

SOCIAL JUSTICE WITH SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON OPEN DISTANCE LEARNING IN GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

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ABSTRACT:

Social justice generally refers to the idea of creating a society or institution that is based on the principles of equality and solidarity, that understands the values and recognizes the human rights and the dignity of every human being. A social justice is found not only in India also we can see in many countries of the world. There is basis biased on religion, caste, language, gender etc., therefore social justice is needed to overcome from all these bias. One way to come out of this bias can be only through education without any fence to all. Everyone has to offer formal education in Open University through open distance learning. One of the objectives of Open Distance Learning system in India is to democratize higher education by providing access to large segment of the population. In India the Open Distance Learning System only focuses on solving the basic problem of providing equal access to higher education. In spite of limited access to higher education India faces another problem that are the inequalities of other kinds within the education system mainly, the gender inequality and inequalities among the disadvantaged groups such as weaker sections in the larger neglected masses of the country. The aim of this paper is to brief review on how open distance learning system involve in social justices.

KEY WORDS: Social Justice, higher education, distance education, gender inequalities, global issues

INTRODUCTION

Distance learning and its relationship to emerging computer technologies have together offered many promises to the field of education. In practice however, the combination often falls short of what it attempts to accomplish. Some of the shortcomings are due to problems with the technology; others have more to do with administration, instructional methods, or students. Despite the problems, many users like technologies such as compressed video and continued growth in the area. This paper will examine some of the current research and thought on the promises, problems, and the future possibilities in modern distance learning, particularly types that are delivered via electronic means. The struggle for individual freedom and social justice is as old as human existence although there is bound to be conflict between the claims of individual freedom and those of social justice these two values have assumed a significant place in the

movement of constitutionalism throughout the world during the guaranteed individual freedoms world lose much of their meaning, value and significance without adequate commitment to the constitutional promise of social justice. India inspired by being a socialist democracy, opted for the liberal democratic model with due emphasis on the basic human rights consequently, the framers of the Indian Constitution attempted to strike a balance between the claims of the individual and social justice by incorporating the individual freedom. The constitutional goal of social justice enshrined in the preamble of the constitution of India and to assess the actual position of their socio-economic and political situations. Besides, that attempt has also been made to trace the historical evolution of caste system, which is responsible for inequality, injustice, and discrimination between the haves and have-nots. In this paper describes on Social Justice as contemplate under the constitution of India which concentrates on treating all people equally and providing people with equal rights. Basically, it is about giving everyone a 'fair go'. However, since inequality still exists in society treating everyone the same does not necessarily mean fairness of treatment. The provision of equality of opportunity must be combined with social justice principles to provide substantive equality to marginalized groups. Social justice provides equitable outcomes to marginalized groups by recognizing past disadvantage and existence of structural barriers embedded in the social, economic and political system that perpetuate systemic discrimination.

History

Kautilya in his Arthashastra has beautifully put in an analytical manner, the duties of the different castes as mentioned be expelled at will. And to be slain at will. The milk, which was used to be used for fire-oblation was not allowed to be milked by a shudra. Besides, he was not to be addressed by a person consecrated for sacrifice. The Shatapatha Brahmana goes to the length of declaring the shudra as untruth itself. The Shudra, though kept away from following the religious practices of the Aryans. The ideas of Untouchability were first given literary expression in connection with the Shudras and the sacrifice. Besides, there were many inequalities in the matter of religious practices between three other classes. Each order seems to have been habitually endogamous in marriage though occasionally Brahmins married Kshatriya females.

Before any discussion of distance learning, we need to look at the way the term has been defined in the past and how it is currently defined in the literature. The term can be used to describe any of a number of instructional situations. Although it is thought of as a new term, distance learning has been around for well over 100 years. One of the earlier forms of distance learning was done through correspondence courses started in Europe. This stayed the primary means of distance learning until the middle of this century when instructional radio and television became more popular (Imel, 1996). As technology has changed, so has the definition of distance learning. Videotaped lectures have been a standard in university and professional courses for the last two decades (Moore & Lockee, 1998). Audiotapes and lessons sent through the mail have been used in correspondence courses to teach subjects such as foreign language for quite some time (Teaster & Blieszner, 1999). Today, the Internet and compressed video have taken distance learning in new directions, allowing distance learning to occur in real time. Live video instruction is the most popular and fastest growing delivery mode in the United States (Ostendorf, 1997). The hereditary and prescriptive right of the Brahmins to act as priests to all castes of Hindu fold has been the on uniform and general principal inherent in a cast society through its entire vicissitudes. But later, due to the decision of the high courts in the three presidency towns the Brahmins were dislodged from their monopoly of priesthood. In Bengal

