

Evolution of distance education in Sri Lanka

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Abstract:

The origin of distance education begins with correspondence education. History of correspondence education begins in 1840. University correspondence courses started in 1880. Usage of term 'distance education' was started after the 12th World Conference in 1982. The development of distance education in different countries was mostly influenced by the local needs such as social, economical, geographical, political needs and scientific development. Due to these needs it was spread to Asian countries in 20th century like South Korea, Japan, Bangladesh, India etc. including Sri Lanka.

Significant development to the distance education in Sri Lanka was occurred during these two decades, 1970-1980 and 2000 -2009. The need for distance education in Sri Lanka was recognized in 1972. The Ministry of Education had to face a big problem of having large number of professionally disqualified graduate teachers in service. External Examinations Agency (EEA) was established in 1972 to find solutions for that problem. A new era was begun for the distance education of Sri Lanka in 1976 with the establishment of the Sri Lanka Institute of Distance Education.

The paper also discusses further development of distance education in Sri Lanka and its application to our education system after the establishment of Open University of Sri Lanka in 1980. New era began to our education system in 1980 as the OUSL was introduced single mode distance teaching method to our society. In 2000, DEMP project was started with the help of ADB and dual mode distance teaching method was started in other universities. Further this paper relates information on open school system which was started in 2007 by NIE hoping to give more chances to school leavers. Finally, overview discussion on problems and application regarding future development is given.