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AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The COMOSA Journal of Open Schooling is a peer reviewed international journal committed to school education through open learning methodologies. The journal is inter nationally contributed, abstracted and subscribed. The affairs of the COMOSA Journal of Open Schooling are being managed with the help of an Editorial Advisory Board, and an Editorial Board, placed at NIOS, India .

The aims and objectives of the Journal are:

to provide a forum across the Commonwealth Countries for scholarly discussion on concerns and issues in Open Schooling/Open Learning.

to disseminate research, theory and practices including inter-disciplinary studies.

The COMOSA Journal includes research papers, articles, review of research, review of Books on Open and Distance Education and highlights programmes and activities in Open Schooling in Commonwealth Countries.

The research papers may inter alia reflect need of the study, objectives, research methodology including sample and results of the study. The researches may be empirical, archival, historical etc.

EDITORIAL CORRESPONDENCE

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SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION

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COMOSA Journal of Open Schooling

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Chief Editor's Note

Commonwealth Open Schooling Association (COMOSA) , is a non-profit, democratic, collaborative and futuristic organization based on mutual respect and committed to support the efforts of open schooling institutions. The basic objective of the association is to cooperate and collaborate in development, promotion and introduction of innovative, high quality, relevant, equitable, gender-sensitive and cost-effective programmes of school education for sustainable development in commonwealth countries through Open and Distance Learning Mode, and thereby targeting to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) of the United Nations.

The Association aims at achieving a number of outcomes. One of these is sharing of resources by compiling, publishing and distributing research and other materials. The Journal provides a forum to the member countries to mutually benefit by sharing views, activities, research and innovations, etc. I am happy to share the news that the COMOSA Journal of Open Schooling has been registered and assigned **Number ISSN 0976-0407.**

The present issue of the COMOSA Journal has eight articles/papers on varied themes which cover different aspects of Open and Distance Learning across the commonwealth countries, a book review and a brief report on International conference and 24th Foundation Day(Silver Jubilee) of NIOS.

The article titled **Quality Audits in Distance Learning Experiences of Regional Centre Managers in Botswana** elaborates how Regional Centre Managers at the Botswana College of Distance and Open Learning (BOCODOL) perceived and experienced quality assurance audits. The study contributes to quality assurance literature in terms of conceptualization, understanding and implementation of internal quality audits in the context of sub-Saharan African development.

The paper on **Integration of Academic and Vocational Education in Tanzania Is this an Innovation? The Experience of the Institute of Adult Education** gives general experience of the IAE in offering this programme and in particular to disclose the innovative practices, successes and challenges in the course of implementation of this programme.

The article titled **School Readiness for Universalisation of Secondary Education in ULDA Panchayat, East Singhbhum Jharkhand: A Search for Solution Through Open Schooling** throw light into the readiness of secondary schools for promoting USE in underdeveloped states like Jharkhand, India.

The paper on **Assessment of Quality assurance Guidelines in Open and Distance Education: A Case Study,** presents a case study in assessing quality assurance guidelines that are followed in WOU and after modification to fit those in this case study context assessment of those factors was done in Bangladesh Open University (BOU) to ensure quality assurance in open and distance learning system.

The article titled **Skill Development Education Through ICT (ODL)** elaborates how ICT is a major factor in shaping the new global economy and producing rapid changes in society.

The paper on **Criteria for Enhancing the Accessibility, Availability and Affordability CALL Environments at Dr. B. R. Ambedkar University** precisely explain how it is possible to formulate criteria for the accessibility, availability and affordability of CALL environments.

The paper titled **Present Scenario of Open and Distance Learning in India: Development and Challenges for Student Support Services** presents the challenging aspect is the developing and practicing better support systems for the learners.

The paper on **Harnessing Open Educational Resources and Practices for Excellence in Teacher Education** reflects how OER can play a very important role in making good quality instructional material available to all at minimal cost and also in the sharing of issues and experiences among the student-teachers as well as practitioners which ultimately will result in teachers being reflective practitioners.

In addition to these papers, a brief report on international conference organised by NIOS , 24th Foundation Day(Silver Jubilee) celebration of NIOS, India,and a book review is also presented in this issue.

The contributors of this issue of the Journal deserve special thanks for their valuable contribution on varied themes. I appreciate the hard work of the Editorial Board of COMOSA and Printing Unit of NIOS for bringing out this issue of the Journal. We look forward to receive articles for the forthcoming issues of COMOSA Journal. We invite comments and suggestions for quality improvement of this Journal.

Best Wishes !

(Dr. Sitanshu S. Jena)
Chairman, NIOS
&
Chairperson, COMOSA

Quality Audits in Distance Learning Experiences of Regional Centre Managers in Botswana

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Abstract

This study investigated how Regional Centre Managers at the Botswana College of Distance and Open Learning (BOCODOL) perceived and experienced quality assurance audits. The study was underpinned by the silence in the literature about the perceptions and experiences of Regional Centre Managers with regard to internal quality audits. A qualitative research design and methodology was adopted for this study in which interviews and documents were used. The findings of this study underscore the importance of compliance, continuous improvement and best practices as critical success factors in ODL (Open Distance Learning) quality assurance implementation, monitoring and evaluation. The study contributes to quality assurance literature in terms of conceptualization, understanding and implementation of internal quality audits in the context of sub-Saharan African development. The lessons drawn from this study are critical in contributing towards complying with ODL quality standards and best practices.

The implications of this study are that Quality Assurance policy implementation in an ODL environment should be the core business of all stakeholders. For effective and efficient deployment of quality assurance policy, it is necessary that quality assurance drivers should be more conversant in both theory and practice so that the interpretation of quality assurance policy is properly cascaded to all structures and levels within an institution. Sustainable Open and Distance Learning that is reputable can be achieved if policy and practices are formed by evidence-based research. Hence it is recommended that further research in quality assurance and internal audits, which is more inclusive of all ODL staff, learners and other key external stakeholders should be carried out in order to shed more light and lead to a more comprehensive in-depth understanding of quality issues and practices in ODL institutions.

Introduction

Quality audits in distance learning institutions in the context of development are fairly new. Internal quality audits undertaking are meant for continuous improvement. However, conceptualization of quality assurance at operational level appears to be a challenge where Quality Assurance (QA) implementation is fairly new in developing countries. Distance education institutions across the world experience high enrolments and low completion rates. The planning and management of quality learner support service is critical in enabling distance learners to complete their courses successfully (Kishore 1998; Sim et al. (2006). In the light of challenges faced with the dropping-out rates of distance learners the need for a culture of quality assurance in the delivery of learner support services in distance education is vital for learners' satisfaction and retention (Jung and Latchem 2007). Quality is achieved through continuous improvement and innovation and therefore it calls for effective planning of learner support services (Kishore 1998). Some distance education institutions have put in place plans for learner support services and have quality assurance committees tasked to ensure that a high quality standard is maintained in delivering of education through the distance education mode (Nyondo 2001).

Internal quality audits are key to providing quality learner support services. A number of distance education institutions are adopting quality assurance guidelines to help assure the quality of their programmes, courses and services, (Poizat 2006; Hirumi 2005). In order to build sustainable learner support systems, the undertaking of a quality assurance audit conveys the fact that the education phenomenon transcends geographical boundaries and distance learners are of diverse cultures, different economic backgrounds and geographical regions, (Braimoh and Lekoko 2005). Conceptualization of quality assurance and utilizing well-defined quality indicators to measure the quality of learner support services is critical (Lakshmi and Rama 2007; Mishra 2006) if regional centres are to deliver learner support services that satisfy learners, retain them and help them improve their academic performance and complete their courses.

In a decentralized distance education system like at BOCODOL, quality assurance is a core function of each regional centre. The Regional Centre Manager is expected to obtain information from staff and learners on areas that need improvement for instance; to analyse results, render academic assistance and how to provide resources and a strategy to encourage improvement and enhance the distance learning context (Nyondo 2001). In order to have an in-depth understanding of Regional Centre Manager's experience in the implementation of the quality assurance system in Botswana, the objectives of the study is to understand:

♦ The role of quality assurance audits in enhancing the delivery of learner support services in a developing context

♦ How BOCODOL Regional Centre Managers have conceptualized and implemented the quality assurance policy framework over the years and

♦ How the Regional Centre Managers have perceived and experienced internal quality audits carried out by either the internal auditor or the institutional quality assurance audit team.

Rationale

This study addresses a silence in the literature on the role of distance education Regional Centre Managers with regard to the implementation of quality assurance audits in the delivery of learner support services in the context of a developing country such as Botswana. The study explores the experiences of Regional Centre Managers since November 2002 when quality assurance was institutionalized at BOCODOL and the annual internal quality audits were initiated at regional centres.

Given the internal quality audit experiences of Regional Centre Managers in the past eight years, this study provides for an in-depth understanding of how quality audits may be undertaken in a decentralized distance education system such as Botswana. The study also provides lessons for adaptation and those to be avoided when implementing quality assurance in the delivery of learner support services. In the light of the foregoing, this study underpins the need for a quality assurance policy framework and strategy which has clear quality indicators for learner support services to guide the undertaking of internal quality audits. Further, to establish a culture of quality assurance, training of staff in quality assurance and in conducting internal quality audits is critical if quality assurance is to be everyone's business in a distance learning institution. When a culture of quality assurance is established, learner outcomes are more likely to be improved. In order to understand and appreciate the quality assurance implementation at BOCODOL, a contextual background is necessary.

Context

The history of quality assurance in Botswana is fairly new. Just like the national ODL agency BOCODOL was established through an Act of Parliament in December 1998. BOCODOL's mandate is to provide school equivalency programmes at secondary school level throughout the country using open and distance learning methodologies. It has successfully delivered school equivalency programmes throughout the country through the use of a

decentralized learner support system in which five strategically located regional centres were created servicing 90 study centres spread across the country.

Botswana has a population of about 1.8 million people spread over 582 000 square kilometres of which 84 per cent is covered by the Kalahari Desert. It is a landlocked country located in southern Africa roughly the size of France or Texas and shares borders with South Africa in the south, Namibia in the west, Zambia in the north and Zimbabwe in the east.

Research Design and Methodology

This study was underpinned by the need to have an in-depth understanding of Regional Centre Managers' experiences of quality audits as practised at BOCODOL hence a qualitative approach was adopted to inform the research design and methodology. The main tools for collecting data were interviews and study of official records, that is, quality assurance related documents produced by Regional Centre Managers, College Internal Auditor and Internal Quality Assurance Audit team.

Findings

The Regional Centre Managers' Conceptualization of Quality Assurance

Quality assurance was conceptualized by Regional Centre Managers as a system for ensuring that learner support processes and procedures are in conformity with standards determined by college-wide management and staff through a quality assurance development process. This conceptualization of quality assurance is similar to what has been shared by a number of authors (Kishore 1998; Nyondo 2001; Braimoh and Lekoko 2005; Mishra 2006; Jung and Latchem 2007). The Regional Centre Managers' views on quality assurance were that it is a continuous improvement and had been enhanced by initiatives made through ISO 9000 certification process spearheaded Executive Management and driven by the Research and Development Department. Regional Centre Managers also viewed quality assurance as providing direction to the provision of quality learner support services in terms of ensuring the activities undertaken that conformed to the expected standards as defined by the staff in the Learner Support Services Directorate (especially the regional centre and community study centres staff). The Regional Centre Managers again viewed quality assurance as enabling the institution to be able to gauge the quality of its learner support services delivered through the BOCODOL network of regional centres, for instance that the documents used by staff in the provision of learner support services within the College were the right ones from the intranet and the documentation complied with the ISO 9000 standards as were expected by the college-wide management. Further the Regional Centre Managers perceived Quality Assurance at the College to be heavily inclined towards work processes. In the light of the foregoing

Regional Managers' conceptualization of Quality Assurance demonstrates their contextualized understanding and recognition of the role of Quality Assurance in the management of learners support services at regional level.

Regional Centre Managers' Perceived Role of Quality Assurance

Robinson (1995) argues that Quality Assurance can facilitate communication, coordination and care to its detail but it does not guarantee the value or worth of a service, hence different kinds of actions and judgement are needed to achieve value or worth of a service. Despite Robinson's argument, the view expressed by Regional Centre Managers was that the role of Quality Assurance audits was indispensable and critical in regional centre's reporting and reflection especially in terms of ODL's best practice particularly with reference to adherence to policies, established work processes and procedures. This view fits the description put across by Kefalas et al. (2003) and Braimoh and Lekoko (2005). The other view expressed by the Regional Centre Managers about the role of Quality Assurance was that it encourages regional centre staff to document their work processes and to collect evidence of work achieved for the purposes of verification during regional centre quarterly reporting periods, and also during mid-year and end of year when one-to-one performance appraisal conferences between supervisor and supervisee are conducted. And this is how one Regional Centre Manager put it:

These impressions on the role of quality assurance underscore the importance of quality audits as a tool for ensuring that what regional centres undertake to accomplish in their annual operational plans is executed. Hence the role of the regional centre manager as the main driver of quality assurance in the provision of learner supports services.

