

# Implications of Globalisation of Economy and Distance Education

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Education system of any nation has its roots in the socio-economic structure of that very country. Changes in the political economy have direct bearing on educational profile. Information Revolution in 21st century has further weakened the geographic boundaries amongst various nations and ushered the world into a global village. The contribution of Indian technocrats and software developers has enabled India to emerge as the leading player in information technology in the last decade.

Since 1990's onwards drastic changes have been noticed in India's economy. The process of economic reforms have helped India to integrate with the global economy. One of the significant implication of economic reforms made in Indian economy is the curtailed role of public sector and encouragement of private sector was assigned a bigger responsibility. Foreign investment were allowed to be made both in manufacturing and portfolio form. Indian rupee has been made fully convertible on current account and imports have been further liberalized.

Quantitative restrictions and import duties have been slashed in a drastic manner. India being a member of WTO, as per its guidelines, by 2005 almost entire duty structure of India will be brought to the global level. Since last ten years, the volume of foreign investment sanctioned has more than \$20 billion. Large number of leading transnational corporations have already started their operations in India. Even some Indian companies have also gone for euro issues, GDR issues and got listed in American and other leading stock exchanges.

## **Globalisation and Distance Education**

Transition from mixed economy to market economy has serious repercussions to the tertiary sector. Resource crunch has been a permanent feature in India since so many years, hence the expansion of conventional system of education has restricted to a reasonable extent, which obviously has increased the scope of DE in India. Moreover, technological revolution and population explosion, increasing literacy level has further widened the potential of distance education. Above all, opening up of the Indian economy has not been restricted to the primary and secondary sector but educational sector has also been thrown open to a reasonable extent. Number of overseas universities/institutions have already established their centres in India and some of the Indian Universities have also started their study centres in overseas countries. The inventions of satellite, computer internet, fax etc. has further multiplied

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the scope of DE many times. The policies of liberalisation persuaded by the various countries particularly in the 90's has brought so many new avenues to the DE.

### **Present Status of Distance Education in India**

DE in India provided one of the world's biggest market because sixteen per cent of world's population is living in India. At the time of independence, Indian literacy level was just 15 per cent which is likely to reach 65 per cent by the end of this year. Moreover, there has been a tremendous expansion in the number of schools, colleges and universities.

**Table 1 : Expansion of School and College Education**

	<b>1997-98</b>	<b>1996-97</b>	<b>1990-91</b>	<b>1980-81</b>
Primary (000s)	610.8	598.4	560.9	494.5
Middle (000s)	185.5	176.8	151.5	118.6
High Secondary (000s)	107.1	102.2	79.8	51.6
General Colleges	7,199	6,759	4,862	3,421
Professional Colleges	2,075	1,770	1,317	886
Universities	229	228	184	110

SOURCE : Based on the Estimates by the Institute of Applied Manpower Research, New Delhi.

The Table 1 clearly reveals that educational network in India is one of the largest in the world, that is why India has emerged as the third largest country in terms of technical manpower. Nevertheless in order to meet the ever growing demand, these institutions are still inadequate. India opted a path of egalitarian society in post-independence era, and so as to provide equal number of opportunities to the entire population and hence DE is the only option before India.

Due to the inadequacies rigidities and limitations of the formal system of education, the Central Advisory Board of Education in 1961 resolved for the introduction of correspondence courses in India. The Expert Committee on correspondence courses headed by D.S. Kothari felt that these courses expand and equalise educational opportunities on the one hand and it will reduce the capital cost of higher education on the other.

On the above said recommendations of Dr. Kothari Committee, Delhi University was the first to introduce correspondence courses in 1962 and which can be considered as the birth of DE in India. The popularity of these courses motivated other universities

to constitute correspondence institution in India. By 1980 more than 20 universities constituted correspondence institutes.

A quantum jump was noticed in DE during the decade of 80's in India. During 1982 Andhra Pradesh Open University came into being and Indira Gandhi National Open University was set up by the Govt. of India in 1985. Presently there are more than 65 universities and offering correspondence courses and these are 10 open universities.<sup>4</sup> Apart from this, number of private sector institutions have also joined the area of DE. Electronic media in India has become a dominant source of DE in India. National Geographic channel, Discovery, Gian Darshan channel from IGNOU, Zee, DD1 etc. are providing DE in different forms in India. HP University is also planning to have its centre for DE in different countries. A number of American, Australian and British institutions are offering courses through DE mode. IGNOU have also opened its centres in overseas countries. Obviously, the entire infrastructure of DE has made India as one of the pioneer nation in this field.

### **New Opportunities and Challenges for DE in Post-reforms Era**

The process of economic reforms which was initiated in the early 90's has entered in the second phase. The bonds between India's economy vis-a-vis world economy have further strengthened India to emerge as the biggest democracy in the world. If we calculate the GDP on the basis of purchasing power parity method then India is the fifth largest economy in the world.<sup>4</sup> By 2020, it is likely to become the third largest one. India's stock market is third largest in the world in terms of listed companies and number of share holders. Even in terms of market capitalisation it is the 6th largest in the world. India has emerged a leading global player in information technology, space sciences in general and software in particular. In the field of DE also, the achievements of India have been spectacular. It is the one of the biggest market for DE. The print material and audio-video material developed in India is of international standards. Moreover, mainly this material is available in English language which is most acceptable link language in the world. Above all, the most important highlight of DE in India is that it has been designed to suit the multi-ethnic and multi-cultural society.

