

Distance Education in Nepal

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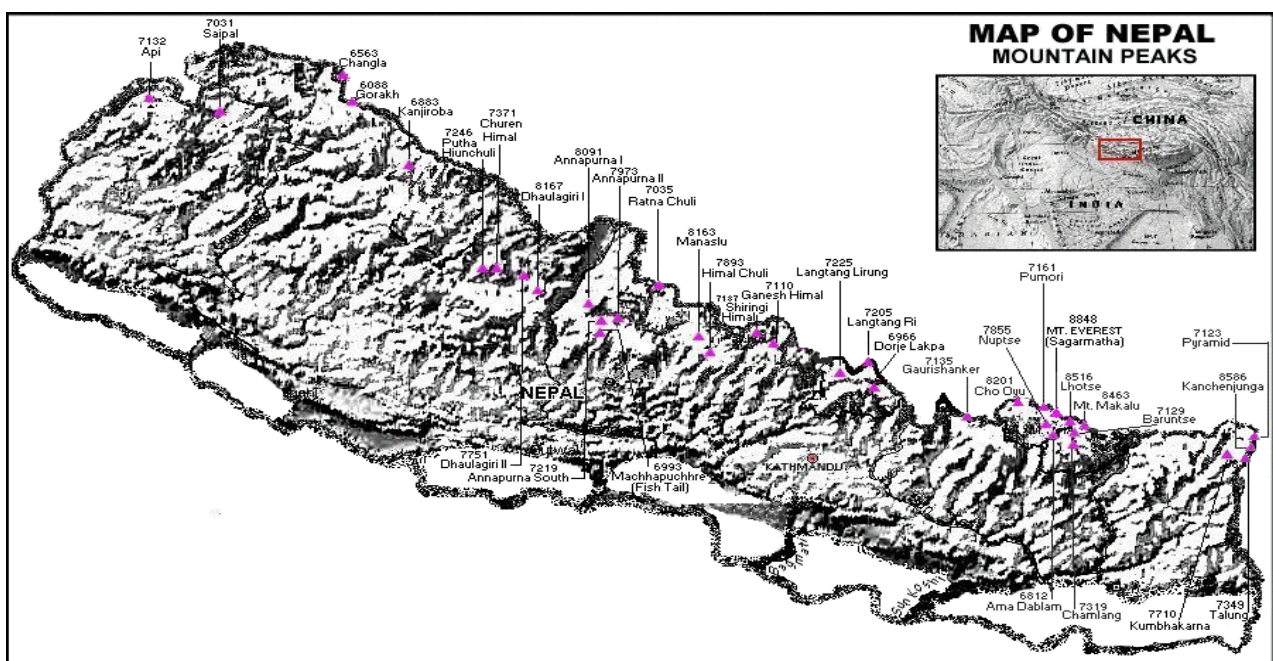
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Abstract Distance education is a method of imparting education in which there is no face-to-face interactions. Now face-to-face interaction is becoming popular in this mode of education. Distance education delivery methods assist the modes of delivery of the courses depending on the nature and demands of the subjects. The tutor is a facilitator of face-to-face interaction and tutor counselor is the locally available resource person for providing continuing support to the students. Distance education in Nepal was started in Nepal when College of Education in 1957 launched Radio Education Program for teacher training and promoting adult education. This program was mainly to upgrade the quality of SLC teachers serving in primary schools. Radio Nepal, FM radios, TV are playing major role in providing distance education. This mode of education is intended to all kinds of people for many purposes of any country developed or developing. The 10 month in-service training course for primary teachers is a kind of distance education.

Keywords: Tutor, Tutor-counselor, Face to Face Interaction, Resource center

Introduction

Nepal is a country of multiple dimensions in terms of race/caste, ethnicity, language, religion, society and culture. These diversities have helped Nepal to recognize distinctly a plural society and as a country of cultures of more than one hundred three distinct ethnic and caste groups. Such diversities demand pluralistic approaches and calls for a multi-paradigm approach in developing education plan, strategies, policies and programs. On the part of distance learning difficult landscape, remoteness, under development and poverty are some of the hindrances that limit all people to have equal access to education in Nepal. Modern technology has developed many soft ware and hard ware equipments tools for distance mode of education and they are very helpful. Distance education must have developed on the concept of 'Reading hand written letters from abroad by relatives or friends'



In earlier days, distance education was a method of imparting education in which there was no face to face contact between the learner and the teacher. The face to face interaction was not envisaged between the learner and teacher but also among the learners. The students to study at home at their own pace. The students were given access to learning materials but there was no face to face communication. Now face to face interaction is becoming popular even in distance mode. In distance mode there is physical separation of the learners from the institution which is responsible for teaching. However some contact sessions can be made with the use of technology. Different kinds of activities are organized by the provider to support students to learn under distance learning. The development of different technologies has contributed further development of distance education. The development of postal system and the printed materials allowed the students to get the learning materials in the mail and return the assignments in mail again. This system has become popular even in rich and developed countries like UK, India, Japan, Australia, USA, Canada, Korea etc.