and in some parts in North India, generally it is now settled that there is no office of priest recognized as such in law and a householder may employ anyone he likes for the performance of any priestly service and pay the fees to him. Several non-Brahmins reformists started to perform their religious rites without the assistance of the Brahmin priests. Many Brahmin priests lodged complaints against such acts in the Many Brahmin priests lodged complaints against such acts in the High Court of Bombay asking for an injunction against those persons who were not at all bound to call for the services of the hereditary priest. On the other hand, the hereditary priest must be paid some fees by way of compensation. Through the uniform law enforced by the British many prejudices inequality and ill will among many castes were removed and whoever discriminated and treated with contempt was punished under the law. Although the British brought this uniform law through the territory of India for their survival and safety in their administration, yet it also helped for the removed of many social disabilities, which existed in the Hindu society to some extent.

Meaning of the Social justice with special emphasis on open distance leaning in global environment issues and challenges.

Distance education or **distance learning** is a field of education that focuses on teaching methods and technology with the aim of delivering teaching, often on an individual basis, to students who are not physically present in a traditional educational setting such as a classroom. It has been described as "a process to create and provide access to learning when the source of information and the learners are separated by time and distance, or both."^[1] Distance education courses that require a physical on-site presence for any reason (including taking examinations) have been referred to as hybrid or blended courses of study.

Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Equal opportunity and social justice in education calls for: availability, accessibility, affordability, acceptability and adaptability. Social Justice is the principle that all individuals are entitled to basic human needs", regardless of apparent differences such as economic differences, class, gender, race, ethnicity, citizenship, religion, age, sexual orientation, disability, or health. This includes the eradication of poverty and illiteracy, the establishment of sound environmental policy, and equality of opportunity for healthy personal and social development. Social work is a practical profession aimed at helping people address their problems and matching them with the resources they need to lead healthy and productive lives. Beneath this practicality lies a strong value system that can be summarized in two words: social justice. Social justice is the view that everyone deserves equal economic, political and social rights and opportunities. Social workers aim to open the doors of access and opportunity for everyone, particularly those in greatest need. A brief glance at the many roles of social workers shows how this value system underscores everything they do. With homeless clients, for example, social workers make sure their clients have access to food stamps and health care. The same is true for elderly clients: Social workers may work to protect them from financial abuse or to ensure that they are receiving the health and financial benefits that are rightfully theirs. Social workers also apply social-justice principles to structural problems in the social service agencies in which they work. Armed with the long-term goal of empowering their clients, they use knowledge of existing legal principles and organizational structure to suggest changes to protect their clients, who are often powerless and underserved. For example, social workers may learn organizational ethics to ensure that clients are treated respectfully by staff or they may examine the organization's policies on personal

client information to make sure it is held in confidence. Often, social workers bring social justice concepts into the wider social and political arena. Following the September 11, 2001, attacks in New York, Pennsylvania, and Washington an international group of social workers issued statements condemning terrorism but calling for examination of possible underlying causes. In particular, the statements suggested that terrorism may be fueled in part by global practices that led to poverty and rage among millions of Middle Eastern citizens. Indeed, from the beginning of their profession, social workers have been involved in “connecting the dots” between peace and social justice. According to social work philosophy ... Peace is not possible where there are gross inequalities of money and power, whether between workers and managers, nations and nations or men and women.

Justice Krinshna Jyer is of the view the social justice in our socialist republic is ‘socio-economic revolution in the current miasmatic milieu’ He further explains the term social justice as the vice of social inequality assumes a particularly reprehensible form in relation to the backward classes and communities which are treated as Untouchables; and so, the problem of social justice is as urgent and important in India as is the problem of economic justice.... I am using the term social justice in a comprehensive sense so as to include both economic justice and social justice. The concept of social justice thus takes within its sweep in objective of removing all inequalities and affording equal opportunities to all citizens in social affairs as well as economic activities.

