

**RESEARCH PAPER****Open Education System: A True Blessing for Everyone****Priti Verma**

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Email: priti-verma018@gmail.comReceived: 14th January 2017, Revised: 24th February 2017, Accepted: 26th February 2017**ABSTRACT**

No one can deny the importance of education in one's life as it is the key to success and prosperity. It is the process of developing the inner abilities and powers of an individual in order to make him a good and responsible citizen. It is a life-long process that not only provides knowledge and skills but also inculcates values, right attitudes and habits in an individual. According to Mahatma Gandhi, who emphasized on the harmonious development of the various faculties of human beings, education means an all round drawing out of the best in child and man – body, mind and spirit. Thus, education is a cultivating process whose main purpose is to impart knowledge in a person so that he can tackle the problems of life and can earn his livelihood. Blessed are those who have access to formal education in schools and colleges without any hindrances; but there are others who are not so fortunate to continue their education for some or the other reasons. Some kind of financial problems or adverse domestic conditions may pose a hurdle in the continuation of further studies. Such students, who wish to carry on with their studies later on in life when things become somewhat favourable, need not dishearten themselves as Open-Education System has emerged as a boon for all those who wish to fill the gap that has occurred in their journey of formal educational life.

Key words: open-education, importance, flexible, distance, pace, blessing

INTRODUCTION

Blessed are those who have access to formal education in schools, colleges and universities without any hindrances; but there are others who are not so fortunate to continue their education for some or the other reasons. Some kind of financial problems or adverse domestic conditions or circumstances may pose a hurdle in the continuation of further studies. Such students, who wish to carry on with their studies later on in life when things become somewhat favourable, need not dishearten themselves or abandon their aspirations for higher studies as Open-Education System has come to their rescue to help them out with their studies. Such Open Universities are fast coming up throughout the country with their ever-increasing branches covering more and more cities, assimilating a vast number of study courses in almost all subjects and endeavouring hard to provide better facilities. Moreover, it is reliable and easily affordable, working with the goal to educate all and to make sure that no one is deprived of education; to help all those who aspire for higher studies but could not get admission in regular colleges because of limited number of seats; those who were compelled to leave their studies in between in order to take up some employment early in their lives to seek livelihood because of death of the earning member of the family but now are eager to continue with their studies. It also has come as a hope for those criminals who were led astray in their lives under some circumstances and are in jails, but now even they can carry on with their education through open learning and seek a good livelihood for them after their release. Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), New Delhi; Netaji Subhas Open University, Kolkata; Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Open University, Ahmedabad; IMT Distance and Open Learning Institute, Ghaziabad; Yashwantrao C. Maharashtra Open University, Nashik; Nalanda Open University, Patna; Madhya Pradesh Bhoj University, Bhopal are some of the National and State Open Universities where the aspirants can get themselves enrolled. The basic purpose of these open universities is to provide education, instruction and study materials to the learners at their doorsteps through various books, media and technology.

IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION

No one can deny the importance of education in one's life. In fact education is the key to success, prosperity and contentment. The word 'education' is derived from the Latin word 'educatum' which means developing or progressing from inward to outward. Thus, education is the process of developing the inner abilities and powers of an individual. Thousands of years ago, the ancient Greek philosopher Plato defined education as a life-long process starting "from the first years of childhood and lasting to the very end of the life" (Chandra, p.1). The foundation of every state is the education of its citizens. Education not only provides knowledge and skills but also inculcates moral values, right attitudes and good habits. According to Mahatma Gandhi, who emphasized on the harmonious development of the various faculties of human beings, education means an "all round drawing out of the best in child and man – body, mind and spirit" (Bharathi, p.2). Thus, education is a fostering, a nurturing and a cultivating process whose main purpose is to impart knowledge in a person, thereby making him more able and more wise to tackle the problems of life and to find out their solutions in a more convincing way. Education trains men and women according to their abilities so that they can earn their own livelihood; and helps in a balanced development of their personality – physical, emotional, psychological, social and moral – which is essential for the individual's private and social life, thereby making him a good and responsible citizen. Hence, education must be designed, not only to cultivate the mind and inculcate academic and vocational skills but also to develop responsibility to self and to country; as it is the most important factor in achieving rapid economic development, technological progress and in setting a social order founded on the values of freedom, patience, tolerance, social justice and equal opportunities. In order to fulfil this purpose, Open-Education System has emerged as a blessing for all those who wish to fill the gap that has occurred in their journey of formal educational life.

OPEN-EDUCATION SYSTEM: ITS FEATURES

Open-Education System is a learning system where the learner is guided by the study material arranged by the instructor or the co-ordinator who is apart from the learner in location. It endeavours to meet the challenges of education through distance learning where the study material in the form of printed texts and lessons, audio and visual aids are supplied to the learners. It aims at making higher education facilities available to a wider section of the population, particularly those whom access to the formal system is difficult; offering a chance for continuing education for people at work and to provide opportunities for upgrading knowledge and skills. The courses are designed and developed in such a way so as to meet the identified needs and interests of a wide variety of potential learners throughout India. Thus, open-education system is a process to create and provide access to learning when the source of information and the learners are separated by time and distance.