Objectives

The objectives of distance education are:

- To provide quality higher education
- To provide learning opportunities for private students who are deprived of higher education under the regular programs.
- To serve the mass through the distance mode.
- To utilize modern technology in education.
- To provide education to women who cannot leave home for further education.
- To provide education to people wishing for life long education.
- To provide foundation for establishing the Open University in Nepal

Modes and Methods of Distance Education

Distance learning delivery methods assist the modes of delivery of the courses depending on the nature and demand of the subjects. The different methods are:

- Study materials in print, electronic, videos, audio cassette.
- TV programmes
- Contact sessions
- Part-time tutorial sessions
- Telephone tutoring: enquiry reception, support and counseling
- Assignment marking: special attention is given to the evaluation of assignment responses. During assignment marking, comments are made, questions are asked and answers required with their justifications.
- Special seminars on a certain subject in a course with special focus on more difficult subjects.
- Study centers with the facility of libraries and laboratories

The Resource Center Tutor and Tutor Counselor

The resource center teacher (tutor) is a facilitator of face-to face interaction with the students. The resource centre tutor requires two things: the ability on the part of the contact session tutor to convey through his contents advice for further study and the ability to perceive his student's present state of knowledge and conceptual framework and also providing regular advice to the learners through the use of electronic media, email or web page services.

Tutor-counselor is seen as the locally available resources for providing continuing support to the students. They are physically present at the study center to do the predefined task. The tutor-counselor is an academic person who is assisted by the chief administrative staff of the center. This type of academic counselor is managed at every contact centre for necessary tutorial and counseling services.

Medium of Instruction

Medium of instruction is bi-lingual or Nepali or English. Gradually, other local languages such as Newari, Maithili is used as a medium of instruction depending upon the need and demand of the learners

Distance Education in Nepal

Distance education in Nepal was started in Nepal when College of Education in 1957 launched Radio Education Program for teacher training and promoting adult education. The implementation of New Education System Plan 1971(NESP) made training mandatory for teachers to have a permanent tenure. College of Education was not able to train all the teachers. It was after National Education System Plan (NESP) it was realized that the conventional approach to teacher training through face to face alone would not be enough to cater for the needs for trained teachers in the country. So the government had to look for an alternative means to train more teachers. For that the then Institute of Education (IOE) initiated a new program called Teacher Training through distance learning in 1976/77. This program was mainly to upgrade the qualifications of under SLC teachers serving in primary schools and in-service training for primary school teachers of remote areas. The then Institute of Education created Extension Division and developed a set of self learning materials based on the curriculum. This scheme had two contact sessions in order to help the teachers overcome their difficulties in understanding the materials. These contact sessions were organized during the vacations in their teaching jobs. During the contact sessions, the tutors assess students 'progress as a part of formative evaluation'. The tutors provide feedback to the learners with guidance for their remaining works to be completed within the stipulated time of academic session. This program was supported by UNICEF. The program discontinued after Radio Teacher Training (RETT) program was implemented by the Government of Nepal with the help of USAID in 1978. Tribhuvan University, Faculty of Education has been running B.Ed program through distance mode. Nine centres in TU constituent campuses were established for this purpose.

The students followed the same curriculum and examinations as the regular students of TU. The percentage of pass rate of these students has been better than the average results of the regular students of TU. In order to promote distance media education in Nepal, Radio Nepal, FM radios, Nepal Television and other TV channels are playing major role. Private radio station and TV channels are recently established and other media companies also have become active role in providing distance education.

The ten-month in-service training course for primary teachers constitutes four packages of 2.5 months each. The second and third packages of the training are delivered in a distance mode through radio broadcasting by the distance education centre and the first and the fourth packages in a face to face by National Centre for Educational Development (NCED), through its nine Primary Teacher training Centres (PTTCs). Besides, the trainees are supplied with self-learning materials in order to support the radio lessons. The training is also followed by contact sessions every weekend, which are organized at the Resource Centre for providing the trainees an opportunity an opportunity to interact with the resource persons to avoid confusions encountered on the radio broadcasting and the self learning materials. Thus, the DEC and NCED are two institutes under MOES responsible for in-service training to primary school teachers jointly.

Conclusion

Distance education bridges the formal and non-formal sector. It is one of the most feasible modes of instruction in recent years. The open school system is an alternative route to formal school schooling with provision of school curriculum, external examination system and varying in learning materials in the form of print, audio-visual cassettes, broadcast telecast, audio-visual conferencing etc. through resource materials, face to face interactions and distance tutor. This mode of education is intended for all kinds of people for many purpose like young and adults, literacy, vocational, technical and scientific. This mode is most potential and dynamic for any country developed or developing nature. Due to advancement of technology, more effective equipments and learning materials are coming up which will enhance the quality and efficiency of distance learning.

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