As custodian of Quality Assurance policy implementation at a regional level, each Regional Centre Manager ensures that the customers and in particular distance learners get what they are promised in the Learner Charter. Anything less is tantamount to short changing the student as a customer given the fact that the Learner Charter makes an undertaking to deliver quality learner support services within specified time and of specified quality. Viewed in the light of the foregoing, the impressions of Regional Centre Managers on the role of Quality Assurance seems to underscore what has been pointed out by Robinson (1995) that Quality Assurance in ODL delivery specifically focuses on several issues which include the set standards for service such as turnaround times for learners' assignments, the provision of accurate, consistent and timely course choice information to all students. The Regional Centre Managers' roles at BOCODOL include implementing all College policies

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relevant in successful regional operations and implementation of which Quality Assurance policy implementation is one such duty they execute.

Implementation of Quality Assurance at Regional Centres

Evidence from the study of documents and from interviews revealed that the process of developing the Quality Assurance policy at BCODODL was spearheaded by a consultant appointed by the College Executive Management and involved college–wide consultations which included the Regional Centre Managers. The involvement of staff at all levels at the college ensured that the buy-in or the potential for owning the Quality Assurance policy and standards was increased. Regional Centre Managers were instrumental in contributing to the development of quality assurance indicators for measuring the provision of learner support services at regional level. The development of Quality Assurance policy and subsequent launch in November 2002 meant that it had to be implemented by all the College structures. Regional Centre Managers acknowledged that over the years they had played key roles in the implementation of Quality Assurance by conducting quality self-audits at their regional centres and community study centres.

As part of college-wide implementation of Quality Assurance an institutional Quality Assurance committee based at the College Headquarters, with members from different departments of college were appointed. As part of college-wide buy-in, Quality Assurance focal persons at the five regional centres were appointed by the Regional Centre Managers to assist in driving the Quality Assurance implementation programme.

The institutional Quality Assurance committee was charged with among other things sensitizing all staff and propagating the Quality Assurance agenda, assisting departments and regional centres to generate their own quality indicators or standards for all their operations. The committee was also charged with undertaking internal quality audits in all the College departments and regional centres. The committee was again charged with the duty to encourage staff to have quality assurance measures built into their operational and individual work plans and to reflect on these quality assurance measures during periodical reviews and performance appraisal conferences. This approach, promoted the consolidation of the performance management system within the college. Performance management system was adopted by the BOCODOL in order to measure work performance and reward staff who achieved targets and those who exceeded expectations accordingly whilst ensuring that those who did not, were guided accordingly through a poor performance management system. In this fashion, the implementation of Quality Assurance and the undertaking of internal quality audits implied the adoption of Quality Assurance as a core business of every staff member of

the College and this is reflected in the perceptions and experiences of Regional Centre Managers.

Regional Centre Managers' Perceptions and Experiences of Internal Audits

Regional Centre Managers' Perceptions

Regional Centre Managers perceived the process of undertaking quality audits to be critical and to be adding value towards the provision of quality learner support services. Their perceptions were that the internal quality audits encouraged staff to adhere to their work objectives, plans and commitments as postulated in the Learner Charter and to apply procedures and regulations which are consistent with best practices in the provision of learner support services in open and distance learning contexts. Basically their perception was that quality audits encouraged compliance with established work processes and procedures, something that is underscored by Robinson (1995). The quality audits were also perceived as being helpful in indentifying areas that need improvement as well as showing the strengths of the regional centre. This is how Mr Puso puts it:

The audits are very important and value adding to the regional operations in that they enhance the general compliance with College procedures and regulations, and audit activities are geared towards accomplishment of College mandate and are consistent with the College strategic intentions. The audits also help in identifying some grey areas that warrant attention as well as the areas that need improvement or strengthening from a quality assurance perspective and to highlight the Department or regional centre's strengths which the College can capitalise on in the process of advancing its quality assurance agenda.

Mr Puso demonstrates how Regional Managers at BOCODOL understand the importance of quality audits in maintaining quality work processes through adhering to agreed standards. It also shows that the Regional Centre Managers have developed confidence in the quality audits system. Despite the positive perceptions by most Regional Managers on the implementation of quality assurance audits at BOCODOL, Mr Thuso did express perceptions that were contrary by saying:

To me it is a routine exercise. The whole exercise should not just be someone looking at a checklist but questioning the checklist against what really works for the Regional Centre and the customers. It seems to be an academic exercise. For instance, we are not allowed to alter

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any form even if it is obvious that it is not user friendly. Once it comes from the Intranet it is canonized!

Whilst the above sentiments might appear to be negative, it is critical that in a service industry like education quality audits should go beyond just compliance and examine the extent to which it contributes to the intended educational outcomes. It is, therefore, in this light that the participant Mr Thus, quoted above provides some constructive criticism. Value adding through quality audits entails being aware of the need to contextualize the quality audits rather than applying a rigid approach. A rigid approach does not demonstrate learning from experiences and can have adverse effects for instance it might encourage resistance by Regional Centre Managers who are knowledgeable and passionate about issues of quality at regional level.

The changes in the composition of the quality audit team in 2009 instituted as part of capacity building might have been responsible for the strong view on the perceptions that appear to write off the quality audit exercise as a routine exercise. The inclusion of new quality audit team members who were inexperienced may have led them to be more concerned with the fundamental issues of compliance with standards than anything else and this may not have impressed or gone down well with some Regional Managers like Mr Thuso. The other possibility for the reaction displayed by Mr Thuso could be that Regional Centre Managers may not have fully complied with the request by internal auditors to submit their work processes for inclusion in the quality assurance standards posted in the intranet. The revelation that some managers had not submitted all their work processes and standards had on several occasions been raised by the Coordinator of the College Quality Management System (QMS) during QMS meetings. Nevertheless, one would still expect auditors not to be rigid but assess what is obtained on the ground and appreciate the effort made by regional staff in taking cognizance of their unique conditions and their recommendations for the improvement and possible effect changes to audit tools in the intranet. It is such experiences that matter in implementing quality assurance audits in an educational environment.

Regional Centre Managers' Experiences

Regional Centre Managers' experiences were solicited through interviews. Their responses indicated that the implementation of quality assurance involved training of the staff employed by the college both on a full and part-time basis. The training of staff focused on conceptualization of quality assurance, audit processes and procedures, monitoring and evaluation of learner support services at all the learning centres. The learner support issues that came under the spotlight of Regional Centre Managers' experiences of quality audits included the processes and procedures related to the following

activities:

♦ the vision statement

♦ self assessment

♦ review of learners' problems in staff meetings

♦ learners' evaluation of tutors

♦ monitoring of the quality of learners and tutor's work

♦ reflection on learners' work and ways to improve it

♦ implementation of tutor's feedback and how to cope with weaknesses

♦ regional centre's reaction to learners feedback

♦ staff reports on learners' performance (good or poor)

♦ monitoring of tutors' learner feedback

♦ assessing achievement of objectives and outcomes in courses

Quality audits focusing on the above activities meant checking whether the processes and procedures were undertaken within the quality assurance framework and standards as initiated by the regional staff members. Key to verification of quality claims was evident in the form of documents. This was acknowledged by all the regional centre managers who further indicated that these were critically important in the quality audit process and practice. Table 4.1 shows Regional Managers' responses in terms of whether they were satisfied or dissatisfied with quality attributes which are part of the quality audit focus. The overall experiences of Regional Centre Managers as reflected in Table 4.1 in the twelve attributes of quality indicate that their satisfaction level was average that is slightly above 50 per cent. Three or more regional managers were satisfied in seven of the attributes and dissatisfied in five of them. They were all satisfied in terms of conformity to the vision of the college. However, dissatisfaction in terms of learners' performance and ways of improving, implementing tutor learner feedback and assessing achievement of objectives and outcomes in courses is a cause of concern given that these are the core issues in the provision of learner support services. It does not reflect well on the part of those who are charged with ensuring that such activities are carried out dutifully to enhance learners academic performance.

Table 4.1 Regional Centre Managers' Quality Audits Satisfaction

Quality Assurance Attribute	Response		Total out of 5
	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	
1. Conformity with BOCODOL Vision	Xxxxx[1]		5/5
2. Self-assessment	Xxx[1]	xx	3/5
3. Review of learners' problems in staff meetings	Xxx[1]	xx	3/5
4. Learners' evaluation of tutors	Xx	xxx[2]	2/5
5. Monitoring the quality of learners' work	Xxx[1]	xx	3/5
6. Monitoring the quality of tutor's work	Xxxx[1]	x	4/5
7. Reflecting on learners' performance and ways to improve them	X	xxxx[2]	1/5
8. Implementing tutor learner feedback and reflecting on how to cope with weaknesses	X	xxxx[2]	1/5
9. Regional centre's reacting to learner feedback	Xxx[1]	xx	3/5
10. Regular staff report on learner's consistent good/poor performance	Xxx[1]	xx	3/5
11. Regular monitoring of the quality of tutor's learner feedback	Xx	xxx[2]	2/5
12. Assessing achievement of objectives and outcomes in courses	X	xxxx[2]	1/5
Total responses	**31/60[1]**	**29/60[2]**	**31/60[1]**

Note: [1] indicates satisfaction and [2] indicates dissatisfaction.

The low satisfaction depicted in Table 4.1, may be a result of several factors raised by Regional Centre Managers and the factors include:

◆ Quality Assurance being a new thing and as such they were still learning

◆ heavy workload due to the College expecting all staff to be multi-skilled to ensure that the College has a lean structure given financial constraints

However a close examination of some of the interviews reveals yet another view bordering on excuses for non-delivery when it comes to quality assurance implementation. For instance, after indicating their satisfaction in terms of their internal quality assurance processes and procedures five regional centre managers had this to say:

Mr Mpedi: The implementation of quality assurance is a new thing and has not been institutionalised. The situation is further

compounded by a lack of feedback from the department concerning the development of courses and a defensive attitude from across the college.

Mr Thuso:　　　The current effort and energy is appreciated but due to workload and over multi-tasking, the focus is not consistent.

Mr Tsheko:　　Although the college has largely embraced total quality management, there has to be constant monitoring and evaluation and quality audits on a periodic basis. Staff members need to infuse issues of quality in all their functional areas.

Mr Puso:　　　Issues of quality require staff members that are dedicated and committed, particularly on issues that relate to quality of instruction and learning, that is dedicated staff members that are trained on classroom issues. With such trained staff members, there would be a great difference as work could be evenly spread. However, the only two Learner-Tutor Coordinators are overstretched. These are the only professionals we have at the regional centre.

Mr Mathebula:　Regional monitoring of learner performance is generally poor though it is done daily, records are not kept as evidence of work done and compilation of reports is generally poor.

The general views expressed by Regional Centre Managers indicate the low satisfaction as demonstrated in Table 4.1. The views expressed above show that not all was well in terms of best quality practices. The Regional Managers' views demonstrate that there is a need for more work to be done to achieve quality delivery of learner support services. In the light of the concerns arising from responses in Table 4.1 and from the views expressed above elsewhere, the question that arises is: What efforts are being made to train and mentor staff members? It appears that staff members at regional centres are not getting enough supervision, adequate mentoring and support when it comes to the implementation of quality assurance and self-audits. In all the views there is an admission that enough is not being done but no Regional Manager in the views above takes responsibility or accountability. It appears that someone somewhere has to come and deliver best quality practices at the regional centres. However, a review of Regional Centre Managers' job profiles clearly indicates that quality assurance implementation and self-audits are their key responsibilities and they all remain accountable for its implementation.

