

Role of Distance Education in Human Resource Development

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Abstract:

The purpose of the paper is to describe the role of distance education in human resource development. This is a conceptual paper which conceptualise how human resources are getting benefitted by open distance learning particularly in India. The paper highlights how distance education meets the need of majority of people who cannot get the opportunity to study in regular course programme and for those who want to pursue their knowledge ahead. Distance education or continuing education helps in increasing the level of literacy, education and skills in the country which can help in meeting greater employment opportunities and increasing incomes which ultimately leads to raising the level of human resource development in the country.

Keywords: *Open Distance Learning (ODL), Human Resource Development (HRD), Distance Education (DE), Information and Communication Technology (ICT)*

INTRODUCTION:

Several words are used to describe the distance mode of education. In India it is usually referred to as Distance Education, Correspondence Education or Open Distance Learning (Kanjilal, 1997). Open Distance Learning (ODL) is an expression which accepts the idea of “openness” and uses the “distance mode” of education. It is “open” in the sense that it removes whatever constraints exist in face to face conservative classroom scheme of teaching and learning. It provide flexibility through “openness” and expand opportunities for many learners who are aspiring for higher education but not having access to it through the conventional or conservative mode of education. In distance education, the teachers and the learners are separated by distance and time. Students do self-study with the help of supplied study materials in print (audios and videos in some cases), postal communication, some form of counseling, telecommunication, teleconferencing, support from tutors and mentors by means of telephone or electronic communication like e-mail etc. It also involves e-learning, open-learning, flexible-learning, on-line learning, resource-based learning, technology-mediated learning etc. All these

flexible and innovative characteristics of the open and distance learning system helps in meeting the educational requirement of varied groups of people at low costs.

Education is the only way through which the development of any country can takes place. Both regular as well as distance education course programme playing a very crucial role in the development of the human resources. But now according to Kanjilal (1997), distance education as a system of learning has attracted the attention of many institutions and individuals both in national and international countries within the last twenty-five years. In April 1995, International Centre for Distance Learning (ICDL) CD-ROM database on distance education indicates that there are 835 distance teaching institutions offering 29,166 courses located in almost 100 countries. So the significance of distance education is getting importance as the time passes. According to Ansari (2010), at least 40% of incremental student’s population at post-secondary level, of the total of about 0.5 million students per year, prefer to study through distance mode. Since students’ population is large, over twenty lakhs and widely dispersed, each institution has developed its own form of distance

education in accordance with local resources, target groups, philosophy and mission of the organisations (Ansari, 2010). The rising public requirement for education and training for a variety of specialized development augmented the opportunities for Open Distance Learning (ODL). In developing countries like India, Open and distance education is fast becoming an accepted and vital part of the main stream of educational systems. The globalization of distance education provides many opportunities for developing countries for the realization of their goals.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Distance education was started in 1962 in India, though training on distance education received its due place only after the establishment of the Indira Gandhi National Open University in 1985. A Division of Distance Education (DDE) was established in 1986 to develop appropriate human resources to take up required functions in academic, administrative and technical responsibilities in distance education (Panda, 2006).

The term Human Resource Development (HRD) cannot be defined in obsolete terms, as it is ever developing. Formerly it was termed as “training” and

then it became widely used as “training and development” and then finally to HRD. The distinct features of HRD in all these phases of development were the expansion of knowledge and skill for personal as well as organizational development. Human Resource Development takes place when all attributes in man are developed that can lead him to a live without any wants. In other words, the developments that can make him stand at par with the others and hold his head high. It can be summed as “the total knowledge, skills, creative abilities, talents and aptitudes of an organizations work force, as well as the values and attitudes of an individual involved” (Cheema and Sandhu, 1998). It focuses on the development of an individual’s skill and prepares him for productive usage. Academic studies in the field of human resource development have emphasized the potential of higher education for the growth in economy as well as reduction of poverty. The focus of every nation and worldwide organizations has been on the development of human resource development. It is the important factor that determines the nation’s development (Lama and Kashyap, 2012).

In developing country like India, distance education is playing a crucial role

in the human resource development by making skilled human resources by imparting education and various vocational courses which leads to economic development (Gaba, 2008) in the country. Vocational education and training raise the job opportunities in many ways and also helps to develop the necessary skills, attitude and motivation which match the demand for skilled manpower requirement for the economy as well as for the self-employment. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in Distance Education System helps in updating the existing skills and also generating the new skills among the learners. So most of the people take admissions in distance education to continue their education, to get good job, to get promotion in the field in which they are interested, for social reasons etc. Gaba (2008) examined the experiences of IGNOU graduated in the job market and found that out of the 13.52% of the total graduates, whose main reason for joining the course was to get a job, 24% of them had been successful. Of those who desired promotion (10.32%), 28% achieved their goal.

Conclusion:

Hence there are various advantages of distance education such as providing access to education to those with physical limitations, greater flexibility for scheduling learning-students class time, learner centered as distance education places responsibility for learning with the learner who must be more active and self directed, facilitates greater learner-instructor interaction, increased interaction with classmates, facilitates pedagogic development, produces a carryover effect into the regular classroom of improved pedagogic techniques, opportunity to develop technology competencies as distance education provide access to global resources and experts via internet communication and internet resources which allows for the internationalization of learning opportunities, centralized resources that produces higher quality of study materials. So open and distance learning is not only closely linked to innovation in information and communication technologies but also helps in the human resources of the country. Now open and distance education is being accepted worldwide as an alternative medium of education. As depicted by the Kapoor (2011), teaching courses like Humanities and Social Sciences are quite popular in distance mode of education in the

country since 1962. Thus distance learning comes as a blessing to students who want to study further while continuing with jobs or who might not be able to attend a full-time course for various reasons. Hence, training through distance mode is cost-effective as comparison to traditional classroom training and very important for human resource development. This system of distance education with Internet Communication Technology helped to acquire skills that enrich professional development in their

concerned areas. With tremendous expansion and increasing diversification of the distance education system, the importance of human resource development (HRD) is being increasingly recognised as never before. So, distance education or continuing education helps in increasing the level literacy, education and skills that meet greater employment opportunities and provides with increasing incomes which leads to better development of human resources of the country.

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