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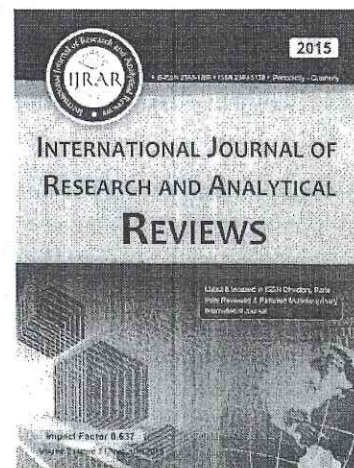
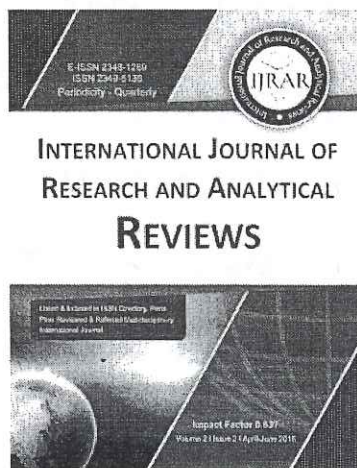
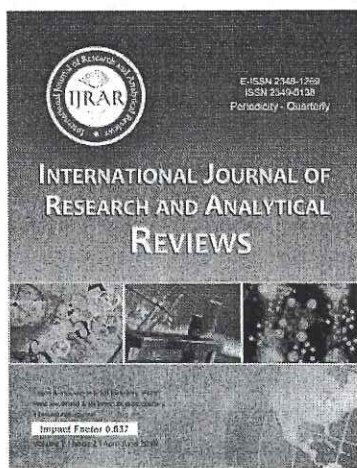
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## Reaching the Unreached Through Distance Education in the Present Scenario

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### 1. Introduction

Audrey Azoulay, director-general of UNESCO, said in UN's first-ever International Day of Education, to celebrate how education can lead to peace and development said that "Education is a human right, a public good, and a public responsibility". Education is the most powerful force in our hands to ensure significant improvements in health, to stimulate economic growth, to unlock the potential and innovation we need to build more resilient and sustainable societies."

It is the aspiration of most of the people to attain the best education in life. In the present scenario educate every one is the aim and dream of our country. Over the years, individuals, institutions, business, industry and the military have continuously sought for alternative means to education as well as higher education as they strive to cope with lifestyles and changing demands of the economies and societies they live in.

Through Distance Education it is possible to fulfil the dream of providing best education to everyone who aspires for it. Distance education is the education of students who may not always be physically present in the classroom for learning. Traditionally, this usually involved correspondence courses wherein the student corresponded with the institution via post. Distance Education is passing through a period of significant transformation and expansion. Today it involves online and mobile education also. In distance education the learner is at a distance from the teacher for most of the time during teaching learning process. Distance education offers *flexibility* and *autonomy* to the students to study when and where they wish and at a pace to suit their circumstances.

In distance education system both asynchronous and synchronous learning are possible. Asynchronous learning refers to those situations of learning when learners and teachers are not involved in the learning activity at the same point of time. Internet courses are a form of asynchronous learning network. Here, the students and teacher interaction is separated by time. Synchronous learning environments are those in which teacher and learners communicate to each other in real time even though they are separated by space. Examples are satellite delivery, teleconferencing, video conferencing, audio conferencing etc. These provide for real time communication between teacher and students and learning activities that are parallel to those available in face-to-face environments.

In distance education system the students have to study independently and they do not receive immediate feedback as compared to their counterparts in the formal system. Normally, they do not have easy access to library facilities. Alongside we see the developments in information and communication technology and the use of communication technology in Distance Education system. Open Universities have become important mode of transferring disciplinary knowledge base to the ever-increasing number of aspirants in various fields of education through distance mode. In distance mode, education is provided at any stage and to any group of learners. The learner is left free to determine his pace, place and course of learning. In this mode of education, knowledge is imparted to the learners through Self Learning Material (printed materials), radio broadcast, audio cassettes, video devices, audio conferencing, teleconferencing, online learning, mobile learning, personal contact programmes and weekend counselling etc. These are used as mediated communication to solve the problem of distance and make their learning more effective.

People could not get education at the period when they were to be educated because of lack of funding for education, having no teacher, or having untrained teacher/s, no classroom, lack of learning materials, the exclusion of children with disabilities, distance from home to school, the expense of education, poverty etc. There are large numbers of individuals in our country who are untouched and unreached by education in more than one ways. Through Distance Education it is possible to reach the unreached.

**Unreached due to distance:** India has a multiplicity of geographical contexts. There are people living in geographically remote areas like islands, hilly areas, places that cannot be reached by normal means of

transportation etc. For them education is not reached. Because of the use of different media in Distance Education like radio broadcast, mobile learning, Self Learning Material etc it has the advantage of reaching these unreached.

Among different electronic media available today, educational radio broadcast can play a vital role in distance education in reaching the unreached due to distance for its easy accessibility, cost effectiveness, ability to reach the masses, overcome distance, ability to promote thinking and imagination, ability to cater to people of all ages and help in direct instruction for definite target groups.

Presently distance education uses emerging technologies to enhance traditional way of learning. That is distance learning on the web, also referred to as online learning, online distance learning or e-learning is increasingly becoming the logical way to learn. This has been made possible by the evolving information and communication technology. Telecommunication networks are providing learning opportunities for non-traditional populations of learners and individuals isolated by distance or geographical barriers.