The issue of quality assurance and audits being new and not institutionalized as indicated by Mr Mpedi above is not true given the evidence from documents reviewed. All Regional Centre Managers had been taken on board right from the time Quality Assurance was institutionalized at the college. And as indicated in Chapter 1 and 2, quality assurance and quality audits were introduced at

the college towards the end of 2002 and since then annual audits have been carried and Mr Mpedi was one of the first Regional Managers at the college. The question then is: Why should one deny the existence of a system, of which one was an architect in the first place? It is a major concern when people expected to take responsibility turnaround and make excuses. This compromises the initiatives and efforts in the implementation of quality assurance and quality audits. It does not contribute to growth and excellence. It works against the vision of the college of being an *Institution of choice for life-long learning*. The vision may never be realized if people who are expected to drive Quality Assurance issues and ensure best practices are reluctant and are quick to find excuses.

However in one of the regional centres contrary to the generalized view expressed by Mr Mathebula there was evidence that demonstrated that quality monitoring and evaluation and self-audits were being conducted. For example, weekly briefings focusing on the following were being undertaken:

❖ reporting about the key activities of the past week;

❖ achievements of the week;

❖ problems/challenges encountered;

❖ what was being done or had been done to overcome the problems/ challenges and

❖ key activities for the following week.

The weekly briefings entailed staff members producing written reports. The practice ensured that each staff member's weekly activities were aligned to the regional operational plan and this made it easy for the Regional Centre Manager to monitor the progress towards achieving the annual regional operational plan. The monitoring and evaluation reports produced demonstrated a framework which guided the reporting and it covered some of the following matters:

◆ The background that prompted the monitoring and evaluation tour for example, the absence of signed protocols on shared use of facilities, low tutorial attendance and assignment submission. This kind of background provided the theoretical basis for undertaking monitoring and evaluation. Clear processes and an audit trail were visible from documents studied.

◆ The actual purpose of the tour for example, to sign protocol agreements, to find out the reasons for low attendance and to conduct motivational seminars;

◆ The main aspects achieved during the tour

◆ The observations made during the tour and

◆ The recommended action for the different staff members within the regional centre and at headquarters.

There was also evidence from documents reviewed that staff members at one of the regional centres were doing more to ensure quality delivery of learner support services and best practices, for instance, evidence was found in several reports and official records generated between 2003 and 2007 which were reviewed indicated the following:

♦ Learner management committee had been established, and learners had been trained on taking responsibility for their learning and using shared use of facilities responsibly.

♦ Procedures had been put in place to facilitate conduct of tutoring and learning business.

♦ Learners were being encouraged to take charge of their learning, through study groups, peer help, requesting and initiating group academic counselling in difficulty-prone study areas.

♦ Annual open and prize-giving day celebration had been an established learning event which was part of the academic calendar. Open and prize-giving day was a learner-centred and driven event organized and run by the Regional Learner Management Committee. Distance learners who worked hard and met the requirements for submission of quality assignments and attained over 60 per cent were recognized and similarly those who demonstrated effort of improving on their academic performance upon taking their mock examinations were equally rewarded. They were awarded certificates. The best managed learning centres competed annually for a floating trophy. This was one way of motivating learners and their tutors. All learning centres in the region had to work hard throughout the year in order to be recognized during the annual open and prize-giving day event.

♦ Subject-specific reports for weekend courses were also being compiled showing exactly what transpired during the academic counselling, the questions that were asked by distance learners and how the other learners and tutors responded. The reports were then sent to all distance learners in the region irrespective of whether they had attended or not. This enabled all distance learners to benefit from the weekend tutorial feedback.

♦ Congratulatory letters for distance learners demonstrating hard work and persistence in their studies despite adverse learning conditions were often written and sent to all deserving distance learners. This type of recognition ensured that even geographically isolated distance learners in-mates and others in special circumstances were motivated to continuously make effort and defy the difficult circumstances they were experiencing.

The above findings from one regional centre demonstrate unique practice tailored for distance learners with a diverse profile within a geographic context-specific. It is not surprising that during the period 2003 to 2007 performance of learners from this geographically isolated and underdeveloped context

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was not different from that of distance learners from the peri-urban and urban areas. Official divisional reports show that the practice and progress at this particular regional centre was shared with other Regional Managers during the divisional quarterly meetings. The sharing included progress in implementing quality assurance.

Sharing their experiences Regional Centre Managers indicated that in terms of quality assurance implementation, they had observed that some staff members' commitment was low. It appears low commitment was mainly from staff members who had been there before the Regional Managers were appointed in 2002. From informal discussions with some of the staff members, it appears this had more to do with changes in the delivery of open and distance learning by the new semi-autonomous college as opposed to the delivery approach that the previous provider, the Department of Non-Formal Education had adopted. The low commitment to some extent did affect the delivery of quality learner support services to clients. Other issues observed by Regional Centre Managers during the implementation of quality assurance include the following:

◆ mismatch between the curriculum delivered and career needs of learners

◆ errors in the learning materials and

◆ poor quality of mock examinations

As far as mismatch between the curriculum delivered and learner career needs is concerned the observation by the Regional Centre Managers was that the curriculum was rather more inclined to careers in the humanities and learner career needs in the science and technology areas were not being addressed. This was because at the time of the study, the college did not offer science and technology-related subjects. This meant that the cohorts enrolled at the time were excluded in the science and technology-related careers. However this aspect of mismatch was never picked-up during the quality audits exercises as there is no evidence from the quality audits reports of the period.

On the issue of errors in the learning materials, all Regional Centre Managers concurred that this had been outstanding since 2002. Mr Tsheko emphasised the importance of error-free learning materials when he said the following:

Quality assurance as reinforced by ISO certification processes is a good development. ODL depends much on the printed materials but the quality and continuous improvement is somewhat lacking.

Apparently, the quality audit teams as early as 2003 picked the issue of errors in the learning materials and the relevant department had been apprised of the matter but no effort had been taken to rectify the issue at the time of this study. Probably this is why Mr Mpedi, one of the Regional Managers alluded above to some departments not cooperating adequately in providing feedback

to issues raised during the audits. This is rather a cause of concern as errors in learning materials hinder effective learning particularly for those remote learners without access to face-to-face tutorial support and with very limited communication with part-time tutors. Failure to address non-conformity issues like errors in learning materials for such a long time in terms of education law constitutes negligence and a legally aware distance learner may be at liberty to institute ligation. Failure to address the errors in learning materials compromises and undermines the quality assurance polic, standards and college efforts to achieve the same.

In terms of mock examinations, Regional Centre Managers considered the quality of mock examinations to be critical in preparing distance learners at school equivalency level for their final examinations. They noted that mock examinations every year had errors and were delivered late and that it appeared as if they were being administered more as a routine process rather than for their critical role in helping learners gauge or measure their performance and examination readiness. This is how Mr Tsheko puts it:

Mock examinations quality has been questionable for a long time now and is seemingly administered as a routine process not for the value they add. They are always delivered late thus affecting the quality of preparations, delivery and marking and return to learners. My view is that a lot still needs to be done to ensure quality at all levels

The effects of late delivery of mock examinations was that it affected the entire mock examination process, that is, its administration, marketing and returning of scripts to learners. The quality standards pertaining to administration of examinations specifically state otherwise. The late delivery of examinations and other related issues compromised the college quality standards and the promise undertaken through the Learner Charter.

As far as errors in mock examination is concerned, there is no excuse that could be made and the errors would always remain unacceptable given that quality assurance measures in place at the College. The process of developing mock examinations at BOCODOL entails the following: part-time tutors develop the test items, which are then subjected to quality assurance by professional subject specialists and editors employed full time by the College. Errors in mock examinations just like in the learning materials constitute gross negligence on the part of ODL practitioners involved in developing and quality assuring the test items and may attract litigation if distance learners decide to sue given the contractual promise undertaken in the Learner Charter by the college. Indications from these revelations point to the fact that there is inadequate supervision of staff responsible for generating and quality assuring the development of mock examinations. And in this case, it means some professional staff members at the college are both short, changing the college and distance learners and as such are not delivering on what they are being paid for.

One Regional Centre Manager Mr Mpedi made an observation that the practice of quality at the college appeared to be heavily inclined towards work processes that is, filling a form appropriately and keeping records rather than satisfying the customer with quality products and services. Mr Mpedi is correct in terms of quality products and service satisfying the customer. However whilst he is uncomfortable in his observation on documentation of work processes it has to be emphasised that documentation of work processes and procedures is the main means of verifying that quality measures are being employed. Without documentation it is difficult to assess and confirm that indeed quality assurance practices and standards are being adhered to and non-conformities are being followed and addressed.

Despite the Regional Centre Managers highlighting some of the weaknesses experienced during the implementation of quality audits, they also had positive experiences to share. For instance, their overall impressions from implementing the quality assurance has led them to conclude that quality audits were critical for introspection, for instance regional staff were able to undertake proactive self-evaluation of their work practices and performance when they compiled their quarterly reports during staff meetings. Their experiences were that quality internal audits encouraged mutual understanding between individual staff and their supervisors in the provision of learner support services. Further their experiences revealed that mutual understanding between the supervisor and the supervisee facilitated amicable agreement during the mid-year and final appraisal of their annual work performance as per the individual work contract signed at the beginning of each financial year. This is how Mr Mathebula confirmed the view held by the rest of the Regional Centre Managers;

It helps staff to introspect on their performance, however it should be noted that since it has monetary attachments in terms of staff being rewarded for their performance, the positive aspects are sometimes exaggerated. The immediate positive aspect of it is that the individual officers have a mutual understanding with their supervisors and they agree on the score after reaching an amicable agreement.

Despite the positive sentiments expressed concerning the performance reward system, there were also reservations on how the reward system was implemented. As indicated by Mr Mathebula above, staff tended to exaggerate their annual performance in a bid to get the monetary reward. The aspect of performance reward system was a cause for concern that was raised by all the Regional Centre Managers. The concern arose from the interpretation of the appraisal score. It appears the interpretation of the appraisal score was not understood by staff members and Regional Managers. The reason for this was more related to how the orientation of staff may have been conducted initially when the appraisal instrument was introduced and as such fundamental understanding may not have been achieved. Inadequate understanding of performance scoring by managers led to the flaws in measuring annual

performance and rewarding it despite that it was exaggerated. The appraisal instrument specifically indicates that when an employee has consistently exceeded expectation, he or she would have performed on several occasions beyond the scope of his or her operational plan and performance contract in terms of speed, efficiency and effectiveness of executing tasks planned is entitled to be awarded a 'B' grade. Further when an employee performs outstanding, the employee would have made significant and consistent unique contributions to the college and is entitled to be awarded an 'A' grade. However, it was revealed that when employees had demonstrated competency and consistently achieved output expected as per performance contract they demanded to be awarded an 'A' grade or a 'B' grade in order to get the 6 per cent performance reward. The issue is that when one has achieved the expected output, one is already rewarded on a monthly basis through his or her basic salary. Payment of rewards when employees actually do not deserve it, compromises the performance and quality standards set by the college. However, the overall picture of the implementation of quality assurance at BOCODOL show that reasonable attempts are being pursued in order to improve quality learner support services geared towards the realization of quality academic performance by distance learners.

Summary of Main Findings

The main findings of this study are summed up using three themes, namely: *compliance, continuous improvement* and *best practice*

♦ *Compliance*: This relates to the need and quality of compliance to the college Quality Assurance Management System (QMS) in terms of its policy, processes, procedures and standards. The compliance with QMS is anchored on the college staff's conceptualization of quality assurance as applied in the development of learning materials and delivery of learner support services at BOCODOL.

◆ *Continuous improvement*: The reflection and introspection by staff provided through the application quality assurance auditing compels action to improve its application to be taken to ensure not only compliance with QMS but improvements in work processes in order to provide quality distance learning that ensures that the best practice in ODL is sustained.

◆ *Best practice*: Embracing Quality Assurance processes, procedures and standards ensures constant reflections and introspection by ODL practitioners. The adoption and implementation of internal quality audits at BOCODOL provides the necessary ingredients for best practice as everyone takes quality assurance as his or her core business as reflected in the performance management system practiced to enhance the development and delivery of quality ODL products and services.

Significance of the Study

This study contributes to quality assurance literature in terms of

conceptualization and understanding of internal quality audits and their implementation in the context of African development. The lessons drawn from this study are critical in contributing towards complying with ODL quality standards, ODL best practice and continuous delivery of learner support services. This study has revealed the importance of quality assurance audits with regard to:

◆ conceptualization quality assurance as a systematic way of ensuring that what is set to be done in the annual plans is actually done, that is using quality assurance audits as a process of checking whether activities planned are being executed accordingly and achieving the intended outputs in order to ensure continuous improvement

◆ Implementation, first by ensuring participation by stakeholders in developing a quality assurance policy and making it available to all staff. Second, appointing coordinators of quality assurance at regional level. Third, infusing quality assurance issues within the institutional strategic and annual operational plans, with identifiable monitoring and evaluation framework in terms of inputs, outputs, outcomes and criteria for success or indicators with means of verification in order to facilitate internal quality auditing.

