

DISTANCE EDUCATION, WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

DISTANCE EDUCATION: THE SLICE OF LIGHT FOR WOMEN

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RENU had always dreamt of creating her own identity amidst the learned society. Snatched out of school and married off at a tender age, she did not have the chance to fulfill her dream of continuing her studies.

But, Distance Education program from a reputed institution provided her with a chance to fulfill her dream without going against the rules of her patriarchal family. Little Renu is today's Dr. Renuka, a well-loved university professor, thanks to Distance Education.

Renu is just an example from a large section of India's underprivileged group of women, who has the great responsibility of shouldering domestic duties, social norms, and traditional patriarchal restrictions. Hence, Distance Education programs, which also include vocational trainings, have been primarily important for women who had to terminate their formal studies for either financial or social reasons, particularly applicable in the rural areas. Distance Education -with its flexibility and convenience of not being time and location bound- also opens up a vista of opportunities for those women who want to pursue studies after marriage or after their children grow up, to gratify their wishes to improve their financial and social standards.

Rise in tuition fees, limited course availability, and commuting problem are few challenges that traditional institutions face. Distance Education is perhaps the best available alternative today, in spite of the initial skepticism and resistance it faced. Flexibility and convenience is the major USP for Distance Education. One can study whenever, wherever, and whatever fits into their lifestyle without compromising their current job or family responsibilities, availing the convenience of procuring the course materials online or being delivered to their doorstep.

Over the years, Distance Education has come out successful in becoming the most powerful medium of acquiring basic as well as higher education degrees for a large number of students, especially women who stay in remote areas where getting into colleges and universities as regular fulltime students still remains a distant dream. And as per Ministry of Human Resource and Development (MHRD) survey data, enrolment in Distance Education constitutes about 12.5% of the total enrolment in higher education, out of which 39.9% are women. (Source: MHRD online).

Distance Learning -the most convenient method of continuing education for women - has brought about a drastic increase in the number of women students, and majority of them have been able to secure employment in relevant sectors post completion of their studies. According to the Government of India's National Data Sharing and Accessibility Policy (NDSAP), the gross women enrolment for Distance Education in the higher education category increased from 1273807 in 2007-2008 to 1400229 the next year, and this trend continues.

Therefore, it can be rightly claimed that Distance Education has been highly successful in bringing about positive changes in the lives of a lot of Renu -who has the intent but not the means of obtaining a formal education -by providing them a chance to chalk out their study time around the rest of their duties, and not vice versa.

Source: Distance Education: The Slice of Light For Women. Retrieved on 01.12.2016, available from <http://blog.smude.edu.in/distance-education-the-slice-of-light-for-women>



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What was your motivation to attend Open Learning and pursue distance studies?

What did you accomplish through your studies that makes you proud?

What challenges, if any, did you overcome to pursue your education?

May we contact you for more information regarding your story?

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