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# Distance Education for Women Empowerment

• Praveen Ghodeswar

**E**ducation is perhaps the most fundamental requirement for inclusive growth, empowering person and people, opening up opportunities and promoting real people's participation in the process of development. It is an important aspect that fuels both economic growth and social change. It helps in increasing the productivity of the nation and strengthens all bonds, social and cultural. India has the largest education system in the world after China. We have a history of stretching back to the ancient urban centers for learning at Nalanda and Taxila. With the establishment of the British Rule western education became embedded into the Indian society.

Considering education as one of the most important means of empowering women, several schemes, programmes, awards and facilities have been initiated by the Central Government and State Governments to promote girls and women's education. The Central Government has taken resources to comprehensive literary drive for girls related to poor and socially weaker section of the society. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, National Literacy Mission, Adult-Education Programme, National Girl's Education Programme, Mid Day Scheme, Literacy Award Scheme programmes are being benefited to women for their educational empowerment. The literacy rate among women has increased because of these initiatives. Although there is a gap between male and female literacy rate, high dropout rate of girls in school is matter of concern. Education is a powerful tool in the liberation and empowerment of women. It is vital that education facilitate women not only to acquire more knowledge about the world outside of her fireplace and home but helps her to get status, positive self esteem and self confidence, necessary courage and inner strength to face challenges in life. Apparently it also facilitates them to obtain a job and accomplish social status. Education mainly of women has a major impact on health and nutrition as an instrument of developing a sustainable strategy for population control. Furthermore educated women can play an equally important role as men in nation building.

## What is Distance Education?

In the context of education, distance means that the learner and the teacher are not face-to-face. Nowadays Open Learning and Distance Education (DE); these two terms are being used almost interchangeably and they are often combined to be known as Open and Distance Learning (ODL). Open learning is philosophy and Distance Education is the mode used for translating it into reality as the two are harmonizing to each other. It is essential to realize that distance education is a specific term. Since it depends on two way communication, distance education is not either just teaching people who are at a distance from one or just learning from the work of someone who is not present. DE is an umbrella term which describes all the teaching, learning arrangements in which the learner and the teacher are separated by space and time. In fact it is a mode of delivering education and instruction to learners who are not physically present in a traditional setting of a classroom.

## Characteristics of Open Learning:

- Accessibility- it is open for all those who are interested to learn. No higher age bar.
- Freedom of time – the learner can study whenever he or she desire.
- Freedom of pace- the learner is not required to complete a course or programme within a specific duration. Instead, the learner can learn at his/her own pace and make his/her own decisions about the study path which can be followed for his/her programme or course.
- Freedom of Place- the learner is not required to be present physically at the institute. The working people (employees/business persons/self employed/house wives) do not need to leave their work.
- Availability of study materials- comprehensive, well designed study materials are provided to the students. It is called Self Instructional Materials.
- Availability of Study Centre- as per the requirement of course and programme availability of Study Centers is there. Study