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Vocational education and training through open & distance learning mode: Prospects and challenges

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Abstract

The National Knowledge commission report (2006-2009), has also acknowledged vocational education as an important element of the Nation's education initiative. In its recommendation, it has also proposed for a National Institute for vocational Education Planning and development, linking of vocational education with the mainstream education and also advised the Government to spend 10-15% of its total expenditure on education specially vocational education. The Eleventh plan has focused on inclusive growth to reduce poverty and aims to provide an opportunity to restructure policies. It has recognized the role of Distance Learning and, hence in its report it has suggested for using Distance Education as a significant delivery model for importing vocational education. In such a situation ODL models in VET could play an important and viable role in improving overall skills of man force in the globalization and knowledge based economy of 21st century.

Keywords: Vocational education, open & distance learning

Introduction

As a force contributing to social and economic development open and distance learning is today one of the most rapidly growing fields of education and training. It is fast becoming an accepted and indispensable part of the main stream of educational systems in both developed and developing countries, with particular importance for the latter.

In efforts to meet the new and changing demands for education and training, open and distance learning may be seen as an approach that is at least complementary and under certain circumstances an appropriate substitute for the face-to-face methods that still dominate most educational system.

Over the past decades, there has been a noticeable growth in distance education around the world. This is very much evident from the increasing employment in Open Distance Learning (ODL) institutions. ODL institutions are not only imparting education as an alternative to the formal system, but also in areas such as vocational and technical and continuing education, teacher education and ever in high technology based education. To the learner ODL means more freedom of access and thereby, a wider range of opportunities for learning and qualification. Such ODL based model of vocational education and training programme has great importance and relevance in countries like India where there is a urgent need of providing training to a large number of untrained work force at different levels for improve overall their skills and enable them to be part of the productive force in fast growing Indian economy.

Objectives of the study

This present paper in Vocational Education and Training through ODL mode aims at certain aims and objectives which are as follows –

- i. To focus on the trend of study and to make popularise this new mode of teaching learning process in contemporary educational system.
- ii. To elevate its opportunities and facilities before young generations, so that they are interested in this new mode of study. ii. To detect its shortcomings and barriers and challenges in its path of progress so that necessary measures should be taken on the part of Government and well aware part of society.

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- iii. To highlight the status of this mode of learning in present scenario of Indian context.
 - (i) To give ample significance on VET in the world of globalization and skill based economy.
 - (ii) To reflect the present scenario of VET in Indian context in comparison to the world's economy

Meaning of the related terms

(a) **ODL:** - Open Distance Learning (ODL) is general term for the use of telecommunication of provide or enhance learning. It refers to the provision of flexible educational opportunities in terms of access and multiple modes of knowledge acquisition.

- Flexible means the availability of choices for educational endeavors anywhere, anytime and anyhow.
- Access means opportunity made available to all, freeing form constraints of time and place.
- Multiple modes mean the use of various delivery system and learning resources.

Among the more commonly used terms related to ODL are the following :- Correspondence education, home study, independent study, external studies, distance teaching, technology based or mediated education, open learning, flexible learning and distributed learning. To the learner, ODL means more freedom of access, and thereby, a wider range of opportunities for learning and qualification.

(b) Vocational Education and Training :-

Vocational Education is the education which prepares trainees for jobs and other careers at different level like engineering, nursing, pharmacy and law. In other words, (broad view) vocational education implies that aspect of education which prepares a person to enter the "world of work". UNESCO defines vocational education as education designed to prepare skilled personnel at lower level of qualifications for one or group of occupations, traders or jobs and vocational training refers to the way in which these fields of studies are trained to the trainees for the optimum development of their skills at work.

(c) Distance Education

Distance Education is a planned education which normally occurs in a different location form teaching. It also provides student with a second chance at a college education. Distance education gives an opportunity those who are disadvantaged by limited time, distance or physical disability. In distance education mode of education, students may not be required to be present in a classroom but that also maybe a question of option. For example in the open Universities in India, especially in the Indira Gandhi National Open University, (IGNOU) week and contact sessions are held.

History of vocational education and training through ODL mode

The present paper aims to view the history of days VET the ODL mode from the ancient to recent century. Vocational Education in India existed long back from the time of the Aryan settlement. The earliest form of education was mainly religious in nature; however there were certain form of education that fulfilled the non-religious aspect of the life during the Vedic ages. The earliest subjects that were certain form, of education that fulfilled the non-religious life during the Vedic ages. The earliest subjects that were practical in

nature were the courses in Ayurvedic Medicine, Military Science and other arts and crafts. These subjects were termed as silpas or kalas. The Milinda Panha gives a list of 19 silpas, while the contemporary. Buddhist and Brahmanical put the total Kalas at 64.

As time passed, vocational education come to be associated with a particular caste and thus formed a caste based profession. Then with the coming of British and Industrialization, the vocational form of education could not meet the challenges, and hence, arts crafts etc all disappears fro, the Indian scenario.

