This paper will focus on the historical background of Open and Distance Education which is most valuable in recent times.

Keywords: Distance Education, Open Education, Non-formal Education, Technology, Advanced Learning, Sustainable Development.

INTRODUCTION:

Education is a critical transformer to change lifestyles, behaviours, and attitudes, and realize a sustainable world. So, we can say that education is a weapon of transfer ideas, values, and thoughts of our society cum world. To spread education among all people of our world Open and Distance Education became necessary. "Distance Education (DE) is a system wherein the learner and the teacher are not face-to-face. For two-way communication to take place between them, a medium such as radio, print or the telephone has to be used." (Perry and Rumble, 1987). Open learning covers the air of doubtfulness, it is considered as a philosophy rather than a pedagogic method (Bates, 2005). "Distance Education represents distance teaching with learning." (Keegan, D).

Open and Distance Education is the one type of learning process where the teaching-learning process is held within the learners' space and time. There is no face-to-face interaction between the tutor and students. There is no conventional classroom like a regular or formal classroom in this system. In this type of education, knowledge is transferred through different mediums; such as audio, video, visual things etc. It is not only the opposite or alternative of the conventional learning process but also an effective, time and cost-conservative educational process. From anywhere any person can acquire degrees, diplomas, and certificates in various areas of knowledge.

Although Open and Distance Education is more common in today's context it has appeared many years back. In 1982, distance education was formally recognized when the International Council for Correspondence Education (ICCE) was renamed the International Council for Distance Education (ICDE). We know that Open and Distance Education is known by many names; such as distance learning, e-learning, open education, correspondence education, non-conventional learning, independent study, flexible learning etc. It runs programs from open schooling to open universities through distance education mode, which is known as Open and Distance Learning (ODL).

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

- I. To know about the Historical Perspectives of Open and Distance Learning.
- II. To know about the Challenges of Open and Distance Learning.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING (ODL):

In this area, let us look at the developmental process cum historical background of the Open and Distance Education system. The concept of distance education comes from correspondence education where a tutor or teacher sends the study materials by post. This concept of Open and Distance Education originated in England in the 19th century.

Correspondence education was shaped in England, in the year 1840 by Issac Pitman through his course in the New Penny Post. In 1880, the oldest correspondence educational institution was established in the U.K. Several other correspondence institutions were established in the U.K. during the 20th century. This course helped all those students who could not take up formal education for some reason. Thus, the expansion of interest towards education led the Open and Distance Education. Here, we will discuss the historical background of Open and Distance Education from two perspectives, one is from a Global perspective and the other from a national perspective.

AN OVERVIEW OF ODL FROM GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE:

The major developmental history of Open and Distance Education was the establishment of the first open university in our world at Milton Keynes, U.K. in 1969.

Open access, easy enrolment, multimedia-based teaching-learning process, and credit-based system are the salient features of creating an open university in the U.K. It has led to the spread of the open university in Europe and throughout the World.

In the context of America, it was named as correspondence study, independence study, home study etc. The University of California, the University of Chicago, the University of Nebraska, Pennsylvania State University, and The University of Florida, among others universities started this type of education program in the 20th century.

To promote distance education another leading country was Australia. This type of program gained popularity in Australia due to the distance between the different islands, which were geographical barriers to formal education for all citizens. Australia provides correspondence education in three stages- at primary stage, secondary stage and tertiary stage. Distance education in Australia was conducted in dual mode. In New Zealand dual mode has been practiced also like Australia.

Distance education played a very important role after the revolution of 1917. Russia added a new clause in this regard. Correspondence education in Russia was prevalent at all levels from secondary school to university, polytechnics other institutions etc. Correspondence education programs were thoroughly popular at Russian universities.

In Asia, Distance education was influenced by the UK's experience. In 1974, Pakistan established The Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) which was the pioneer of distance education at the tertiary level.

In 1976, Thailand established Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University (STOU) for Open and Distance Education. There were Almost 90% of learners were employees. Study materials are provided through printing materials, TV, radio etc.

