ROLE OF ONLINE AND DISTANCE LEARNING SYSTEM DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC PERIOD

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ABSTRACT:

The Covid-19 Pandemic is currently the biggest health crisis in the world after Spanish Flu of 1918. The outbreak has reached from local level to pandemic level with an alarming speed. At present, almost all Countries of the world are affected by Covid-19 virus. It is also realized that there are no proven remedial treatments for this virus. Therefore, as per the guidelines of World Health Organization (WHO) maintaining social distance is the best preventive measure. Accordingly, almost all Governments with immediate action decided to close Schools, colleges, educational Institutions and universities thereby avoiding social gathering. This lockdown period during the Covid-19 Pandemic could be utilized effectively for online learning. In this situation Online and Distance Learning is the best available solution for learning as social distance is required. Thus, this Research paper has been focused on the role of Online and Distance Learning (ODL) in educating people during Covid-19 pandemic with available online platforms.

Keywords: *Covid-19 Pandemic, Learning, Online and Distance Learning.*

INTRODUCTION :

Covid-19 was reported in mid of December 2019 at Wuhan city of Hubei Province of China (www.who.int, n.d.). Initially, the health department did not have any idea regarding how contagious it is. On 31st December 2019 China reported to WHO about infection and spread of this Virus and on 12th January 2020 WHO confirmed that Covid-19 causes respiratory illness among population in China. (www.who.int, n.d.) The Outbreak was declared a public Health Emergency of International concern on 30th January 2020. In early cases of Covid-19 it was found that this virus is spreading very fast because of uncontrolled social contacts and gatherings. (www.who.int, n.d.) The WHO provided guidelines to lockdown all markets, public transports, schools, Institutes, Factories, offices, companies and Universities to control the spread of Virus.

At starting of this Virus outbreak, the government of all affected counties declared Lockdown for certain limited period. Later on, it was realized that spread was very rapid. Therefore, the lockdown period was extended.

The incubation period of virus is nearly 14 days (two weeks) within the host body. Primary symptoms appear after incubation period. The person becomes infected and carrier of virus. The spreading takes place exponentially. Because of this lockdown, the daily life is greatly disturbed, but it is essential to maintain lockdown status. As per the present situation it seems that even after lockdown in upcoming months there will be restrictions on Local and International Travelling.

In view of the above facts, it is difficult for any government or any organization to predict about time required for regaining normal functioning of the educational activities. So, the academic activities of University, Coaching classes, collages, Educational Institutions get hampered. It is evident that because of this situation the academic calendar during ensuing year is likely to extend. Similarly, the regular activities including admissions for new courses, examinations, results will be pending, syllabus completion will take extra time, evaluation will face problems. Thus, it is a big task in front of

educational institutions to complete all these activities in time frame and keep continuing their activities.

After studying all the current situation in which social distancing is required online and distance learning is the best solution for learning. Because in this Pandemic face to face learning is not possible and online learning is the best way to educate people as in this system teacher and learners are separated by space and time. As in open and distance learning student get flexibility regarding the place and mode of learning. Open Learning is the only available option under this situation to cater to the needs of learners.

OBJECTIVE

1. To evaluate the role of ODL system at the time of Covid-19 Pandemic.

2. To document the advantages and Limitations of ODL.

CONCEPT OF ODL

Definition:

"Open and Distance Learning (ODL) is a general term for the use of telecommunication to provide or enhance learning. Around the world, the academic community is discovering and exploring the Internet, teleconferencing, and related means to achieve an extended classroom or learning experience."(https://searchsqlserver.techtarget. com/definition/ODL)

"Presently the two terms that are being used almost inter-changeably are 'Open Learning' and 'Distance Education' and they are often combined to be known as Open and Distance Learning (ODL). Open learning is a philosophy and Distance Education is the mode used for translating it into reality as the two are complementary to each other." (https://www.ugc.ac.in/deb/)

Open and Distance Learning give wider Access of education, Equity and relatively cost-effective education to all. It also provides flexibility of time to students so students can easily get

access of it thus this tree are the main features of ODL that accessibility, Affordability and Cost effective. ODL helps to remove barriers of education by giving flexibility of getting education at any time at any place as they required.

- **Online and Distance Learning**

In Distance education various Medias are used like World Wide Web, Television, Radio, and Audio/video, Internet etc. In ODL system limited face to face contact held as much material and communication is done through the electronic media. In today's Covid-19 Pandemic situation it is needed to have social distance thus it is very useful to go through ODL system. It also provides greater flexibility regarding the choice and combination of courses, entry and exit, place and time. It is beneficial to larger section of society.

Media Used in ODL

- Print
- Non-Print
- Electronic
- Network and Web-based

FOLLOWING METHODS CAN BE USED FOR IMPLEMENTING ODL FOR LEARNING IN THIS CURRENT COVID-19 SITUATION:

1. Various available Online programs Can be provided to Students with available Online material like.

2. Various Non-Credit awareness programs can be developed for Public interest by using various Online Platforms available. it can be done by recording the lectures personally by speakers and then on suitable online platform. In which learning assistance can be given by various ways like Learn from article, Learn from Videos, learn from presentations and Take Practice Test.

3. Small group Education system can be used for Online Learning; Teacher Training will be required for the same.

4. Various Online Platforms are available free in this Covid-19 Pandemic Period they can be use to make this program more Cost effective.

ADVANTAGES OF USING ODL AT THE TIME OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC PERIOD-

1. Provide Flexibility: In current situation people are not getting access to educational institutes thus it provides greater flexibility to all for learning.

2. Cost Effective Mode: In this Covid-19 pandemic people don't have source of income, and ODL is the cost-effective learning it will beneficial to all population.

3. Skill Utilization: The students who are free at home they can develop their skills in this period by utilizing this free time.

4. **Convenient Learning for all:** It is very convenient learning mode as students can get access on the electronics mode available with them.

5. **Time Saving:** As it reduces the travelling time of students, they can utilize it for study.

6. **Use of Modern Technology:** By using modern technology of various online platforms learning can be provided to students on their mobile phones and laptops.

7. **Expert Guidance:** By conducting various online Seminar and Conference expert guidance can get available to students very easily.

8. **Great Access and Equity:** It provides access to all by giving equal chance to all.

9. **Proper utilization of Time:** Because of busy schedule many people cannot do study related of various areas in which they are interested, in this Covid-19 pandemic period they can utilize this time for doing interested study work.

LIMITATIONS OF USING ODL:

1. Chance of Distraction: As this is not face to face mode of learning students cannot give their full attention, as they are at home chances of distractions increases.

2.Network Issues: As network is not available at all places at same time, in villages also students face network problems thus, this can create issues.

3.**Technological issues:** Many technologies are complicated and thus if students are not familiar with technological handling it can create problem.

4. Practical study Problems: In many courses the practical study is necessary which cannot be completed only online.

5. **Examination and Evaluation problems**: As exam is conducted online the question is raised regarding the Examination and Evaluation.

CONCLUSION:

It is difficult for learners to visit educational institutions physically in this current Covid-19 Pandemic period. Therefore, they can utilize this time for their skill development and also for creating awareness among people by developing various related programs. For all this Open and Distance learning system is the right option for online learning for upgrading skills and Knowledge of people as it gives access, equity and cost effectiveness in learning. By using ODL system this time can be use as productive time for learning.

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