◆ Encouraging efficient and effective processes and compliance with procedures which enhance the achievement of best practice in the delivery of learner support services.

◆ Documentation of work processes and collection of evidence for work-related achievements or non-achievement which helps in reviews and continuous improvement.

◆ Ensuring that self-audits are conducted at least formally twice a year and standards or indicators of success in the operational plans are used for checking progress and achievements.

Further this study has demonstrated the importance of adhering to ODL quality standards, ODL best practices in order to ensure continuous improvement in the delivery of learner support services. *Compliance, ODL Best Practice* and *Continuous Improvement* are therefore considered in this study as the key components to monitor and evaluate when undertaking ODL internal quality audits.

♦ *Compliance*: This relates to the need to adhere to work processes, policy, procedures and standards as encapsulated in the College Quality Assurance Management System (QMS). Such compliance eliminates any stigma and provides learners and other stakeholders with greater confidence in the courses (Jung and Latchem 2007) provided by BOCODOL or any ODL institutions since the QMS is benchmarked on international standards including ISO 9000. This has also been underscored by Robinson (1995) as such compliance reduces variability and unpredictability and helps achieve defined standards.

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♦ *Continuous improvement*: The introspection and reflection by Regional Managers on internal audit non-conformities encourages action to be taken in order to have continuous improvement in the work processes. This keeps BOCODOL or any ODL institution alert to the emerging individual and collective needs and demands among members, (National Assessment and Accreditation Council 2007). It also allows for BOCODOL or any other ODL institution to learn how to do things better so as to satisfy the needs and expectations of distance learners. Such an initiative is also meant to provide quality distance learning that ensures that best practice in ODL is sustained.

♦ *Best practice*: Constant reflections and introspection by Regional Centre Managers and their staff led to the adoption and implementation of internal quality audits findings. This encourages best practice anchored on performance management system. In terms of performance management practice at BOCODOL, the success so far registered is similar to the one achieved by the Indonesia Open University where staff signed work contracts and were evaluated throughout the year to monitor their performance (Belawati and Zuhairi 2007).

Implications for Policy and Practice

The implications of this study is that Quality Assurance is critical in ODL for ensuring that the mode delivers quality education and skills which meet the needs of the varied stakeholders including learners, parents, employers, assessment and accreditation bodies. Meeting the needs of stakeholders is possible when Quality Assurance Policy formulation and implementation involves all who matter in the development and delivery of ODL products and services. This therefore means that policy and decision makers should always take on board all key stakeholders when developing ODL institutional quality assurance policy. For effective and efficient deployment of quality assurance policy in ODL, it is necessary that quality assurance drivers and ODL managers should be more conversant in both theory and practice so that the interpretation of quality assurance policy and best practice is properly cascaded to all structures and levels within an ODL institution. Further failure to address non conformities like errors in the learning materials as was the case in this study is an anomaly that should not be allowed to occur as it negatively affects the reputation of an ODL institution, and has legal implications in the event distance learners decide to sue for being supplied with wrong content. This therefore implies that all work should be quality assured for errors to be eliminated before learning materials are given to learners and that in the event of genuine oversight, when internal audits brings these non conformities then corrective measures should be undertaken without wasting time. Such measures are more likely to assist in minimizing differences and misunderstanding that affect the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of quality assurance policy in an ODL institution.

Recommendations

In the light of the findings the following are the recommendations for ODL institutions running a decentralized learner support system through a network of regional centres:

◆ All regional ODL practitioners should undertake in their annual contracts and operational plans a promise to ensure that quality assurance becomes their core business. Such a step is more likely to ensure that there is a total buy-in by staff.

◆ A deliberate effort in capacity building in quality assurance measures and audits should be continuously undertaken and reviews conducted from time-to-time so that there is continuous learning within the organisations. Such efforts can make quality assurance more sustainable as more people or everyone in the institution embraces quality assurance as core business. In other words, a once in a while training does not build an institutional culture of quality assurance, whereas on-going capacity building or training does. Further, the habit of conducting sustained reviews with reports regularly shared and with every employee being taken on board during the provision of input for improvement can also enhance quality assurance culture.

◆ Juan's quality improvement steps should be considered and customised for the needs of the ODL institutions. In other words ODL institutions should endeavour to do the following as advocated by Juran:

   ◆ Create awareness of the need and opportunity for improvement

   ◆ Set explicit goals for improvement

   ◆ Create on organizational structure to drive the improvement process

   ◆ Provide appropriate training

   ◆ Adopt a project approach to problem solving

   ◆ Identify and report progress

   ◆ Recognize and reinforce success

   ◆ Communicate results

   ◆ Keep records of changes

   ◆ Build an annual improvement cycle into all company processes.

◆ Sustainable open distance learning that is reputable can be achieved if policy and practice is informed by evidence-based research, hence it is recommended that further research in quality assurance and internal audits that is more inclusive of all stakeholders; ODL staff, learners and other key external stakeholders should be carried out in order to shed more light and lead to a more comprehensive in-depth understanding of

quality assurance issues and practices in ODL institutions. This would lead to continuous improvement and promote sustained ODL best practice.

Conclusion

Whilst quality audits in distance learning institutions in the context of a developing country is fairly new, the Botswana case study has shown that, robust efforts can instil a culture of quality assurance practice in an ODL institution. Internal quality audits undertaken for continuous improvement at regional centres demonstrate ODL's best practice that may be transferable to similar contexts. The conceptualization of quality assurance and internal quality audits at regional operational level as revealed from the regional centre managers' perceptions and experiences disconfirm the assumption that conceptualization of QA appears to be a challenge where QA implementation in an ODL institution is fairly new. The perceptions and experiences of regional centre managers at BOCODOL further demonstrate the best practice in terms of ODL practitioner participation in quality assurance planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation through an institutionalized performance management system. These efforts by regional centre managers provide the evidence that quality assurance measures when in place and working, do contribute towards continuous improvement of ODL products and quality learner support services.

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Integration of Academic and Vocational Education in Tanzania Is this an Innovation? The Experience of the Institute of Adult Education

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Abstract

One of the fundamental objectives of the United Republic of Tanzania is to alleviate poverty in a number of ways through the increase of access, equity and quality of education at all levels. Tanzania has been offering basic education—primary and secondary education—since independence till date mainly in learning areas of academic component. However, there were some primary schools in which learners were provided with vocational education and had time to attend practical sessions soon after independence to the 1980s. Also, there are few secondary schools which offer vocational education; which are referred to as technical secondary schools (MoEVT 2010). Despite the fact that vocational education has been provided to learners, not much emphasis has been put in place and the learning process is not integrated. Therefore, in most cases, the graduates have been developed in one aspect and hence failure to continue with further studies creates difficulties in having sustainable means to earn their living. The foregoing explication, as well as the need to widen opportunities for secondary education which was pioneered by the government since 2004, resulted into innovative ideas to design and develop the programme which would minimise or eliminate the existing situation. In 2006, the study on Complementary Secondary Education in Tanzania (COSET) was initiated by United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in collaboration with the Institute of Adult Education (IAE). The study explored how the COSET initiative could be implemented in the non-formal context. This initiative went further into transformation of ideas from COSET to Integrated Post Primary Education (IPPE) Programme which is offered through Open and Distance Learning (ODL) as a mode of delivery. This is an alternative learning opportunity, which tries to increase access and equity to post-primary education. The curriculum was designed to meet the needs of its beneficiaries in a changing society. It is a competence-based curriculum and modularised, consisting of three key learning areas/components namely academic, vocational skills and generic skills. This programme has been

implemented since 2012 in seven piloting districts. The paper gives general experience of the IAE in offering this programme and in particular to disclose the innovative practices, successes and challenges in the course of implementation of this programme. Recommendations have also been given at the end of this paper.

Key words: Innovation, Open and Distance Learning (ODL)

Introduction

The IAE was established as a parastatal organisation through parliamentary Act No. 12 of 1975. It conducts Certificate, Diploma and Bachelor degree programmes in adult and continuing education. IAE is a dual mode institution since it offers both conventional and ODL modes. The term *Open and Distance Learning* reflects both the fact that all or most of the teaching is conducted by someone (students or learners) removed in time and space from teacher and other learners, and that the mission aims to include greater dimensions of openness and flexibility, whether in terms of access, curriculum or other elements of structure.

The Government of Tanzania has been implementing various education policies and programmes which aimed at improving the status of education. Among them are Universal Primary Education in 1970 and the Education for All of 1990s. Despite the government's efforts to ensure that education is universal, equal access to free and compulsory primary education has not been realised. As it is stipulated that there were more than 3 million school-age children that were out of school, most of them being from poor families and hard-to-reach communities (Mushi *etal.*2002). In 1999, the Ministry of Education with the support from UNICEF introduced a primary education programme titled 'Complementary Basic Education in Tanzania (COBET)'. Complementing formal education by the non-formal system in providing primary education has led to an increase in the Net and Gross Enrolment Ratios. This has indeed absorbed more than 72,000 learners by 2010 (BEST 2010).

In Tanzania, the primary school leavers are streamlined in one of the following areas—formal secondary school; vocational training school (VET) and folk development college courses (FDCs); Post-Primary Technical Centres (PPTCs);Secondary Education through ODL and; other programmes which are supported with NGOs. All these programmes are characterised by low enrolment, absence of participatory training methods, lack of community participation, few clear policy and operational guidelines (Mushi *etal.* 2002). All of the foregoing listed programmes are neither integrative nor abide to competence-based approaches.

Despite the presence of those opportunities after primary education, there was a need to widen opportunities to the accessibility of secondary education. Statistics show that in 2002 secondary school dropouts were 12,851which dropped to 11,513 in 2004 and it rose again in 2006 to 13,961 (BEST 2006).

Hence, secondary school programme which would complement the efforts of the MoEVT in providing secondary education was visualised and named as COSET.

COSET was needed to be introduced because it would enable many youths to meet their life expectations not only after having completed the secondary school circle but also in the course of their open schooling. This is because of the flexible curriculum, which would induce and indeed attract learners to combine study and work by putting into practice the theory taught in class. By that time, the question was what were the peculiarities with COSET when it was compared to existing secondary school programme through ODL? From this question, Integrated Post-Primary Education Programmes (IPPE) came into being. Therefore, this is a descriptive analysis paper which explores the experience of the IAE with the focus to accomplish the needs of the following rubrics: What are the innovative practices conducted by the IAE in designing and implementing IPPE? What are the successes in the implementation of IPPE and what are the challenges in the course of implementation of this programme? Reponses to these questions are the basis for writing this paper.

What is Integration?

Bailey andMatsuzuka (2003) argues that in recent years, scientists, business people and educators have engaged in an extensive discussion on how education in science, technology, engineering and mathematics can be improved. The thrust was a growing concern that learners are not prepared for the rapidly changing workplace, which is caused by increasing global competition and constant technological innovation (Bassi 1996; Committee for Economic Development 1985). In Tanzania, the concept of integrated education is new, and Bassi (1996) asserts that integrated education refers to education that is organised in such a way that it cuts across subject-matter lines, bringing together various aspects of the curriculum into meaningful association to focus upon broad areas of study. It views learning and teaching in a holistic way and reflects the real world, which is interactive.

What is Integrated Post-Primary Education (IPPE) Programme?

Integrated Post-primary Education (IPPE) is an outcome of a response to the increased public demand for post-primary education opportunities for graduates of primary school education in Tanzania. The starting point was to introduce COSET based on a situational analysis conducted in 2006. The findings of the study revealed that learning needs for post-primary education aspirants were diverse and these included academic studies, vocational skills, life skills, agriculture skills and entrepreneurship skills. In general, the findings suggested that target population of the study prefer education which enables them to cope with the real life situation. To meet these learners' needs an integrated kind of programme was considered to be appropriate. Hence, the idea of IPPE was developed.

An integrated approach to teaching and learning is designed to strengthen the academic base of work-related skills, on the one hand; and to provide a context and motivation for learning academic skills, on the other (Bailey 1997;Brown 1998). The foregoing explication implies that the integrated approach involves reforms from two perspectives: one as an occupational reform and another as a general pedagogical reform. All of these perspectives have been considered broadly in the design and development of IPPE. In the area of occupational programmes, the integration is beyond the boundaries of academic and vocational components. In IPPE, three learning areas have been integrated. These are academic, vocational and generic/supportive/ life skills. These have been done to enhance skills development in the following aspects: thinking skills, decision-making, problem solving and knowing how to learn as well as basic academic skills (SCANS 1991).