Social Justice and Education

Right to education for the first time supreme court of India has observed, in *Mohini Jain V . Stat of Karnataka* that the right to education is a fundamental right under Article 21 of the constitution which cannot be denied to a citizen by charging higher capitation fee. The right to life under Article 21 and the dignity of an individual cannot be assured unless it is accompanied by the right to education as these right flows directly from right to life. In this case a writ petition was filed by Miss. Mohini Jain of Meerut, Uttar Pradesh challenging the validity of the notification issued by the Government of Karnataka under Karnataka Educational institutions (prohibition of Capitation fee) Act, 1984, which was passed to regulate the capitation fee collected by the private Medical College in the State

Every morning, diverse groups of American students – rich and poor, black and white, rural and urban, gay and straight — begin the school day by rising, facing the flag, and pledging allegiance to a country that claims to be indivisible, ensuring liberty and justice for all. Students learn about the core democratic value of equality, which dictates that Americans have the basic right of equal treatment regardless of background, belief, economic status, race, religion, or sex. In addition, they learn about the core democratic value of justice, a fundamental belief that American society offers the same benefits and has the same obligations to all of its citizens. While both of these values teach students that individuals and groups are not favored over other individuals or groups, we need not look further than the very system that champions these tenets of social justice, the American education system, to recognize that disparate inequalities not only exist, but continue to be perpetuated.

“Education is risky, for it fuels the sense of possibility. But a failure to equip minds with the skills for understanding and feeling and acting in the cultural world ... risks creating alienation, defiance, and practical incompetence”

For much too long, the American education system has functioned as a divisive tool where the wealthy received a liberal education to perpetuate the ruling class, while the workers received

enough education to make them functional components of industrial productivity. Inherent inequalities in schooling have persisted and have been maintained, because equal education for all Americans is a dangerous proposition that could very well upset the status quo. Dewey believed that education was crucial to shaping a society, because intelligence, behavior, and knowledge can change (Fishman, 1998). It is time to facilitate change in our schools to afford equality and justice for all.

What problems do young children encounter as they enter school?

Consider a kindergarten class in any one of thousands of school systems in the United States. How do the children in the class experience the world? Their classroom mirrors the larger society with its diverse ethnic, religious, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Are the children learning structures for accepting and appreciating diversity at this critical age in the development of lifelong attitudes? Mere contact with diversity, without understanding, can intensify conflict. Does their classroom mirror the larger society in this sense also? In classroom, day-care center, home, and neighborhood, kindergartners encounter rules and laws. Do they understand the reasons for these institutions? Can they distinguish between legitimate authority and raw power? Are they learning to act as rule makers as well as rule obeyers and to see the necessity of personal involvement in the democratic process? The kindergarten class of 1988 will graduate in the year 2001 as citizens who live in a world characterized by a staggering volume of information, varying sets of values, and a growing interdependence among nations. However, children will not automatically become citizens when they graduate or reach voting age; they are citizens now, with rights, responsibilities, and a confusing array of choices before them. The abilities for making personally and socially productive decisions do not just happen. They require that the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of social studies be introduced early and built upon throughout the school years.

If the young people of this nation are to become effective participants in a democratic society, then social studies must be an essential part of the curriculum in the early childhood/elementary years. In a world that demands independent and cooperative problem solving to address complex social, economic, ethical, and personal concerns, the social studies are as basic for survival as reading, writing, and computing. Knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for informed and thoughtful participation in society require a systematically developed program focused on concepts from history and the social sciences.

Global Distance Education Learning Problems

Despite the promises and obvious advantages to distance learning, there are problems that need to be resolved. These problems include the quality of instruction, hidden costs, misuse of technology, and the attitudes of instructors, students, and administrators. Each one of these has an effect on the overall quality of distance learning as a product. In many ways, each of these issues relates to the others. We will examine each of these issues separately. Equipment and hardware malfunctions can be a great detriment to the effectiveness of distance learning. When a problem occurs in a class everything comes to a standstill and the learning environment is interrupted. If there are too many instances, the entire course can be affected. For instance, if an overhead projector goes out during an instructor's presentation, an alternate way of delivering that information can easily be found. However, if a compressed video presentation has problems, the entire class must be stopped until the problem is resolved. If the instructor goes ahead with the lesson, one site will miss out on that information. Carter (2001) did a study of

