



## International Journal of Research Publication and Reviews

Journal homepage: [www.ijrpr.com](http://www.ijrpr.com) ISSN 2582-7421

# Recent Trends of Open and Distance Education in Indian an Analytical Study.

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### Introduction

India now becoming the largest populated country in the world. The demand of knowledge also is incising day by day, as a result the formal education system could not provide the sufficient knowledge as per needs. therefor distance mode of learning now most valuable for the country.

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### Meaning & Trends

According to UNESCO (2002), the terms 'open learning' and 'distance education' represent approaches that focus on opening access to education and training provision, freeing learners from the constraints of time and place, and offering flexible learning opportunities to individuals and groups of learners. Open and distance learning is one of the most rapidly growing fields of education, and its potential impact on all education delivery systems has been greatly accentuated through the development of Internet-based information technologies, and in particular the World Wide Web.

According to Wikipedia distance education or distance learning is the education of students who are not physically present at a school (Boz kurt et.al., 2015).

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### Recent Research

The rapid development of information and communication technologies and the move towards more knowledge- intensive, interdependent and internationalized societies create new challenges and opportunities for the design and delivery of education (UNESCO, 2002, p.8). ICT opens up new horizons for progress and the exchange of creativity and dialogue. The result is that the disadvantages group, rural communities, illiterate populations and even entire countries are looking forward for further new scope of higher education with the application of ICTS. The peoples are looking forward for increased access and flexibility in education so that works and education can walk parallel. They are waiting for more and more learner centric, enriched, higher quality and cost effective facilities in education. Employers also demands a new horizon in education through which employees quality and skill development can be possible in a cost effective way and their productivity can be increased without hampering their regular production. The governments also were in search of that system of training which will increase the capacity of the target group within a low cost and with limited access. The answer of all these queries is open and distance learning.

Therefore the open and distance learning system occurs in different context and in different countries in different names, viz. open education, distance education, correspondence education, external study, off-campus study etc.. Its importance increased throughout the world and particularly in the third world countries including India because of its cost-effectiveness, high productivity, utility, greater flexibility and innovative approach.

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### Research Study in Open and Distance Education

For development of open and distance education regular research work is essential. As this field of study is still evolving and orienting itself to fulfill the demands of nations, a regular and in-depth research is essential. For the last two decades its study emerge as a separate field of research. But since late seventies study in this field get momentum in India in the name of 'Educational Technology', 'Teacher Education', 'Non-formal Education' and 'Higher Education' etc.

First trend study in distance education published in 2001 by Berge and Mrozowski. They studied published research work and article for a period of ten years since 1990 to 1999 mainly in America. A total 890 research articles were studied by them which they categorize into ten research issues on the basis of Sherry's (1996) study. The issues were,

1. Redefining the roles of key participants,

2. Technology selection and adoption,
3. Design issues,
4. Strategies to increase interactivity and active learning,
5. Learners characteristics,
6. Learner support,
7. Operational issues,
8. Policy and management issues,
9. Equity and accessibility,
10. Cost/benefit trade-offs.

They also noticed that the main areas of research in this field were pedagogical issues. Most of the researchers used survey method in their study.

Another literature review was done by three researchers-Lee, Driscoll and Nelson (2004). They reviewed 383 research articles from four different research journals, published from America. Lee et.al. (2004) classified research articles into six themes-

1. Design related,
2. Development-related,
3. Management-related,
4. evaluation-related,
5. Institutional and operational-related,
6. Theory and research-related,

Lee et.al. (2004) studied papers which were published between 1997 to 2002. They used thematic-analysis method in their survey study.

Zawacki-Richter (2009) explores the distance education research domain by using Delphi technique. Zawacki-Richter, Backer and Vogt (2009) studied 695 research articles on distance education published in five papers reviewed in this study were published between 2000 to 2008. Zawacki-Richter (2009) identified 15 research areas which were categorized under 3 broad categories-

1. Distance education systems and theories,
2. Management, organization and teaching,
3. Teaching and learning in distance education

In the Delphi technique they collected data from editorial board experts (of major DE journals published in Sept-Dec, 2008) having an average 27 years of professional experience in distance education study. The data were collected from experts from Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Fiji, Germany, Ireland, New Zealand, South Africa, USA and UK.