In 1980, many open universities were established in Sri Lanka. Their purpose was to increase opportunities for continuing education, life-long education, increase the educational qualification of working people etc. For public education, Sri Lanka also used Distance education programs. For In-service teacher education programs, The Ministry of Education of Sri Lanka adopted the Distance Education Model.

In 1990, for Open and Distance Education Bangladesh established Bangladesh Open University.

AN OVERVIEW ODL SYSTEM FROM NATIONAL PERSPECTIVE:

In our Indian context, first established Open universities then openness in education moved towards school education. Our country looked after the independence spread of the education system, such as institution establishment, enrolment etc. In the Open and Distance Education field in India, firstly higher education was given attention but economics could not balance up with it. So, then it was brought into the field of school education. It had two purposes-(i) it was cost-effective for learners and (ii) democratisation.

In India, in 1962 The University of Delhi first introduced correspondence courses as a pilot project. It was conducted based on the report of the Expert Committee in March 1961.

University Grant Commission (UGC) gave some guidelines about correspondence education in the year 1969. For the establishment of an open university in India, initiatives began during the 1970s.

In December 1970, Social Welfare in Collaboration with the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, the Ministry of Education, the UGC and the Indian National Commission for Co-operation with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) conducted a seminar programme on 'Open University'. Then a working group of the Indian Government submitted a report in 1974 for the creation of an Open University.

Some years later, on May 25, 1982, following the initiatives of the Expert Committee Government of Andhra Pradesh received the recommendations and formed a State Open University, whose name was the Andhra Pradesh Open University (APOU). This university was newly renamed as Dr. B. R. Ambedkar Open University (BRAOU).

For the establishment of a National Open University, the Union Government made a policy statement in January 1985. This University was Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU). In 1991, the Distance Education Council was established for directing the Open and Distance Education in our Country.

Then different open and distance universities were established in different states like West Bengal (Netaji Subhas Open University), Rajasthan (Kota Open University), Bihar (Nalanda Open University), and Maharashtra (Yashwant Rao Chavan Maharashtra Open University), among other states.

• List of Open Universities in India:

Name of Open Universities	Year of Establishment	Location of the Open Universities
1. B.R. Ambedkar Open University	1982	Hyderabad, Telangana
2. The Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU)	1985	New Delhi, Delhi
3. Nalanda Open University	1987	Patna, Bihar
4. Vardhman Mahaveer Open University	1987	Kota, Rajasthan

5.	Yashwant Rao Chavan Maharashtra Open University	1989	Nashik, Maharashtra
6.	M. P. Bhoj (Open) University	1991	Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh
7.	Dr. Baba Saheb Ambedkar Open University	1994	Ahmedabad, Gujarat
8.	Karnataka State Open University	1996	Mysore, Karnataka
9.	Netaji Subhas Open University	1997	Kolkata, West Bengal
10.	U. P. Rajarshi Tandon Open University	1998	Allahabad, Uttar Pradesh
11.	Tamil Nadu Open University	2002	Chennai, Tamil Nadu
12.	Krishna Kanta Handiqui State Open University	2005	Guwahati, Assam
13.	Pt. Sundarlal Sharma Open University	2005	Bilaspur, Chhattisgarh
14.	Uttarakhand Open University	2005	Haldwani, Uttarakhand
15.	Odisha State Open University	2015	Sambalpur, Odisha
16.	Jagat Guru Nanak Dev Punjab State Open University	2019	Patiala, Punjab