Total enrollment in India through DE is around 5 million. By the next decade, it is likely to be doubled, because almost all state Governments and universities are planning to have a DE institutions. The fact that correspondence education have become a major source of finance to meet their expenses for conventional system of higher education.<sup>5</sup> Although, Indian Council of Distance Education is trying to regulate various DE institutions in the country but it has yet to emerge as nucleus of entire DE programmes. In the absence of proper coordination amongst various DE institutions, lot of duplication and deterioration in quality has also been noticed. Obviously, if proper planning is done at a macro level then lot of costs can be saved on the one

hand and proper quality standards can also be maintained on the other.

### **Available Economies of Scale in DE at International Level**

DE has become highly a industrialised process of education. Information revolution and globalisation has further widened the length and breadth of DE the production of material, distribution of material and communication is being carried out in DE in highly industrialised manner. Perhaps it will not be wrong to call DE a high-tech industry with social objectives. A whole range of experts from subject specialists, course writers and editors to instructional designers, printers etc. work on industrial lines to produce materials which are to be used in wage different from those that are used to learn from conventional books. The basic industrial principle that is involved here is the division of labour. The principle of division of labour is not only applicable to the production of materials, but also to the rest of pedagogical process i.e. those who prepare the informaton and academic tasks are not the ones who supply or transmit it, those who supply/transmit it are not concerned with tuition and counseling, those engaged in tutoring and counseling are different from those who evaluate learner's progress or assess their progress. This division of work ultimately leads towards specialisation and which is the most important feature of modern industry.

Much has been talked about greater interaction of industries of various countries after globalisation. nevertheless, there is hardly any study which talked about creating linkages amongst this industry of DE of various countries. Globalisation provides ample opportunities for exchange of knowledge, ideas and thoughts. Hence the need of the hour is to create global linkages even in the sector of DE on the pattern of general industrial sector.

The experience acquired by developed countries in this field hardly suits the needs of developing countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America. In developed world the main problem is of quality while in TWC, the literacy level is also very low and hence even in first stage quantity is also important.<sup>8</sup> Association of Asian Open Universities meet provides a valuable platform where such modalities can be worked out for arranging a special session exclusively devoted for developing a common print, audio-video material, delivery system etc. and lateron modifying it to meet the specific need of the various nations.

In order to avail the economies of scale the following model is hereby suggested :



In the above diagram, reasons for making India as a hub for the entire DE programmes of third world are very obvious. Firstly, it has got the biggest network of DE in comparison to any other country of the world. Moreover, India's strategic location, strengthened democratic institutions, pluralism of Indian society, English language as link language and lower cost level are also other important factors. Above all, emergence of India as a global player in software and space sciences the prerequisites for successful launching of DE programmes on global level.

Under such circumstances, India can act as a bridge between DC and TWC where fusion of knowledge can take place to meet the ever growing and variety of needs of different parts of the world. For this purpose a comprehensive marketing approach has to be developed. Developing the right marketing mix for marketing of education would mean constantly fashioning and reshaping the components of the mix into the most effective combination at any point of time. This needs absorption and assimilation of the knowledge which has already been developed so as to develop new products of DE which are desired by the various developing countries.

### **Formation of Joint Ventures and Subsidiaries**

A large number of Indian DE institutions have already started taking initiatives in opening up their centres in different parts of the world. IGNOU has taken a lead in this direction. ICDEOL of HP University is also planning on the same lines. Private institutions like NIIT has also initiated some steps in this direction. However, progress in this area is still very slow. Need of the hour is firstly to study the unlimited potential in this area and then formulate a strategy. CCI's, DE and Indian DE institutions can plan out joint ventures in the form of giving opportunities to each other in opening their centres in each other's jurisdiction. Respective institutions can identify the areas of each institution's specialisation and then coordinating the various activities like conduct of personal contact programmes and examinations of other institutions in their respective countries. This will help both the institutions in bringing down their cost levels to reasonable extent on the one hand and improving the quality and enrollment on the other. Moreover, it will convert competition into coordination.

As far as the TWC are concerned, Indian DE institutions can open their centres directly or in the language of business it can be called as subsidiaries the modes operandi will be the same. For personal contact programmes and examinations, responsibility should be lie with the DE institution of TWC. Similarly, job of supply of print, audio-video and learning through satellite can be left to the Indian DE institutions. The revenue earned could be sheered by both institutions on the basis of arrangements worked out separately for each case. This kind of arrangement will going to take DE to the new heights in the twenty first century.

## Conclusion

The word globalisation has become a currency in these days. Path breaking inventions have turned the world into global village. Since 1990's onwards, India has also gone for opening up its economy to the world in a big way. New collaborations and agreements are being signed everyday. Nevertheless, the area of DE has not been much influenced. Obviously, globalisation provides ample opportunities in this area also.

India being a leading player in DE, can act as a linking bridge between the DE of DC and TWC. This needs a through examination of opportunities and threats prevailing in this area. It has been suggested that Indian DE institutions can form joint ventures with the DE institutions of DC and subsidiaries in TWC on the line of business organisations through the principle of sharing social and economic gains and this will help in giving new direction to the philosophy of DE.

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