Mobile learning represents a way to address a number of our educational problems. Devices such as smart phones and tablets enable innovation and help students, teachers, and parents gain access to digital content. Mobile devices are essential tools to improve learning for students and these in the hands of students have the potential to dramatically improve educational outcomes. Wireless technology is a way to provide new content and facilitate information access wherever a student is located. It enables, empowers, and engages learning in ways that transform the learning environment for students inside and outside of the institution.

#### **Unreached due to Mode of Education:**

Mode of transmission is normally textual and aural mode in formal schools, colleges and universities. Differently abled individuals such as visually challenged, hearing impaired, etc who have no other choice but to learn through the same kind modalities of chalk-talk-perform which any other student of education goes through. Distance Education provides an opportunity to reach these students by way of designing its instruction in alternate ways to cater to students with differential learning needs in terms of mode of education. In Distance Education you can prepare specific material such as brail or audio cassettes, radio programmes, television programmes etc to reach the unreached due to mode of education.

#### **Unreached due to lack of individualisation:**

In the formal classrooms particularly in higher education in which the number of students in a class would be too large, it is not possible to provide individual attention to the learners in a cohort. Each individual learns according his/her own pace, rate and way of learning. In formal education system instruction is not individualized and also learner-centred. Even though they are in the classroom they are unreached. Because of individual differences and lack of individualized instruction many a students leave a programme mid-way, fail, dropout, etc. Particular type of material used in Distance Education is primarily meant for catering to the individual needs of the learner. These materials are individualized materials and they are called Self Learning Materials (SLMs).

Self Learning Materials (SLMs) provided to the learners are designed for distance learners to learn on their own. SIMs includes all the text prepared to stimulate independent study. They depend heavily upon the Self Learning Materials provided by the institution. Self Learning Materials are Self explanatory i.e. the content could be presented in a style so that the learner can go through the material without much external support. They are self contained which is made self sufficient so that a learner need not hunt for additional sources of information. It covers all information required by the learner while keeping away all that is not necessary. Self-directed i.e. the study materials perform the role of a teacher namely guide, instruct, moderate and regulate the learning process. They are self motivating in the sense the study material not only arouse curiosity of the learners, relate knowledge to familiar situations, make learning meaningful but also provide appropriate reinforcement to sustain the interest and encourage learners to study further.

#### **Unreached due to life context**

Large numbers of women, particularly home makers are deprived of education particularly higher education. They are deprived of education because their circumstances of life do not permit them to go to formal education. However education can reach to their homes through distance education. It may be through state or national open universities, through internet, on-line learning or e-learning, on-line courses, Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), etc. Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) offer large-scale interactive participation and open access through the World Wide Web or other network technologies. These are recent developments in distance education.

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In the present scenario, the Internet or the networking opens up a way of exponentially the physical limits of the open universities by giving students and teachers access to other students and teachers, experts and resources around the world. It is possible to give the distance learners the best they deserve through Internet. Internet is a network of computer networks. It is a network of networks, that is, it connects many Local Area Network (LAN) and Wide Area Network (WAN). Internet is a global collection of people, who are linked through cables and telephone lines, making communication possible with each other for specific purposes.

The Internet opens up way to e-learning. E-learning is used interchangeably in wide variety of contexts. E-learning or electronic learning can be used effectively in distance education for offering some of the programmes or providing some of the course materials and other required information. E-learning is defined as a planned teaching / learning experience that uses a wide spectrum of technologies, mainly internet to reach learners. Developments in Internet and multimedia technologies are the basic enablers of e-learning. The three key components of e-learning are content, technologies and services. Through e-learning and on-line learning it is easy to reach the unreached women folk.

Using satellite, computers, telephone, the Internet, interactive video conferencing and audio, distance learners can participate and share many different types of experiences that would not ordinarily be made available to them. Through distant learning technologies, students can interact with one another, interact with their instructors and easily consult experts at remote locations. Online distance learning is very flexible. One may have to spend 30 minutes to 40 minutes a day whichever is most convenient to him/her.

**Unreached due to Numbers:** There are limited numbers of seats for different programmes in formal education system. In distance education number of seats is not fixed. Usually distance education is provided by National and State Open Universities. To cater to the requirements of the students Open Universities establish several regional centres and study centres at various places. Through a large number of study centres spread over the entire country or state, higher education can be received by the individuals who could not get admission because of limited seats. These study centres provide weekend counselling, contact programmes, library facilities, information, audio video cassettes etc. To cater to the needs of the learners in distance education and to provide for interaction with the teachers and learners and provide training in different study centres different types of technologies such as audio cassettes, audio CDs, radio lessons, radio counselling, audio conferencing, are used. Apart from these, in order to improve the quality of distance education and enhance students' learning multimedia network providing video clips, animations, Internet, on-line learning, e-learning, audio-video conferencing, video conferencing etc are used.

Distance education provides opportunity to everyone who is unreached in other systems of education. Distance education makes each and every one enjoy the access to education. Open and Distance Education (ODE) is designed basically to provide accessible and affordable education to all especially those who were denied education in earlier life due to one or the other reasons.

Distance education is being used by those involved in the educational process. From high school to higher education, military and government to continuing education, corporate training to lifelong learning, distance education is being used for several purposes; to reach the unreached and also advanced students, reach learners in different geographic locations rural areas as well as cities, for course enrichment, staff development, cost-saving and to offer just-in-time training to individuals and employees in remote locations.

### **Conclusion**

Through Distance Education it is possible to reach the all untouched and unreached.

Through Distance Education it is possible to build a better future for all those who aspire for quality education in our country and in turn see them build a better future for the world.

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