students taking courses by compressed video in the Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College program. One of the questions he asked pertained to the equipment and technology operating correctly. His results from three groups spread over the different sites showed that only 42% agreed with the statement that the equipment and technology operated correctly. A program studied by Teaster and Bliesner (1999) found that unanticipated technical problems with the system shortened the class time and discussion that negatively affected the overall quality of the presentation. In one presentation the connection was lost twice prior to the students arriving and ten times during the actual instructional session. During this particular session there was never more than a four-minute period before the connection to one of the sites was lost. This may be an extreme example, but according to the instructor involved in the presentation, the course experience was “better, but similar to past experiences” (pg. 743). At Southern Arkansas University-Magnolia, they discovered that using compressed video as a single medium of delivering distance education was not as effective as was first hoped. Because of this they developed a different concept of an “electronic classroom” that did not rely on just one mode of delivery (Weber, 1996). Their experience was that compressed video had connection problems and did not work well broadcasting information delivered by lecture. The failure of the hardware can be a very frustrating thing for all involved in distance learning. For the instructor, it means they can be well prepared for the class only to have a bad connection or camera failure cause the entire lesson to go bad. For the technician, the frustration and inability to keep the class running smoothly may affect the instructor’s view of their competency, causing friction. For the student, an inability to get a flow to the class and feel like progress is being made can hinder the learning process. Those students used to the traditional face-to-face instruction and who do not have a tolerance for ambiguity will have a difficult time.

Distance Education and Training Council

Distance education sounds like a wonderful alternative to formal education systems. It offers freedom from scheduled courses and the need to be physically present in a classroom setting. These conveniences can be the propelling factors that finally eliminate all the built up reasons why one has continued to put off advanced educational opportunities. But are these programs too good to be true? Who regulates distance learning programs? Can one really learn as readily and effectively via an online course versus the in-person classroom experience? And, if so, what does this mean for the changing climate of the educational world? The distance education and training council is an organization that specifically regulates the standards of distance education programs. Just as any educational institution is regulated so too are distance education programs. Depending on what school, program or institute is offering the distance education program regulation standards can vary just as they do for formalized non-online institutions. Such institutions are placed in different categories, i.e. Junior college, private colleges, and universities, to name a few. Similar sub-categories can be found within the distance education field. Some programs offer single classes for specialized interests while others go so far as to offer full accredited advanced degrees. Regulation is still important regardless of the distance education program sub-category. Regulation ensures that the quality of education is accurate, enriching and of quality. The distance education and training council works diligently to ensure that the quality of such programs that meet their standards are maintained and supported. The distance education and training council goal is to provide the public with an education that is both rewarding and valuable. Because the demand for distance education is vastly growing so too are the distance online programs. More programs are being created, expanded and improved

than ever before. With more demand, higher standards can be set. The average mean of classroom achievement is increased across the board and institutions with exceptional teaching credentials are becoming more and more selective about the students they accept or deny. This raises the bar for all distance education programs. This also gives the distance education and training council a higher standard to maintain and protect.

Global environment issues Challenges in Open and Distance Learning

Open and Distance Learning is a way of learning that focus on releasing learners from constraints of time and place whilst offering flexible learning opportunities. For a lot of married and working adults, Open and Distance Learning (ODL) is a way of combining work and family responsibilities with educational opportunities. The first challenge faced by online distance learners is in balancing the combination of work and education. Most of the Open and Distance education students are older, have jobs and families. Job responsibility is already intimidating, let alone the family and the learning. The task of balancing all of the above responsibility is truly challenging for most of them. The second issue is in acquiring go online distance study habits. The students' everyday environment is very distracting for most of the students. Unlike traditional university students who are always in their learning community which supports them most of the time, online distance students are not. Distractions such as friends asking for night supper and wife demanding to go shopping at the mall every weekend are among other distractions faced by students. Acquiring some time in a day to study is quite a hard task to complete. Online distance learners also have a hard time in being independent and responsible to their own self. Most of the time, there is no one around to monitor the students learning process. The openness of the online distance program gives students the freedom to do their learning process whenever they like but most of the time, procrastination is the culprit. Unfocused view of their learning goals also will make the students act irresponsibly towards their learning. Online distance learners also face problems in recognizing and mastering strengths and skills. In online distance learning, technology is the main conduit which information and communication flow. A computer with internet access is usually needed for this process and its application will need the user to master certain level of acquirement. The students will also need to have some basic writing skills and a go online distance command of English language. Unfortunately, not all of the students possess the above-said skills. The fifth challenge is in motivating themselves as well as maintaining and increasing self-esteem. In online distance education, learners are usually isolated from peers and tutors. The motivational factors are absent due to lack of contact and competition with other students. The lacks of immediate support of a teacher who is able to motivate will also affects the learners. In the long run, students might feel uneasy with their teacher and uncomfortable with their learning situation and environment. The Open and Distance Learning courses are very different from a traditional classroom setting. Due to a number of challenges and obstacles, it often requires a high degree of commitment on the part of the learner. In order to overcome these online distance challenges, learners must first plan and manage themselves effectively in order to balancing work, family and study. They have to apply smart time management. Avoiding procrastinating is a must. They must be more responsible and have a focused view towards learning. They must also learn to improve themselves in areas they are lacking (such as writing skills, note taking skills, computer skills and English language skills) because not all skills will be taught by the tutor. They need to motivate their own self by setting achievable goals and have a positive attitude. Due to lack of meeting time with peers, they have to make an effort to interact with peers and tutors frequently.