Vocational Education and Training was first introduced in its formal shape in the year 1976-77 under the higher secondary programme as given by NCERT. The Kothari Commission had emphasized on vocational Education at lower (11-16 years) and higher secondary stage (17 years). A centrally sponsored scheme for vocational education was introduced in 1988 and was later revised by NCERT in 1992.

Present status of vocational education and training through ODL mode

This paper also represents the present status of vocational education and training through ODL mode of the country as well as world's perspective.

In the field of vocational and technical education open and distance learning makes up a mixed and complex picture. It may integral element. It has often been developed by private institutions and enterprises, and makes an important contribution to human development. It is often necessary to supplement distance learning with intensive experimental work and hands-on training through residential schools, home experiment kits, etc. Examples could also be mentioned form within the public sector. Electronically supported open and distance learning programmes using the World Wide Web are now substantially employed in technical, vocational and professional education. Many countries have developed vocational and polytechnic and other types of short-cycle colleges, sometimes spanning both secondary and post-secondary levels. In this sector there are many examples of open and distance learning programmes (The Australian TAFE colleges and the US Community Colleges being just two examples). Advances in the information and communication technology (ICT) have opened up new possibilities and opportunities in ODL. The increasing number of open Universities being established across the world is highly indicative of this trend.

Barriers of Vocational Education and training through ODL mode

Though Open and Distance Learning has emerged as a most viable option in vocation education old training over past year in present days, the various problems and barriers still now resist its path for optimum development of this sector. Here in this section the challenges of VET are highlighted.

(a) Bent for general education

As a world becomes small and globally localized, education is the only means for a better standard of living and to build a sustainable economy in today's knowledge based society. Very often, when given a choice, people tend to move towards a general educational qualification rather than a specialized form of education especially vocational education. There may be varied reasons and the most importantly due to lack of interest in it.

(b) Inadequate number of institutes and programmers

For the improvement of vocational education and training sufficient number of institutions and programmers through ODL mode should be organized. The inadequate number of colleges and training institutes become a barrier of its progress. Though there is capacity for enrolling in the vocational course, yet the course have yet to be utilized.

(c) Lack of encouragement from the Government

The Government did not take initiative and effective prospect in this sector of education. They did not provide ample opportunities to enhance the work force and a establish skill developing fund, organizing training for employees in newer skills. In addition to their lack of encouragement. In organizing various ODL courses for the of vocational education is not satisfactory.

(d) Lack of trained teachers and infrastructure

For the development of vocational education and training in ODL mode sufficient number of trained teachers are essential on the other hand proper infrastructure for various vocational course and training are indispensable. But inadequate number of trained teachers and lack of proper infrastructure becomes barrier in these processions.

(e) Lake of private initiative

To enhance vocational education and training course in ODL mode private initiative is essential as well as effective. But lack the private initiative in providing training and other opportunities for VET restrained its progress.

Discussion

Technical and vocational education have in recent years played important roles, not only in contributing to the improvement of productivity of a national labour market, but also in assisting individuals to improve their employment prospects in rapidly changing socio-economic conditions. In this regard, the role of open and distance learning in the field of technical and vocational educations is significant.

Suggesting for the betterment of Vocational Education and Training:- Through ODL mode

The possible necessary measures are suggested in this section of the paper to meet the challenges and barriers for the development of Vocation Education and Training through ODL mode.

- Vocational education and training should be made more attractive in order to capture the eyes of the learners.
- The Public Private Partnership (PPP) scheme should be enforced and encouraged in the ODL system.
- The VET programmed should be made compulsory in the Secondary stage of Education, as it is the last stage of education in formal mode formal mode for most of the students.
- The National Institute of open schooling (NIOS) can also serve as a starting ground for giving vocational education.
- VET through Distance Education can be more attractive by providing the students with state of the art infrastructural facilities, latest equipment's, trained personnel etc.
- The ODL system can play a more effective role in providing vocational education, if it can provide for scholarships and also placements/internships.

- NGO's can also work together with the Distance Education Institutes for providing vocational course and programmers.
- The ODL institute can also provide training for the trainers of the ITI's, ITC's through its courses.
- The open universities can make use of radio, television, internet etc to provide vocational courses through audio and audio visual study materials. Such steps will motivate the learner and keep him engaged.

Findings & Conclusion

In this paper I would like to reflect some of my view point after a brief study on vocational education and training through ODL mode.

In recent days a growing interest has been noticed in vocational education and training through ODL mode not only among young generations but also it is a golden opportunities for working employs/people as they can continue their studies in this stream through open and distance mode. As a result they can increase their skill and capacity in this sector and can try for the betterment for job satisfaction.

The another issue which strikes in my mind is that in present scenario the seat capacity of the vocational institutes such as Polytechnic and ITI is limited. For this a huge number of interested students deprive off getting an admission in such colleges and training institutes. In this context my viewpoint is the prospect of open distance learning of vocational institutes should be developed so that the encouraged students can get opportunity to utilize their skill and talent is this sector.

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