Therefore, in the study of Zawacki-Richter (2009), samples were taken from English speaking countries and so the result of this study may not be accepted in the peoples of non-English speaking countries. From their study through Delphi technique Zawacki-Richter (2009) concluded that "...the priority of DE research areas have not changed drastically,...." in the present era clients of DE study are not only thinking about research on technology innovations, rather about management and change in DE institutions. Delphi experts viewed that in the present era DE research needs to focus in the areas of innovations and change in teaching and learning, quality assurance, faculty support, professional development, applications of mobile devices and synchronous tools for teaching, learning and assessment. Zawacki-Richter et.al. (2009) also noticed that most of the research in DE is by employing qualitative method and 44.2% study were done by single author between the period 2000 and 2008. Mishra observed that between 1991 to 1996, 61.5% studies in DE were done by single author.

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## Review

Bozkurt et.al. (February, 2015) studied "Trends in Distance Education Research: A Content Analysis of Journals 2009-2013" by using the classification system developed by Zawacki-Richter (2009) for distance education research areas. Bozkurt et.al. (2015) reviewed seven DE and educational technology journals published in the period of 2009 to 2013. They surveyed 1,225 papers published in those seven journals in the time period 2009-2013. Out of 1,225 articles 861 were identified as research articles and 364 as others (viz. editorials, book reviews, interviews, concept papers, position papers, reflection papers, field notes, technical notes etc.). Only the research articles (N=861) were considered for their study. Bozkurt et.al. (2015) for their study used content analysis (defined as a systematic, replicable technique for compressing many words of text into fewer content categories based on explicit rules of coding [Berelson, 1952], and analyzing written, verbal or visual communication messages which includes both qualitative and quantitative

approaches [Elo & Kyngas, 2008] method to study empirical documentation). Following content analysis method they used descriptive analysis for reporting the findings and a social network analysis for analyzing the “keywords used in the selected articles to achieve a deeper comprehension and distinguish the links between them” (Bozkurt et.al., 2015, p.4.). Findings of their study were as follows:

‘Keywords indicated in the articles provide a holistic reflection of the research paper topics’. Out of 4,088 keywords 633 were field specific and 3,455 were research related.

Keywords were ranked according to their frequency of appearance in the articles.

The study reveals that more research are needed by the method of quantitative correlation and experimental method.

Berge and Mrozowski (2001) studied the papers on DE published between 1990-1999. They found that most of the studies were done by quantitative method (viz. descriptive, correlational, experimental) and less number of study were done by qualitative method. Now a day’s quantitative, qualitative and mixed studies (exploratory) is necessary in DE research. As an interdisciplinary field researchers may use a variety of research method. Mixed research design might help scientific develop of the field.

DE research can be targeted on any age group or occupation based samples. It has its roots in lifelong learning philosophy. It covers formal, non-formal and informal learning.

In India distance education is effective and need based component of education. Research on open and Distance education was seen since Fifth survey of research in Education (1988-92) though the

DE research gained momentum in the late seventies. Kaul (1997) classified DE research articles into seven broad areas viz.

1. Enrolment trends and courses,
2. Growth, development and social relevance of the DE system,
3. Needs and characteristics of distance learners,
4. Development and production of course materials,
5. Instructional strategies and methodology,
6. Economics of distance education,
7. Evaluative studies.

In India about sixty six research studies were done in the areas of distance education in the period of 1971-1992. Kaul in his trend study observed that in the previous four surveys open and distance education researches were not reported under the umbrella of “Open and Distance Education”. It was also found that in the earlier surveys open and distance education research were reported under Educational Technology, Teacher Education, Non-Formal Education, Higher Education etc.

In international scenario first trend study in DE were held considering the articles and papers published in the period of 1990-1999. In India first trend study was done by Kaul considering the articles and papers published in 1971 to 1992. In America in first trend study 890 research articles were considered but in India Kaul considered only 66 research studies. Like international scenario in India also most of the researchers adopted descriptive survey approach and quantitative analysis techniques. The other methods of research hardly find any place in the conduct of study in DE. In India “impact and intervention studies for programe development and evaluation of distance education system are virtually non-existent” (Kaul). Kaul also noticed that distance mode of education is more cost-effective and the same was established in his trend study. Student support services are virtually not existed in India. Faculty development/improvement programmes are also not existed.

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## Conclusion & Result

Open and distance education in all the developed and developing country are now essential and has no other alternatives.

Lastly, it can be concluded in the words of Kaul (1997, p.535), “Research in distance and open education in India is still in its infancy. Researchers select problems and topics which they feel are useful and conduct research on them without considering their utility in meaningful development of the distance/open education system. Hence, the research in this emerging area could not relate itself effectively to the formulation of the theory and practices of distance education. It is, therefore, worthwhile to pin-point certain priority areas for undertaking research in distance education.

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