Social Ecology and Bioregionalism

Apart from feminist-environmentalist theories and Naess's deep ecology, Murray Bookchin's "social ecology" has also claimed to be radical, subversive, or countercultural (see Bookchin 1980, 1987, 1990). Bookchin's version of critical theory takes the "outer" physical world as constituting what he calls "first nature", from which culture or "second nature" has evolved. Environmentalism, on his view, is a social movement, and the problems it confronts are social problems. While Bookchin is prepared, like Horkheimer and Adorno, to regard (first) nature as an aesthetic and sensuous marvel, he regards our intervention in it as necessary. He suggests that we can choose to put ourselves at the service of natural evolution, to help maintain complexity and diversity, diminish suffering and reduce pollution. Bookchin's social ecology recommends that we use our gifts of sociability, communication and intelligence as if we were "nature rendered conscious", instead of turning them against the very source and origin from which such gifts derive. Exploitation of nature should be replaced by a richer form of life devoted to nature's preservation. John Clark has argued that social ecology is heir to a historical, communitarian tradition of thought that includes not only the anarchist Peter Kropotkin, but also the nineteenth century socialist geographer Elisée Reclus, the eccentric Scottish thinker Patrick Geddes and the latter's disciple, Lewis Mumford (Clark 1998). Ramachandra Guha has described Mumford as "the pioneer American social ecologist" (Guha 1996, 210). Mumford adopted a regionalist perspective, arguing that strong regional centres of culture are the basis of "active and securely grounded local life" (Mumford 1944, 403). Like the pessimists in critical theory, Mumford was worried about the emergence under industrialised capitalism of a "megamachine", one that would oppress and dominate human creativity and freedom, and one that -- despite being a human product -- operates in a way that is out of our control. While Bookchin is more of a technological optimist than Mumford, both writers have inspired a regional turn in environmental thinking. Bioregionalism gives regionalism an environmental twist. This is the view that natural features should provide the defining conditions for places of community, and that secure and satisfying local lives are led by those who know a place, have learned its lore and who adapt their lifestyle to its affordances by developing its potential within ecological limits. Such a life, the bioregionalists argue, will enable people to enjoy the fruits of self-liberation and self-development (see the essays in List 1993, and the book-length treatment in Thayer 2003, for an introduction to bioregional thought). However, critics have asked why natural features should be significant in defining the places in which communities are to be built, and have puzzled over exactly which natural features these should be -- geological, ecological, climatic, hydrological, and so on (see Brennan 1998b). If relatively small, bioregional communities are to be home to flourishing human societies, then a question also arises over the nature of the laws and punishments that will prevail in them, and also of their integration into larger regional and global political and economic groupings. For anarchists and other critics of the predominant social order, a return to self-governing and self-sufficient regional communities is often depicted as liberating and refreshing. But for the skeptics, the worry remains that the bioregional vision is politically over-optimistic and is open to the establishment of illiberal, stifling and undemocratic communities. Further, given its emphasis on local self-sufficiency and the virtue of life in small communities, a question arises over whether bioregionalism is workable in an overcrowded planet. Deep ecology, feminism, and social ecology have had a considerable impact on the development of political positions in regard to the environment. Feminist analyses have often been welcomed for the psychological insight they bring to several social, moral and political problems. There is, however, considerable unease about the implications of critical theory, social

ecology and some varieties of deep ecology and animism. Some recent writers have argued, for example, that critical theory is bound to be ethically anthropocentric, with nature as no more than a "social construction" whose value ultimately depends on human determinations (see Vogel 1996). Others have argued that the demands of "deep" green theorists and activists cannot be accommodated within contemporary theories of liberal politics and social justice (see Ferry 1998). A further suggestion is that there is a need to reassess traditional theories such as virtue ethics, which has its origins in ancient Greek philosophy (see the following section) within the context of a form of stewardship similar to that earlier endorsed by Passmore (see Barry 1999). If this last claim is correct, then the radical activist need not, after all, look for philosophical support in radical, or countercultural, theories of the sort deep ecology, feminism, bioregionalism and social ecology claim to be.

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