The programme is pursued using both conventional and ODL modes of delivery. On the side of conventional, four hours in each afternoon of the working day are used in open schools whereby teaching and learning take place. The three components are taught concurrently. Learners are supplied with self-instructional learning materials. This goes together with face-to-face sessions organised for five days after completion of each module from the three components of the curriculum. However, more details of this kind of innovation will be given in the coming part of this paper.

Innovative Practices

To define 'innovative' practice is always somewhat easier to say what innovative practice is not, than to attempt to say what it actually is. It is sometimes meaningful to think of innovative practice in terms of its characteristics and its mission. Precisely, what is meant by *innovative* practice is tricky since what is considered innovative for one institution may not be so for another and the degree of innovativeness of any initiative is unavoidably transitory, fading with the passing of time. Innovation in education has generally been taken to mean a planned or deliberate process of introducing change, directed towards (but not necessarily achieving) improvements or solving or alleviating some perceived problem. Such changes may be new to a person, course department or institution as a whole. An innovation in one situation may be something already established elsewhere, but its importance for this discussion is that initiative takers and participants see it as an innovation *in their circumstances.* In this regard the next part illustrates the innovative practices in designing, developing and implementing IPPE.

Integration of the Learning Areas

Several early psychologists such as Thorndike (1931) and Hull (1943) had already discussed the importance of associating different elements in learning. The recent cognitive theorists have added a constructivist dimension, contending that learning is a process of knowledge construction rather than knowledge memorisation, absorption or storage (Beane 1998). This concept

of the constructivist pedagogy reflects the philosophy on which academic and vocational integration is based—instruction has to build connections between knowledge development and its application in the workplace (Brown 1998). However, IAE considers the idea of integration itself as an innovation. Integration was done into two levels; at one level three learning areas have been combined to form one curriculum which is both integrated and competence-based. These learning areas are: academic, vocational skills and generic skills. *Academic component* focuses on school subjects taught in formal secondary schools. These include English, Kiswahili, Biology, Mathematics, History, Geography, Civics, Commerce, Book Keeping and Information and Computer Studies. *Pre-vocational skills* intend to help learners to develop a range of skills so that they can survive in the society by increasing their employability. In pre-vocational, learners are trained, among others, in cookery, motor vehicle mechanics, welding and fabrication, plumbing, carpentry and joinery, animal husbandry etc. and *generic skills* are essential for economic activities and social participation. In this area learners are taught health education, cross cutting issues, civic education, and income generation support systems.

Integration of Competences

Another level of integration is revealed in the notion of competence. According to the Tanzania National Council for Technical Education (NACTE), competence means 'the clear ability to successfully carry out some occupational activity. It is described in terms of "skills", "knowledge" and "attitudes" as well as the typical "context" and "level" that a person who possesses such a competence could work in'. Generally, competence is an integration of knowledge, skills and attitudes. Hence, from this view the second level of integration comes into being. Enhancement of this is determined by the pedagogical approaches which are largely learner-centred supported with self-instructional study materials.

Competence Based Self-Instructional Study Materials

The IPPE curriculum was interpreted and a modularised syllabi were developed. From these syllabi, modules or self-instructional study materials were designed. These study materials are activity oriented and are capable of enhancing a learner to develop an inquisitivemind in the course of study.The study materials present the students with real situations so they might apply what they have learnt. If the content is meaningful to the work place, learners are actively involved in the learning and they become more motivated and inquisitive. This is an example of the text in the Civics module 1:*Have you ever attended the Uhuru (independence) torch rally? What activities are carried out during the celebrations? Write and sing the song dedicated for lighting the Uhuru torch? P.15.* This is a real-life activity orientated application.

Competence Based Assessment

Competence Based Assessment (CBA) is an approach to establishing

occupationallyrelevant standards of competence. The emphasis is on demonstrated competence in the qualities important to an occupation or profession, rather than measuring knowledge in isolation from skills or on measuring the time that has been spent in formal professional or academic education (Masters and McCurry 1990). In this regard, IAE has developed IPPE Learning Assessment guide to assess learning process and outcomes. This is also another innovative practice which was not put into practice since IAE has been implementing CBET in 2009. The guide provides key information to IPPE implementers on the assessment of learning in the programme. It emphasises on CBA.

The guide maintains some flexibility of the programme and ensures quality achievement of the expected output. In doing so, assessors are needed to generate and collect evidence of learners' attainment of knowledge, acquisition of skills and attitudes with some degree of flexibility, and judge the evidences against the set standards such as the performance criteria for each practical assignment. In regard to assessment, a number of innovations have been done, including the use of authentic assessment tools. These authentic assessment tools are:rubric,Student Self Assessment Form (SSAF), Personal Development Plan (PDP) and Logbook. While some experts put more emphasis on internal assessment in which tests and examinations are highly emphasised, IAE looks at assessment in a broader sense. It perceives assessment as the process which involves the 'outsiders' (labour market). In doing so, it advocates the practice of workplace observation as Harris and Bell (1990) explain that assessment is carried out for three different groups of people: the learners, the teachers and the 'outsiders'.

Involvement of the Learner in Assessment

Learners are guided to develop their own reflection in their learning process through reflective essays, logbooks, SSAFs and PDPs. It was also, revealed that self assessment was insisted and autonomy was left to learners for the great extent. This enhances learners to assess their own learning process and outcomes as suggested by Heron (1981) who argues that innovative assessment is 'the redistribution of educational power' when assessment becomes not just something which is 'done to' learners but also 'done with' and 'done by' learners.

Learner Centeredness Supervision

In the IPPE programme, supervision is a continuous professional intervention focused on improving the quality of education offered by the learning centres. Supervision is a collaborative course of action between the supervisor and supervisee such as centre coordinator, teachers, learners, local authority councils and other education stakeholders. However, this is not the case in formal schooling when supervisor is seen as the superior and controls the supervision process. Supervision is an important aspect to be assured in any educational programme implementation initiative. To ensure effective

implementation of IPPE, the IAE has developed supervision guide. This guide aims at achieving learners' competence against the IPPE curriculum standards. It seeks to ensure that IPPE learning centres are successfully managed and that they are places where we are happy for our learners to achieve what they intend to achieve. It also gives guidelines for centre supervisors to support learners in their daily tasks.

Developing Multimedia Content

From a pedagogical point of view, ICT applications are highly recognised as the means to enhance active learning among the learners (Poulsen 1995). In distance education, ICT is also a means to meet the wider community and increase active learning. IAE is aware of these roles of the ICT and pioneered the development of multimedia content with a support of Commonwealth of Learning (COL). In this initiative, 25 multimedia lessons were developed from the IPPE learners' study materials. However, the actual use of this in the learning process has not been implemented yet as more arrangement need to be reconsidered. There are more than 30 radio stations in Tanzania and more than 10 TV stations; some of them have the wider coverage country wide while others are not. Most of these TV stations are urban based, but Tanzania Broadcasting Corporation (TBC) covers a larger part of the country (Chuachua 2011). The IAE is planning to make use of both TV and radio stations to air out the video/audio programmes in future for IPPE learners.

Awarding

Tanzania has not yet put into practice the national non-formal qualification framework. This delaying is due to the persistency of the perception that graduates from non-formal basic education should mainstream into the formal schooling at a certain stage. From this attitude, graduates from non-formal basic education programmes are not recognised, if they do, they are not awarded by National Examination Council of Tanzania (NECTA). Thus, for instance, for secondary education programme through ODL, learners are supposed to sit for the same final examination with the learners in the formal system. However, this should not be the case at all times. Sometimes formal and non-formal programmes can stand on their own and learners of the NFE programmes can excel without mainstreaming into formal programmes. IAE has foreseen this diversity of learners' needs when some can opt for final award which is offered by the NECTA while others can excel through NFE system up to further education. In realisation of this, IAE has developed awarding system for those IPPE learners who will accomplish successfully in all three learning areas. This award will enable them to go for higher education if the government through the MoEVT accept this awarding system.

Successes

So far not much can be said in this area since the implementation of this programme is in its infant stage. From an educational perspective, successful programme should support the universal principles for good practice in

education. It should encourage and maximise contacts between learners and teachers, develop relationships and promote collaboration among learners, incorporate active learning, give rich and rapid feedback to learners, set high standards for learners' performance, and respect individual differences and allow learners opportunities for learning that acknowledge those differences (Chickering and Ehrmann 1996; Chickering andGamson 1987; McLoughlin, Oliver andWood 1999). However, all of these need to be realised after a certain period of its implementation and close monitoring and evaluation. The foregoing explanation does not mean nothing can be said that amounts to achievement/successes of the IPPE programme.

Enrolment

It is essential that all programmes which are delivered at a distance enable learners to 'fit in'. However, this is also the case in IPPE since it accommodates characteristics which absorb various learners despite their heterogeneous nature. Since the IPPE programme had been introduced, all pilot districts had managed and succeeded to identify learning centres as well as learners. Almost 34 learning centres were identified and about 1000 learners were registered. It was also revealed that learners are anxious to learn through this flexible mode of delivery and showed interest in this integrated kind of education.

Orientation of the IPPE Programme to Different Stakeholders

All seven pilot districts had managed to conduct orientation of the IPPE to different stakeholders. The programme has been introduced to different stakeholders including political leaders, districts management leaders; ward leaders (Ward Educational Officers) for the aim of getting support and own this programme. Also, management staff of the ministry is aware of the progress and provides moral and material support towards the success of the programme.

Motivation of Stakeholders

Stakeholders show their interest to expand this programme though the programme is still at the piloting stage. For example, UNESCO has started the initiatives in collaboration with IAE to expand this programme in two districts to train teen-mothers/girls who missed the opportunity to accomplish secondary education. This is among the successes to this programme.

Challenges

Limited understanding of the innovation

Challenges were also observed on the part of the knowledge of teachers in this innovation. Some teachers who are coming from Knowledge Based Education and Training (KBET) to Competence Based Education and Training (CBET) for the first time (or are new to both) feel initially rather overwhelmed with a sense of these differences. For example, Chappell (1996) has argued

that: 'For many teachers, competence standards are now a central and problematic feature of practice… many of them are therefore faced with the dilemma of implementing a CB curriculum.'Moreover, studies in this area on the evolution of instructional reform however, have found various barriers to disseminating the new pedagogical approaches to both secondary and post-secondary schools. Grubb and Stasz (1993) and Boesel (1994) report that little progress in implementing academic and vocational integration programmes has been realised, partly because the idea are not disseminated enough. In a later study, Grubb (1999) found significant institutional barriers to the diffusion of innovative pedagogy. In this regard, there is a need of regular comprehensive training to IPPE teachers.

Lack of ICT infrastructure and reliable electric power

Despite the fact that IAE has started to initiate the use of ICT in this innovative programme, there is a problem of ICT infrastructure in Tanzania in general, and at the IAE headquarter as well as at the regional offices in particular. Some learners are living in rural areas where there is no reliable electricity. This means that there is still a long way to go for the actual and meaningful use of multimedia.

Transfer of the trained administrators and teachers

The IAE has been providing continuous capacity building to administrators and teachers towards smooth supervision and coordination of this programme. However, the main setback against this initiative is when these personnel are transferred from one place to another since they are under the local government employment. Clark *et al.* (2007) argues that 'if there is a pattern of frequent administrative turnover, and curricular integration is not given consistent support by administrators, it is unlikely to succeed'. IPPE is a newly implemented initiative in seven pilot districts. This is an innovation which needs practitioners with accumulated competences to provide continuous support to the programme.

Inadequate fund

In Tanzania, inadequate fund is normally located for non-formal programmes hence it becomes difficult to meet the cost for these new initiatives depending on the funds from the donors. Perin (1998) also found that despite enthusiasm for academic-occupational integration, few programmes have carried out a comprehensive implementation of the reform and actual examples are few. She points out that obstacles to integration abound in terms of the cost in time, effort and expenditures needed for professional development and instructional planning. This is also the same to IPPE in which regular trainings for capacitybuilding are needed as well as payment to teachers. There is a need for education key stakeholders (at different levels) to devote their resources (human, physical and fiscal) to facilitate the implementation of IPPE programme in a sustainable manner.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In this paper, we have explored that the IAE has made remarkable efforts towards implementation of the IPPE programme. The IPPE programme presents essential features for an innovative post-primary education programme to be delivered both on conventional and open and distance learning mode. However, to what are its innovativeness features are translated into actual practice remains to be explored particularly after at least a first batch of its graduates has been realised. Yet this is not without challenges.It faces a number of challenges which should be addressed. In this regard, this study puts forward the following recommendations:

1. Teachers and learners should be trained regularly to enable them to acquire skills and knowledge on innovative practices which are implemented by their institution.