Currently, the number of this type of institution is more than 200. In 1964, through the recommendations Board of Higher Secondary Education distance education school was established. Then, the National Policy on Education (NPE) encouraged the idea of Open and Distance Education in 1968 and 1986. NCERT appointed a working group to set up Open Schools in 1974. NCERT and CBSE jointly organized an International Conference based on Open Schooling in November 1978. Then, Open School was established in New Delhi, in 1979 by CBSE. National Open School (NOS) was established in 1989 by the Ministry of Human Resource Development. At present, the Distance Education Council dissolved from the effect of 2013 and all functions taken by the University Grant Commission (UGC) and Distance Education Bureau (DEB). After 34 years of National Policy on Education 1986, the National Education Policy 2020 has been published. Here, Open and Distance Education has been faithfully highlighted. According to Sustainable Development Goal-4, NEP 2020 intends to achieve 50% of the Gross Enrolment Ratio. It states that programs of Open and Distance Education shall be equivalent to other degree or diploma programs. The purposes of this policy are Access, Equity, Quality, Affordability and Accountability. Therefore, various types of Open and Distance Schools, Colleges, Universities or educational institutions have been arranged for those students who do not have the opportunity to study in physical schools. In this way, Open and Distance Education were gradually started in our country.

DISTINGUISH FEATURES OF ODL:

- **Easily Accessible:** According to our Indian Constitution, education is the right of all people. But many are deprived of the light of education due to physical, geographical, social reasons etc. However, Open and Distance Education is easily accessible for every individual from anywhere and anytime.
- **Individual Basis:** Due to distance learning solutions, face-to-face connection between students is not possible. For this reason, students study individual basis in this education system.
- **Relaxation:** We know that education is a lifelong process. So, age is no barrier to education. However, in the case of formal education, there is a formal structure maintained by the formal institutions. Here, in the field of Open and Distance Education, there is no specific age requirement. This education system has carried age relaxation.
- **Interaction:** Interaction means the exchange of ideas, thoughts etc. with one another. In the field of Open and Distance Education, there is not much interaction between teachers and students.
- **Relationship:** An important element of the education system is the bond of relationship between teacher and student. In this system, face-to-face relationship has not been seen between teacher and students.
- **Supervision:** Supervision means managing and overseeing the entire education system. There is no teacher or supervisor to supervise the education systems and learners' progress.
- **Instructional Medium:** In the process of teaching, a systematic order given by the teacher to the students is called Instruction. All the mediums used by the teachers for knowledge transaction and giving instruction are called mediums of instruction or instructional mediums. Open and Distance Education are imparted through TV, radio, wireless etc.
- **Time Flexible:** Time is one of the most precious resources in our busy lives. As many people are engaged in professional work. So, they are unable to finish the formal course on time and complete the coursework properly. For this reason, it is the type of education program where there is no time limitation for study.
- **Frugal in Nature:** Being frugal is one of the goals or characteristics of human life. Saving time and labour is a desirable thing for working and professional people. This type of education is frugal in the case of time, labour and money.

CHALLENGES OF ODL AS COMPARED TO FORMAL EDUCATION SYSTEM:

- a. In this academic setting, there seems to be a significant absence of direct and personal communication between students and their instructors, which is concerning as it hampers the opportunity for meaningful exchanges and can potentially affect the quality of education and overall student experience.
- b. Access to electricity is a crucial factor for engaging in Open and Distance Education, and many villages still lack this resource, so it's important to consider alternative approaches.
- c. Immediate feedback is not provided in the Open and Distance Education System. Feedback in the Open and Distance Education System is slow. Actually, Immediate feedback is not available in the Open and Distance Education System.
- d. Unfortunately, the important aspects of a student's social, emotional, and overall development are being neglected in this Open and Distance Education system.
- e. Due to a lack of regularity and discipline in this Open and Distance Education system students as well as teachers find it difficult to maintain motivation.
- f. Open and Distance Education system is lacking both digital as well as physical infrastructure in developing countries like India.
- g. This Education system suffers from a shortage of educators who possess the necessary skills and training to provide effective instruction, which can negatively impact the academic performance of students and hinder their overall development.
- h. It is also a very crucial matter of concern that the utilization of technology as an educational tool is a costly endeavour in India, proving to be a financial barrier for many institutions and individuals.