OPEN-EDUCATION SYSTEM: ITS ADVANTAGES

One of the most significant advantages of Open-Education System is its flexibility as it provides courses through open learning and allows the students to study at the time, pace and place that suit them the most. Thus, it helps those students who might otherwise be unable to attend on-campus classes due to distance or time constraints if they are in some job. As students are not confined to a classroom for a certain number of fixed hours on a given day, they can go through and study their coursework with flexibility and complete their lessons when it suits their schedule. There is no time frame for taking an examination. One can start and take as long as one likes to complete a course. A course can be completed in a time frame that suits the student. For example, if a particular course can be covered in one year of traditional formal institution; in open-education system, it can be done in three or four years or even more, if the student is a slow learner or if he is unable to dedicate more time to studies because of some job obligations. As it is self-paced learning, it reduces stress for slow as well as quick learners, and so increases their satisfaction and peace of mind. Another advantage of open-education system is that it encourages life-long learning. Because of responsibilities and priorities of work and home, adult learners need more freedom regarding time, place and pace of education. Thus, they can benefit themselves a lot by open learning. Moreover, all the materials in a course are carefully selected and prepared by

professionals. It is ensured that the learning packages are of high quality and top level, so that the student can be sure that he is getting the best.

OPEN-EDUCATION SYSTEM: ITS SHORTCOMINGS

In spite of many benefits, open-education system is not free of problems as there are many barriers to successful open learning. The very first problem is the negative attitude of people towards the open-education system as they readily believe that this option is for those who are not able to seek admission to any formal institution because of their low marks. They also have insecurities regarding financial costs of study. They are also apprehensive about the relevance of their studies as they face lack of support from employers who are reluctant to hire them in their offices and companies. All these considerations often result in higher dropout rates among the students. Another drawback is regarding loss of inspiration and motivation as there are no regular classes. This is because the vital link of communication that is required between a student and a teacher is missing because of the distance that separates them. The study centres are quite far from their dwelling place of residence. Thus, lack of faculty support and feedback is another barrier as the learner is impaired by the lack of daily or weekly casual face to face contact with the tutors or the peers. Hence without adequate give and take response, students may have trouble in self-evaluation. This may also result in the feeling of isolation and a lack of confidence in their own abilities as the students miss that regular give and take response, that social and physical interaction that comes with attending a traditional classroom. This also hampers the learners in getting the opportunity to practice oral communication skills because of very less verbal interaction with teachers and other students.

Though some personal contact programmes are organized, they are not sufficient as these are held only once or twice a year and also for a very short duration as compared to the vast syllabus that has to be studied. Another problem encountered by the students is the lack of training; particularly in reference to technical skills. Many students lack ICT (Information and Communication Technology) competencies. They are not well versed in the uses of technology such as computers and the internet.

OVERCOMING THE LIMITATIONS OF OPEN-EDUCATION SYSTEM

There is a dire requirement to overcome these limitations and drawbacks. There is a genuine need to spread the information and advantages of open-education system and to develop a positive attitude towards it by convincing the masses that open-education system is not inferior in any manner and that it is at par with the formal education. Sufficient classes must be conducted for proper guidance and teaching-learning interaction between the teacher and the students, where the students would be able to clear their doubts and queries without any hesitation. Since there is no boundation to complete the course within a given time period, the learners often tend to become lazy because of lack of motivation and inspiration, and this generally results in dropouts when the learners leave their courses midway. Hence, a proper support system in the form of some tutors, academic planners and counselors should be arranged in order to guide them, to help the students complete their courses on time and to help them to manage their stress level. Technology can play an important role in an open learning system. Hence, in order to make open learning successful, we need to overcome technical barriers.

The students must be taught the basics and fundamentals of operating the computer system. They should be made aware of the latest technologies of internet, multimedia, smart phone etc. The multi-media programmes with diagrams, flow-charts, tables and power-point presentations are likely to be more effective, attractive and grasping than one which relies on a single medium. Programmed learning, one of the gifts of educational technology to the modern world, can be of immense help.

Educational CDs and pen drives can be easily made available in various study centres and it can be sent at a minimum cost, so that open education learners, either in groups or as an individual can be benefited. The use of audio-visual aids and computer assisted learning certainly helps the teacher in the process of instruction.

CONCLUSION

Thus, open-education system has opened the virtuous and glorious path of knowledge, of learning, of wisdom to all those who wish to fulfil their desire of learning, no matter at which place they are, how far they are or whatever their age is. The advantages of open-education system may lure anyone towards it but some of its limitations and drawbacks may hinder the progress of the learner. Hence, a certain amount of dedication and hard work is required to keep up the learner's morale to complete the course. There is no doubt that by overcoming the limitations, open-education system can certainly prove out to be a readily available, easily affordable, better facilities, reliable and an excellent method of reaching to the masses, depriving none from learning and a real help for all those who aspire for higher studies.

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