2. There is a need for the distance education institutions including IAE to invest into e-learning technology so as to increase interactivity in the learning process among ODL learners themselves and between learners and their teachers. This will also, enhance efficiency in administering assessment practices by using innovative assessment tools.

3. Innovative practices should be staged more regularly over the academic year, meaning the pressure on the teachers and learners is much less intense. This does not mean that the learners are not supposed to be under pressure; instead the pressure is more consistent over the duration of the course demanding a more disciplined approach on the part of the learner.

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School Readiness for Universalisation of Secondary Education in ULDA Panchayat, East Singhbhum Jharkhand: A Search for Solution Through Open Schooling

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Abstract

Keeping in mind the importance of secondary education as inculcating children with national and international perspectives to foster responsible citizenship, the need of universalisation of secondary education has been felt by the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India. Thus the ministry has launched *Rastriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan* (RMSA), during the th 11th Five Year Plan as an extension scheme to SSA in order to provide all students with secondary education of satisfactory quality. For successful implementation of RMSA, readiness of secondary schools is one of the basic components in addition to readiness of learners. However, it seems the secondary schools incapacitate in terms of basic infrastructure and teaching faculty to accommodate learners who complete elementary schools. Thus, there is an intense need to enhance the strength of secondary education system to realize the objectives of USE. In tribal and remote areas the condition is more miserable. In the aforesaid context, the current field study was intended to throw light on the readiness of secondary schools for promoting USE in underdeveloped states like Jharkhand. The field study, delimited to Ulda *panchayat* of East Singhbhum district in Jharkhand, India reveals that for universalisation of secondary education Ulda panchayat Mahulia High School, the only high school located in the panchayat, admits students from its own panchayat as well as the adjacent ones. The scenario like this needs an immediate attention of concerned authority in terms of optimizing the teacher-pupil ratio and school-teacher ratio in the school, recruiting adequate number of subject specific teachers and improvising infrastructural facilities in proportion to number of students passing out the elementary education in its catchment area. New well-equipped high the schools or upgrading upper primary schools should be enforced in nearby panchayats. However, it may not be possible in a short period and hence, the advantage of open schooling

by National Institute of Open Schooling or State Open Schools to reach to those unreached by establishing accredited study centers in the locality can be envisaged.

Keywords: Universalisation of Secondary Education, Open Schooling, School Readiness.

Rationale of the Study

In a formal structure, education assumes several forms which are arranged in a hierarchical order‾ Pre-school, Elementary, Secondary, Senior Secondary and Higher Education. Secondary education is a transition phase between elementary and higher secondary education which prepares the child for entering the society as a responsible citizen. According to NPE (1986) revised in 1992, "Secondary education begins to expose students to the differentiated roles of science, humanities and social sciences. This is also an appropriate stage to provide children with a sense of history and national perspective and give them opportunities to understand their constitutional duties and rights as citizens."

The implementation of SSA has approached closer to achieving its goal of universalisation of elementary education. However, it has created an intense need of strengthening the capacity of secondary school system not only in states but also in the whole country to accommodate all the children coming out of the arena of elementary education. Although there is rapid increase in the number of students completing elementary school education, it is difficult to notice existence of secondary schools in proportion to the strength of these students. The existing ones are unable to accomodate all of them. Taking these into consideration Rastriya Madhyamic Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) has been launched by Ministry of Human Resource Development during the 11th plan period to achieve universal access and quality secondary education. It is the most recent initiative of Government of India for achieving the goal of Universalisation of Secondary Education (USE). USE aims at achieving the following-

♦ To provide a secondary school within a reasonable distance of any habitation, 5 kms for secondary schools and 7-10 kms for higher secondary schools.

♦ To ensure universal access of secondary education by 2017 and universal retention by 2020.

♦ To ensure that no child is deprived of secondary education of satisfactory quality due to gender, socio-economic, disability and other barriers.

♦ To ensure that all students pursuing secondary education receive education of good quality

♦ To improve quality of secondary education resulting in enhanced

intellectual, social and cultural learning (http:// www.educationforall india.com/SEMIS.html)

Four guiding principles namely universal access, equality and social justice, relevance and development, structural and curricular aspects may act as the pillars on which the edifice of universal secondary education should be built in the years to come.

Supporting the government's move, Director, Department of Primary Education, Jharkhand said that the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan (SSA) program set up by the government to bring elementary education to millions of children has been successful to a large extent. Due to successful implementation of the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, a large number of students are passing out from upper primary classes creating a huge demand for secondary education and RMSA is a revolutionary move to take secondary education to every corner of the state by ensuring a secondary school (up to class X) within a radius of 5km for every neighbourhood **(**www**.**right-to-education-india.blogspot.com/ .../jharkhand-to-upgrade-300-middle-schools.html).

Like SSA, RMSA also depends upon following five variables:

◆ Access

◆ Enrolment

◆ Retention

◆ Learning Achievement

◆ Effective Management

Until and unless all the above variables are achieved universal access and quality of secondary education would remain a dream, far away from our reach.

The basic fundamental need for successful implementation of RMSA is *Schooling Readiness* which is a broad concept consisting of two things- *Readiness of Learners* and *Readiness of Schools.* Readiness of learners means the learners coming out of elementary education system should be capacitated to continue in the secondary school whereas readiness of schools indicates that the secondary schools should beready to accommodate these students conveniently. The schools should have adequate infrastructure facilities like classrooms, play ground, library, laboratories, teaching learning materials etc. as well as sufficient human power in terms of the number of teachers in accordance with subject and the strength of the schools.(http:// www.unicef.org/education/index_44888html.,http://www.sedl.org/connections/ resources/readinesssynthesis.pdf.,www.community.nsw.gov.au/docswr/ _assets/.../school_readiness.pdf.)

In Jharkhand SSA had been implemented till 2000 and progressed somewhat as per the expectation. The objective of the Jharkhand Education Project Council (JEPC) was to achieve the goals of Universalization of Elementary Education (UEE). Universalization of Elementary Education aimed at achieving universal participation (access and enrolment), universal retention and universal achievement. Enrolment drives and rallies were organized in all the 24 districts to achieve universal access. Schools having 100 percent enrolment of children in their feeder area hoisted the SSA flags for public knowledge and transparency. (http:// www.jepc.nic.in/SSA.html.) Though SSA has been successful to a large extent yet still due to certain lags in achieving the desired objectives it has been extended. Since there is no detention policy in elementary education (http://www.education.nic.in/elementary/ Consolidated_Minutes_Education_Secretaries_28_30_Jan_2010.pdf, www.educationworldonline.net/.../pagearticlechoicemoreid2307,www.right toeducation.org/node/233) all the class VIII students emerging out of elementary system need to have entry in secondary education. The state is facing the problem of accommodating all these students in secondary schools in order to make them continue their studies. In all panchayats under different blocks of various districts of Jharkhand, some primary schools have been upgraded to elementary schools and some new upper primary schools have been established during the tenure of SSA and now attempts are being made to promote universalisation of secondary education. The department of Human Resource Development, Government of Jharkhand has made an all out effort to achieve universalisation of secondary education by launching the programme of RMSA in September 2010. The Jharkhand Government has decided to upgrade more than 300 upper primary schools to high schools with an outlay of Rs.1.19 crores. The schools are being upgraded with the aim of expanding and improving the standards of secondary education, as envisaged in the core principles of the newly launched RMSA. Besides upgrading, the State government has drawn up a parallel plan of action to fill up the vacancies of both teaching and non-teaching staff to support the academic needs of the upgraded schools. (www.right-to-education-india.blogspot. Com /.../ jharkhand-to-upgrade-300-middle-schools.html).

It may be recalled that the Union HRD Ministry has taken note of growing number of students to high schools with an outlay of Rs.1.19 crores at the upper primary school levels due to SSA project and so has planned to implement a secondary education scheme RMSA during the 11th plan at a total cost of Rs 20,120 crore. Under this scheme fund has been released, new high schools are being established and some middle schools are being upgraded to high schools. However, it seems that in Jhrakhand there are many panchayats where the condition regarding universalisation of secondary education is much precarious. Among these panchayats, there are some panchayats where there is no high school and in others there is only one high school that even have inadequate infrastructural facilities and teaching faculty. These high schools have catchment area with a radius of more than 12 -

15kms. They also admit students from other neighbourhood panchayats. Where these high schools are unable to provide adequate accommodation to the students of their own habitations, on the other hand, they also catch students from nearby habitations. This shows their incapability to accommodate all the students passing the elementary system in their own panchayat in near future.

Ulda (Mahulia) Panchayat is one of the Panchayats under Ghatsila block, East Singhbhum District, Jharkhand where there is only one high school established in 1965 i.e*. Mahulia High School* having catchment area with a radius of more than 10 kms receiving students from other nearby panchayats also (www.jepc.nic.in). Moreover, this school has inadequate infrastructure and lacks sufficient number of subject teachers, hence, it seems the existing school is unable to accept all the students coming out of the elementary education system of its own panchayat. Thus, there is a threat to USE in Ulda panchayat looking at the existence of only one secondary school in the entire locality and that too ill-equipped in terms of physical conveniences as well as teaching faculty.

Keeping in view the contexts discussed above the present field study was intended to analyse readiness of Mahulia High School for universalisation of secondary education in Ulda panchayat, East Singhbhum District, Jharkhand.

Objectives

- To find out the strength of class VIII students in different elementary schools located in Ulda panchayat

- To analyse the adequacy of infrastructure available in Mahulia High School to accommodate the students coming out of the elementary education system in Ulda panchayat by 2012

- To estimate the adequacy of teacher's composition of the high school for promoting Universalisation of Secondary Education in Ulda panchayat

- To find out the teacher-pupil ratio in the high school

- To find out the catchment area of the high school

- To analyse the students' perception about the different facilities available in the high school.

Procedure of the Study

Initially the Block Resource Centre Co-ordinator , Ghatsila was interviewed and detailed figures of different elementary schools located in Ulda panchayat and the strength of class VIII students of these schools were collected through an information sheet. Information about different high schools located in Ulda panchayat and its catchment area was also collected.

The sample for the field study included the head master of Mahulia High School and randomly selected 30 students (5 students from each of the 3 sections of class IX and X of the school). The tools for collection of data from the sample were developed. These included an interview schedule for the head master and a focus group discussion format for sample students. The tools were administered and there by the relevant facts about the field study were collected.

Findings

Mahulia High School is the only secondary school for Ulda and other nearby panchayats. Being the only school it is but natural that all the students who completed elementary school from different schools of the panchayats are supposed to be admitted to the said High School. The names of the feeder elementary schools of the high School and their student strength in class VIII are presented in table-1.

Table 1: Feeder Schools of Mahulia High School and student strength in Class VIII

Feeder Schools Under Catchment area of Mahulia High School	No. of Class VIII Students
Ulda Panchayat	
◆ M. S., Baraj Colony, Galudih	48
◆ U.M.S., Sushniguriya	54
◆ U. M. S., Chandrarekha	42
Kakrisol Panchayat	
◆ U.M.S., Kakrisol	48
◆ M.S., Vancati	52
◆ U.M.S., Sikrabanka	45
Jorisa Panchayat	
◆ M.S.,Churinda	54
◆ U.M.S., Haludbani	50
◆ U.M.S., Kalajhor	52
Total	**445**

From the information collected from Block Resource Centre Co-ordinator, Ghatsila and Head master of Mahulia High School, Mahulia it was revealed that the radius of catchment area of Mahulia High School is about 15 kms. From the above table it is clear that the school receives students from Ulda Panchayat (radius about 5 kms) where it is located as well as from other near by panchayats namely Kakrisol and Jorisa. As there are no high school in

Kakrisol and Jorisa, Mahulia high school of Ulda panchayat becomes the life line for the pass outs of elementary schools of these three panchyats. There are 9 upper primary schools (feeder schools) in these three panchayats which sums up about 445 students in class VIII. The school usually accommodates 350-400 students every year to the best of its capacity. The possible number of extra students approaching the school every year would be about 30-50. This indicates that the school is not in a position to admit all the students from the catchment area because of being incapable of accommodating the usual student strength of the school due to lack of adequate infrastructure and human power in the high school.