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF ODL ALONG WITH FORMAL EDUCATION SYSTEM:

- a. Lack of interaction can hinder the opportunity for meaningful exchanges and potentially affect the quality of education and overall student experience. It may be worth considering ways to improve communication channels between students and instructors to address this issue.
- b. It seems that there is a lack of immediate feedback in the Open and Distance Education System, which could potentially slow down the learning process. It may be helpful to explore ways to provide more prompt feedback to students in this type of educational setting.
- c. The open and Distance Education system may be neglecting important aspects of a student's social, emotional, and overall development. Educational institutions need to prioritize the holistic growth of their students, not just their academic achievements.
- d. To tackle the problem of inconsistent discipline that impacts motivation in Open and Distance Education, teachers should offer consistent feedback and support to students to sustain their engagement and create a conducive learning atmosphere.
- e. The Open and Distance Education system in developing countries like India is facing a significant challenge as it lacks both digital and physical infrastructure. The government should build up proper physical as well as digital infrastructure for the improvement of the ODL system
- f. Without well-trained educators, it becomes challenging to ensure students receive the quality education they deserve. Hopefully, there will be more efforts put into addressing this issue and providing educators with the support they need to be successful in their roles.
- g. While the use of technology in education can offer many benefits, it is understandable that the cost of implementing and maintaining such tools can be prohibitive for many in India. That is why, it is important to find so that everyone can benefit from the advantages.

CONCLUSION:

At the end of our discussion despite various difficulties, it can be said that Open and Distance Education is a necessary component for the development of our society. From the historical background, we saw that Open and Distance Education was not given importance from the beginning. Since the turn of the 21st century Open and Distance Education has spread widely at the Primary stage, Secondary stage and Tertiary educational stage. Even vocational education, functional education etc. have gained great prominence also. Here, in the present situation, the demand for Open and Distance Education is currently gaining momentum. Through this kind of educational system, students get the opportunity to access and learn different knowledge from different areas of our country and world. Also, through this education system, students can make connections from the country and abroad. With the help of the Open and Distance Education System, students can easily fulfil their desires without much spending money and time. In the world, Open and Distance Education is expected to become a significant indirect component of economic development. Hopefully, individuals from all levels and all areas of society will be enlightened by the light of education through the Open and Distance Education System and they make society bright.

REFERENCES:

1. Government of India. (1966). *Education and National Development: Report of the Education Commission, 1964-66*. NCERT, New Delhi. India.
2. Government of India. (1986). *National Policy on Education- 1986*. Ministry of Education, New Delhi, Retrieved from: <http://dlkhsou.inflibnet.ac.in>
3. C.A.B.E. (1995). *Report of the Committee on Distance Education*. New Delhi. India.

4. Bates, A. W. (2005). *Technology, e-learning and distance education*. Landon/New York/Routledge Falmer. Page-5. Retrieved from: <https://www.tonybates.ca>
5. Vyas-Doorgapersad, S. (2011). *Open and Distance Education for Sustainable Development of Knowledge Society: concerning ODE methodologies in India*. Vaal Triangle Campus/North-West University/South Africa.
6. Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU). (2014). *Preamble*. Retrieved from: <http://www.ignou.ac.in/ignou/aboutignou/profile/2>
7. Andhra University. (2016). *The School of Distance Education*. Retrieved from: <http://www.andhrauniversity.edu.in/sde>
8. Panda, S., et al. (2016). *Tracing the Historical Development in Open and Distance Education*. Retrieved from: <http://researchgate.net>
9. Kaur, J., Aggarwal, V. (2018). *Evolution of Distance Education in India: From Pre-Mordial to Contemporary Epoch*. *International Journal of Education*, Vol.- 9, Issue- June 2018, Page no- 5-14, ISSN: 2347-4343 Retrieved from: <http://ijoe.vidyapublications.com>
10. Mandal, P. (2022). *Open and Distance Learning Education in India: Past, Present and Future*. ISBN: 978-93-81669-55-6
11. Ministry of Human Resource Development. (n.d.). *growth of Distance Education in India*. Retrieved from: <http://www.teindia.nic.in/mhrd/50yrsedu/g/52/4J/524J0601>
12. STRIDE HANDBOOK, IGNOU. Retrieved from: <http://webserver.ignou.ac.in/institute/handbook11/section-1.pdf>