UNIT 14: OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING

UNIT STRUCTURE

14.1 Learning Objectives
14.2 Introduction
14.3 Concept of Distance Education
14.3.1 Growth of Distance Education in the world
14.3.2 History of Distance Education in India
14.3.3 Growth and Relevance of Distance Education in India
14.4 Let Us Sum Up
14.5 Further Reading
14.6 Answers to Check Your Progress
14.7 Model Questions

14.1 LEARNING OBJCETIVES

After going through this unit you will be able to:

- understand the concept of distance education
- explain the growth of distance education in the world and the history of distance education in India
- discuss the growth and relevance of distance education in India.

14.2 INTRODUCTION

Education is a life long process from which people gather life experiences that are needed by them for a meaningful existence in society. Therefore, education is termed as the most important pillar of our socio-economic development. Education provides knowledge to the people, equips people with some need based skills, and directs their attention in a positive direction. It is for this that education is a vital pre-requisite for the development of a country which is necessary to bring about the welfare of the people as a whole.

Besides, education is the main indicator of human capital formation. At present, India, as a developing country, has the basic motto to accelerate human mobility. Although demographically India as a whole has great

potential, the growth of manpower and the level of its engagement in productive activities are yet to be fully harnessed. The literacy rate in India is rather low compared to that of the developed countries and even compared to many of the developing countries like Sri Lanka, China etc. Even within India there are considerable differences among the states and regions in terms of employment, gender differences in all stages of education, regional disparities in Gross Enrolment Ratio and literacy level etc. Besides, we have to achieve the target of inclusive growth, the progress towards millennium development goals and the target towards the formation of human capital. Education is the only way to achieve these goals as per our needs and desire. Because, educated and trained people are generally better productive workers. They can use the resources more effectively, adopt new technologies and learn from their mistakes. To have access to education is one of the important human rights for everyone living in our country. Therefore, it is an urgent need to disseminate information and knowledge to the people through the various modes of education. Open and distance learning is the most viable option for making education as accessible as possible for all. It has emerged as an effective means to bring education to the door step of those who are deprived of the educational opportunities in the conventional mode in the mainstream educational institutions. This system offers opportunities to millions of underprivileged learners including those like the self-employed and the housewives who desire for an enlightened and productive way of life. Under these circumstances it has become necessary to discuss the various aspects of the ODL system in an effort to remedy its shortcomings, if any, and to highlight its strength. The following content of this unit is designed to meet this objective.



Inclusive growth: It encompasses equality, equality of opportunity in terms of access to market, resources, health services, educational opportunity and so on.

14.3 CONCEPT OF DISTANCE EDUCATION

Distance education means a mode of learning through which education can be accessed by the people irrespective of geographical barriers, physical existence of teachers, space, time, age etc. In a

knowledge-based society, open and distance learning is the most demanding medium of education for the people. The 11th Five Years Plan of the Government of India has made a target to covering around 40% the total number of students under open and distance learning system. Today, for its flexibility, this system is considered indispensible as 3As as far as education is concerned i.e. getting education at any time, anywhere and for any one. The basic objective behind this system is to make democratization of education possible in India. Better access, lower costs, greater flexibility, high quality are some of the objectives of Open and Distance Learning. In the words of Perraton (1981), distance education is "an educational process in which a significant proportion of the teaching is conducted by someone removed in space/ or time from the learner". According to Ochoa (1981) "distance education is a system based on the selective use of instructional media both traditional and innovative that promotes the self-teaching learning process to achieve educational objectives, with a potentially greater geographic coverage than the traditional face-to-face system of education".

Thus from the above definition it is clear that distance education means:

- Separation of teachers and learners
- Institutional accreditation
- Use of mixed-media courseware
- Two-way communication
- Possibility of face-to-face meetings
- Use of industrialised processes

The ODL system is the only corridor through which those sections of population who were once deprived from the purview of higher education in conventional system for one reason or other, can pursue life-long learning in a flexible and cost-effective mode. These sections of population include, inter alia,

- those who dropped out from schools and colleges on economiccompulsions and are now engaging themselves in trade, business etc;