Mahulia High School has its *own school building* and receives *building grant* from government. The students coming from Ulda panchayat, where the school is located, has to walk about 3-5 kms. to reach the school but the students coming from other nearby panchayats have to cover 6-15 Kms. distance either by cycling or by some other conveyance.

The school has the *hostel facility* but it is exclusively for the boys. It is located within the school campus and can accommodate hardly about 60-75 students. It is found inadequate to house all willing students and thus there is no question of accommodating some more students. There is no electric, water and food supply system in the hostel. The hostelites themselves have to cook food and arrange for water from the well and hand the pump available within the school campus. A separate spacious dining hall is available but it is without adequate furniture facility. There is no activity hall or common room where the students could gather and organize any activity. There is no computer facility. There is lack of adequate maintenance of sanitation. No first aid facility is available. Even there is no residential warden in the hostel who is essentially needed to manage day to day activities of the hostel. No hostel staff is available for maintenance of the hostel and the students themselves manage their lodging and food.

As there is no *separate big hall* available for congregation of students on different occasions the school field is used for gathering of students for daily assembly, guest lecture, cultural activities etc.

There is a better *playground* for all students to play. It is big enough (6 Acres) to accommodate all the students.

In the school there is only one *notice board* and no *bulletin board*, hence the students remain deprived of important daily news enriching their knowledge.

The classroom adequacies to accommodate students and their strength in each class have been shown in table-2.

Table 2: Classrooms and their Strength and Adequacy
(in the Year 2011)

Class		Strength	Accommodability	
Class IX				
	A		165	Inadequate
Sections	B		72	Inadequate
	C		161	Inadequate
Total		**398 (133)**		
Class X				
	A		141	Inadequate
Sections	B		92	Inadequate
	C		154	Inadequate
Total		**387 (129)**		

(Figures in parentheses indicate the average number of students)

A look at the table reveals that there are three class rooms for three sections in each class IX and that too for class X. There is an average of 133 students in each section of class IX and an average of 129 students in each section of class X. The strength of each of the sections of class IX and X is very large and the class rooms do not have sufficient space and furniture to accommodate the students with convenience. The 'B' section of each of the classes-X and IX accommodates relatively less number of students in comparison to other sections because it is a Bengali medium section whereas in other two sections the medium of instruction is Hindi. This is due to comparatively less number of Bengali speaking people in the locality.

In each bench more than seven students sit which has the capacity of accommodating five students comfortably. There is no adequate space for the teacher to move around freely and pay attention on individual student inside the class. There is a large blackboard which is clearly visible from all over the class. There is a table and a chair for the teacher in each of the class rooms. There is adequate light and ventilation facility in each of the class rooms but no electric facility. Infact there is no facility of electricity in the whole school.

There is presence of *separate administrative office* and *separate academic office* to carry out administrative and academic work of the school. A *Separate staff room* is also available but it is inadequate in terms of space as well as furniture.

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There is no *activity hall* available. The school ground is used for organizing and conducting different school activities. There is no *canteen* for refreshment of students. The students often buy food from hawkers which is not fresh and nutritious. There is no *separate store room* which is essentially needed to store additional stationary materials like files, books and registers; teaching-learning materials; laboratory equipment; games and sports articles; furniture etc.

There is no *separate library*. It is also used for the purpose of storing surplus and unused school materials and is inadequate to serve as a general library. There is no qualified librarian. A teacher has been given the charge of library cum store room. There is no reading room facility for the students. There is unavailability of sufficient reference books, text books, story books and hand books for students and staff. There is inadequacy of shelves and almirhas for systematic display of books of different subjects and different standards. It is not centrally located and is inadequate to meet the necessity of the present strength of the school. In order to accommodate some more students extra facility as regards furniture, reference materials and shelves are required. About 200 tables and chairs, 80 percent more reference materials and 50 more shelves and almirhas are needed for the use of students. Above all, a more spacious and completely separate library is required for the students.

The school has a single *science laboratory* for all the streams of science- Biology, Physics and Chemistry. There is no laboratory for Mathematics. Moreover, the laboratory is devoid of adequate apparatus and equipments. There is no adequate supply of chemicals and other materials. There is no *computer* in the school. Funds have been granted for computers but due to lack of qualified computer instructor as well as unavailability of electricity, the students remain deprived of computer education.

There is no separate building for *toilets*. An open space has been temporarily covered for girls as a Lavatory. There is a separate toilet for teachers but its hygienic condition is also not satisfactory.

There is no sufficient *supply of water* and no *safe drinking water* facility available. A well and a hand pump are used for this purpose.

There is unavailability of adequate *teaching-learning materials* in different subjects. The teachers only sometimes use available teaching –learning materials for the classroom transaction.

Different subject-teachers are placed in the school. The composition of teachers is shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Teacher Composition in the School

Sl. No.	Subject Taught	Name of Teachers	General Qualification	Professional Qualification	Status in the service	Teaching Experience (in years)
1.	Maths	***A.B. Senapaty M. K. Jha	B.Sc. M.Sc.	B.Ed. B.Ed.	Permanent Temporary	15 10
2.	English	No Teacher	-	-	-	-
3.	Science	R.N.Ghosh ***A.B. Senapaty	M.Sc. B.Sc.	Untrained B.Ed.	Temporary Permanent	815
4.	Social Science	**N.C. Heranz N.S. Heranz *S.K. Mishra	M.A. M.A. B.A.	B.Ed. Untrained B.Ed.	Permanent Temporary Permanent	26 6 15
5.	Hindi	*S.K. Mishra **N. C. Heranz	B.A. M.A.	B.Ed. B.Ed.	Permanent Permanent	15 26
6.	Sanskrit	U. Sharma	M.A.	Untrained	Permanent	28

*, **, *** *the concerned teachers responsible for more than one subject*

It is clear from the information provided in the table that there is immediate need of sufficient number of qualified teachers in the school. There are only 7 teachers out of which, 4 teachers are trained and 3 are untrained, 4 teachers are permanent and 3 are temporary which indicates the poor status of the teaching faculty. However, temporary teachers have 6-10 years of teaching experience and one of them is also trained. There is no teacher available for teaching English. Lack of adequate number of subject teachers is often compensated by appointing teachers on a contractual basis and a particular subject is often taught by such teacher who is not specialised in that discipline. About 15 extra teachers in lots are essential particularly in subject areas like English, Science and Social Science for creating right teaching –learning situation in the school. The average teacher-pupil ratio in the school is 131:1 which is a major threat for effective and better learning.

Normally about 350-400 students are enrolled every year and every student whosoever apples gets admitted but the school is incapable of accommodating all the applicants due to inadequacy of infrastructure and hence, it is difficult to accommodate extra students. Inadequacy of human power is not taken into account usually.

A joint focus group discussion was conducted with 15 students each from class IX and X. Their opinions on different aspects of schooling have been presented in Table 4.

Analysis of the responses of Pupils as presented in table-4 shows that about 60 percent students come to the School from distant panchayats by cycle and bus whereas other 40 percent students come from Ulda panchayat, where the school is located, by walking. All the students unanimously expressed

that there were 7 periods per day out of which 1-2 periods remain vacant due to lack of adequate specific subject teachers, irregularity of teachers as well as unavailability of teachers due to being busy in other works. As many as 76.67 percent students expressed that the teachers regularly come to their the school where as 23.33 percent were of the opinion that the teachers were quite irregular. All students had similar views that the teachers are not much competent in teaching and explaining. The teachers did not regularly use teaching-learning materials but when used, it helped in better understanding of the subject matter by them. About 66.67 percent students did not find English teaching appealing due to unavailability of English specialised teacher. About 33.33 percent students were of the view that science teaching not up to the mark. Due to lack of sufficient number of science teachers, inadequate use of teaching-learning materials and insufficient demonstration and practical classes science teaching was suffered a lot. There was lack of adequate equipment and apparatus required for practical science classes. Moreover, the same laboratory was used for all the branches of science and the teacher was incompetent in transacting in a systematic way.

Table 4: Students' Perception about different School Facilities (N=30)

Different School Facilities	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Accessibility of the high school		
♦ Only high school which is accessible	18	60
♦ Nearby the habitation	12	40
Means of Transportation		
♦ By cycling	10	33.33
♦ By bus	8	26.67
♦ By walking	12	40
No. of periods per day		
♦ 7 Periods Per Day	30	100
No. of unattended periods by teachers per day		
♦ 1-2 Periods per Day	30	100
Periods remaining vacant due to-		
♦ Lack of specific subject teachers	15	30
♦ Irregularity of teachers	12	40
♦ Unavailability of teachers due to being busy in other works	3	10
Regularity of teachers	23	76.67
Subject in which teaching does not appeal		
♦ English	20	66.67
♦ Science	10	33.33
Activities out of the school		
♦ Outdoor games (Football, Athletics)	27	90
♦ Inter-school quiz and Essay competition	12	40
Use of teaching-learning materials in the class		
♦ Regularity	0	0.0
♦ Irregularity	30	100
Inadequacy of furniture in the classroom	30	100
Inadequacy of toilet facility	30	100
Adequacy of classroom blackboard	30	100
'Presence of teachers' table and chair in the classroom	30	100
Unavailability of safe drinking water	30	100
Availability of playground	30	100

There was no separate building for toilets. An open space had been covered for the purpose of lavatory for girls. All students were of the view that there was no adequate furniture facility in the classroom. On a single bench 8, some times even 9 students have to be accommodated. Hence, they did not find free and comfortable space for reading and writing which in turn affect their learning. According to all students blackboard was large enough and clearly visible to all students and a table and chair were provided for the teacher in each of the class rooms. All students opined that there was lack of availability of safe drinking water. A well and a hand pump were used for this purpose. They all expressed that there was a big play ground in the school for physical exercises, playing football, kho-kho. Kabaddi and other athletic games which were a major source of recreation for them.

Conclusion:

Now it is an established fact that Mahulia High School is not ready enough to accommodate the load of the students who will pass out the elementary school system in Ulda panchayat by 2012. It is not capable of accommodating the load from with respect to infrastructural facilities and teaching faculty in general. The school needs to be self sufficient in terms of classrooms, library, laboratory, teaching-learning materials and its use in the classroom process, furniture, hostel facility, separate toilet for boys and girls, water and electricity facilities.

In terms of teachers strength sufficient number of qualified and competent teachers need be recruited for different subjects. They should be competent enough to meet subject specific pedagogic demand as well as controlling the adolescents who are in formal operational cognitive stage, very much vibrant physically, intellectually, socially, and emotionally.

The nature of the subject and student characteristics at this level require the learners to be handled with care for which the teacher-student ratio and school-teacher ratio need to be seriously relooked.

Mahulia high school has immense load in terms of providing secondary education to all students coming out of the elementary school system not only in its own panchayat but also in other panchayats under its catchment area. Until and unless, new well-equipped high schools are established in nearby panchayats i.e. Kakrisol and Jorisa, it is difficult for Mahulia High School itself to become self sufficient with respect to both infrastructure and teacher composition, the school will not be capable of promoting universalisation of secondary education in Ulda panchayat.

Under these circumstances to tackle the educational problems of universalisation of secondary education the alternative mode i.e. open schooling system has a definite role to play. The National Institute of Open

Schooling and the State Open Schools can play an effective role in this regard. The NIOS offers curriculum through open and distance learning mode equivalent to other state and national level Boards. The Accredited Institutions can be organized through govt., non government and private organizations. The out of school children after completion of elementary schools can be enrolled in NIOS system. RMSA has prescribed a definite role for NIOS in the process of universalisation of secondary education. The human power needed for the purpose and infrastructure can be made available in the structured institutions. There are academic and vocational education facilities prescribed for learners at Secondary and Senior Secondary stage. Being enrolled in the system the learners can otherwise be engaged to earn even which will help them in their future progress. The places like Ulda panchayat, Kakrisol and Jorisa where secondary schools are not available as per the prescription of RMSA or due to lack of physical and socio-economical opportunities this alternative can be popularized so as to achieve universalisation of secondary education in the country.

Suggested Action Plans for Open School System

To make the programmes of NIOS/SOS directed towards rural settings like Ulda, Kakrisol and Jorisa panchayats an action plan is suggested for making the secondary education system accessible to the unreached in practical sense of the term.

Setting a unit/cell at the headquarters, to monitor specially the activities to be taken up relating to access, enrolment, learning progress and evaluation of the unreached learners even at the remote areas, it should be under the leadership of a competent officer and supporting staff.

A unit/cell at the regional office under the leadership of a competent officer and supporting staff need be set up for monitoring activities in the whole of the region.

An academic officer need be placed at the district level with special orientation to reach near the unreached at Block/Village level. These specific efforts may be an effort to combat the feeling of availing the ODL mode in urban setup and facilitating it in rural context even.

Whole of the machinery would aim at advocating effective implementation of the ODL programme of secondary and sr. secondary education at grass roots (Block/Village) level

Establishing study centers in NGO, BRC, local secondary schools, upper primary schools etc. considering availability of human power and infrastructure facilities need be considered.

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Assessment of Quality Guidelines in Open and Distance Education : A Case Study

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Abstract

Open and distance learning (ODL) is becoming an effective way of acquiring knowledge in the whole world. It gives learners control of time, place, and pace of learning, often characterized as flexible learning. This learning system is now taking part in the mind of prospective learners instead of face to face or the conventional system due to advanced technology. There seem to be arguments that open and distance education institutions will need to make adjustments to their academic structures, to their methods of teaching, and to the systems by which they deliver their courses to ensure quality. In order to maintain quality there is a need for a system of quality assurance. A systematic and consistent quality Assurance (QA) system helps to establish an institution's good reputation and image. In this paper an attempt has been made to assess the QA measurement factors from my experience that I have gathered during my AAOU (Asian Association of Open Universities) fellowship program me in Wawasan Open University (WOU) in Malaysia. So this article presents a case study in assessing quality assurance guidelines that are followed in WOU and after modification to fit those in this case study context assessment of those factors was done in Bangladesh Open University (BOU) to ensure quality assurance in open and distance learning system.

Keywords: Open and Distance Education, Quality, Quality Assurance, Quality Assurance Guidelines.

Introduction

The use of open and distance education has been increasing dramatically in recent years. The growth of distance education reflects the need for courses among students who are not able to participate traditional face –to –face courses (Beldarrian, 2006). Due to technological development the last two decades have seen a significant increase in different forms of education and as a new education provider ODL that have a global impact emerged. Quality is an incremental process (Daniel, 2005) involving continuous development along with the development of ODL institutions. Throughout academia there

is a considerable dialogue about what constitutes quality in ODL and how to ensure it. Quality is important in the delivery of all courses and programs in open and distance education, regardless of the environment in which they are delivered. Being quality minded in education means caring about the goals, desires and interests of customers and making sure they are met (Whitaker and Moses, 1994). Quality means freedom of deficiencies – freedom from errors that require rework, customer dissatisfaction, customer claims, et cetra (Freeman, 1993). Quality measurement focuses on achieving quality and can be defined as a philosophy and guiding principles intended to meet the needs and expectations of those involved in ODL. Some authors argue that the quality of the services provided by higher educational institution has been uninfluenced and under-research and that the usefulness of investigating students expectations and preferences of service delivery has been neglected (Stevenson et al., 1996; Stevenson and Sander, 1998). Moreover distance educators have always been concerned about quality in course design and student support. The assessment of the quality of learning program comes at a time when concern of the quality assurance in ODL is perhaps at all time a burning issue. Quality is essentially about learning what are we doing well and how to do it better. Quality assurance, which is the process for determining a level of achievement, a standard against which to judge others is defined as fitness for purpose and fitness of purpose. While fitness for purpose is related to the university's mission, i.e., what the universities have set for themselves; fitness of purpose refers to their capacity to satisfy the national goal of higher education (WOU Handbook, 2010).

Review of the Literature

Different organizations have developed principles, guidelines, or benchmarks to ensure quality of distance education. Many quality assurance agencies have responded to the need of quality assurance in ODL and there is considerable dialogue about assessing quality in distance education. In USA ,the Institute for Higher Education Policy has come out with 24 benchmarks that cover seven aspects considered essential to ensuring excellence in internet based distance learning –Institutional Support, Course development, Teaching/Learning, Course Structure, Student Support, Faculty Support and Evaluation and Assessment (IHEP, 2000). New guidelines arranged under the six categories where quality assurance is likely to require attention for distance learning in higher education have been published by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) of UK (QAA, 2002). They are: System design, Program design, Approval and review, The management of program delivery, Student development and support, Student communication and representation, Student assessment.

In his work Nielson, (1997) classified these approaches to quality assessment: objectivist, relativist and developmental. Objectivist approach pass rates or

learner drop-out rates into account. Secondly the relativist approach compares programs between distance education institutions with those of residential universities. Last of all the developmental approach aims at identifying problems in the program offered and finding solutions for them. It involves cycles of critical reflection and dialogue between educators and learners which could be seen more as a means of quality assurance than quality assessment. In another work to explain quality assurance Tait, (1993) identified a team approach where collaborative, non-hierarchical teams works and rework drafts of material and the collection of the feedback from learners as a possible means of quality assurance activities.

The seven step outlined model derived from the expectation led planned organization quality assurance model (ELPO) of quality assurance using students expectations of tutor support needs published in open learning (Stevenson, et al., 1997) involves (a) students asked to provide expectations of tutors support before course begins; (b) tutor considers student expectations, reflects upon them, and discusses mutually agreed strategies with students at 1st tutorials; (c) Tutors deliver tutorials and provide the agreed support; (d) Students are contracted by HQ mid courses and asked to return questionnaire assessing tutor support they have received thus far; (e) Tutors getfeedback satisfaction rating from students along with a list of any unmet service or suggestions how the service might be improved; (f) Tutors consider any student suggestions indicating to HQ any changes to be made, and (g) Students provide overall assessment of tutor support over the course to HQ with satisfaction ratings feedback to tutor. HQ offers support at training to tutors with low quality ratings.

The model of quality assurance of Open and Distance Learning (ODL) student –tutor support needs, using students' expectations, reported here can also be found in a paper describing in a comparative study of European distance education provision   where the authors conclude:

> *"Students expectations of tutor support are difficult to compare across culturally different institutions that employ very different methods of conducting ODL. Nevertheless individual institutions and individual tutors within those institutions can benefit from researching and reflecting upon their student' expectations. We believe that the system we have outlined here for accessing and responding to students expectations as an important and valuable outcome of this study. We also believe that the appropriate use of questionnaires operating in a professional supportive environment can assist in improving the quality of learning and tutorial support provided by ODL institutions (and experienced by ODL students) throughout Europe. We hope that further work using the system suggested here will demonstrate the value of this approach"* (Stevenson et al., 2000).

So quality assurance in ODL has caused a series of concerns to the academic, institution, academician, practitioners, governments, other stakeholders, and quality assurance agencies about the safety of elements being causes for quality.

Objectives of the Study

The purpose of the present study was to measure the quality assurance guidelines perceived by the students, faculty and the administrators for distance courses in ODL. To make that measurement following objectives were addressed.

1. To identify the information to students, faculty and administrators frequently consider ensuring quality assurance in ODL.

2. To identify the level of response in order of agreement with the requirements associated with quality assurance in ODL.

3. To describe the inter-relationship among the respondents regarding the requirements associated with quality assurance in ODL.

Methodology

This study focused on the level agreement among the students, faculty and administrators engaged in ODL system. No published instrument was found suitable. In this study a structured questionnaire was designed and collected opinion from different stakeholders i.e., teachers, students and administrators who are closely related with open and distance learning system in Bangladesh Open University (BOU). In this survey, data was collected from 50 teachers, 50 students, and 50 administrators. The researcher designed the same questionnaire for different stakeholders and collected the opinion on the same issue. Here five points Likert scale was used in this research. This scale consists of 9 variables and scoring was done by assigning 5 points to strongly agree, 4 to agree, 3 to neither agree nor disagree, 2 to disagree and 1 to strongly disagree on the following factors:

i.   Vision, mission, educational goals and learning outcomes.

ii.   Sound curriculum design and delivery system.

iii.   Continuous assessment of students.

iv.   Credibility of student selection process and proper student support services.

v.   Recruitment of qualified academic staff.

vi.   Adequate educational resources.

vii.   Continuous program monitoring and review system.

viii. Efficient leadership, good governance and administration.

ix.   Total continual quality improvements.

Finally the researcher measures the quality assurance guidelines on the above factors from the weightage given by the respondents. Secondary data was collected from different journals, websites, books, quality related handbooks and different papers collected from Wawasan Open University (WOU) in Malaysia.

Analysis and Discussion

The purpose of this section is to measure a number of factors in quality assurance of ODL. The focus is not to discuss the problems of quality assurance in general; rather the variables /aspects that are distinctly related to distance education and the extent to which respondents agree in the context of distance education are discussed here.

Table: 1 Percentage Tutor responses to questions about the quality assurance guidelines (n =50) *[Figure in the parenthesis indicates percentage].*

Respondents	Tutors					
	Scales					
Factors	Strongly agree=5	Agree=4	Neither Agree nor Disagree=3	Disagree = 2	Strongly Disagree = 1	Total
Vision, mission, educational goals and learning outcomes	34(68%)	10(20%)	5(10%)	1(2%)	—	50(100%)
Sound curriculum design and delivery system	29(58%)	13(26%)	6(12%)	2(4%)	—	50(100%)
Recruitment of qualified academic staff.	29(58%)	13(26%)	5(10%)	3(6%)	—	50(100%)
Efficient leadership, good governance and administration	28(56%)	14(28%)	6(12%)	2(4%)	—	50(100%)
Credibility of student selection process and proper student support services.	28(56%)	13(26%)	6(12%)	3(6%)	—	50(100%)
Adequate educational resources.	26(52%)	14(28%)	7(14%)	3(6%)	—	50(100%)
Continuous program monitoring and review system	25(50%)	16(32%)	7(14%)	2(4%)	—	50(100%)
Continuous assessment of students 50(100%)	24(48%)	17(34%)	7(14%)	1(2%)	1(2%)	
Total continual quality improvements 50(100%)	23(46%)	19(38%)	6(12%)	2(4%)	—	

Source: Personal Survey

From Table 1 it can be shown that 68 percent of the respondents strongly agreed that vision, mission, educational goals and learning outcomes is the mostl necessary and important factor. On the same factor 20 percent respondents agreed and 10 percent respondents showed their neutrality on this factor, whereas only 2 percent of tutors showed the opinion to disagree with the other respondents. Nobody of the total respondents among teachers strongly disagree with the mentioned factor. The Highest number of respondents 29(58%) gave emphasis or showed strongly agree opinion about different two factors which are sound curriculum design and delivery system and recruitment of qualified academic staff. Just more than fifty percent (56%) teachers showed the strongly agree opinion about efficient leadership, good governance and administration; and credibility of student selection process and proper student support services. Close to fifty percent 23(46%) respondents opined that a total continual quality improvement is necessary for quality assurance in ODL which ranked the least one. Moreover only 2 percent of the respondent showed the strongly disagree opinion on the factor continuous assessment of students. On the basis of the response of the respondents it is to be mentioned here that 46 to 68 percent of the respondents showed their strongly agree opinion on different factors. 20 to 38 percent respondents showed the opinion on the agree factor and only 2 percent of the total respondents strongly disagree with one factor which is continuous assessment of students.

Respondents	Tutors					
	Scales					
Factors	Strongly agree=5	Agree=4	Neither Agree nor Disagree=3	Disagree = 2	Strongly Disagree = 1	Total
Vision, mission, educational goals and learning outcomes	32(64%)	10(20%)	4(8%)	4(8%)	—	50(100%)
Sound curriculum design and delivery system	33(66%)	8(16%)	5(10%)	4(8%)	—	50(100%)
Recruitment of qualified academic staff.	32(64%)	9(18%)	6(12%)	3(6%)	—	50(100%)
Efficient leadership, good governance and administration	27(54%)	13(26%)	7(14%)	3(6%)	—	50(100%)
Credibility of student selection process and proper student support services.	30(60%)	12(24%)	7(14%)	1(2%)	—	50(100%)
Adequate educational resources	30(60%)	12(24%)	6(12%)	2(4%)	—	50(100%)
Continuous program monitoring and review system	26(52%)	13(26%)	8(16%)	3(6%)	—	50(100%)
Continuous assessment of students	28(56%)	12(24%)	6(12%)	2(4%)	2(4%)	50(100%)
Total continual quality improvements	25(50%)	14(28%)	10(20%)	1(2%)	—	50(100%)

Source: Personal Survey

Table 2 revealed that the mostly needed factor is sound curriculum design and delivery system which carried the strongly agree opinion of 33(66%) students. On the same factor 16 percent of the respondent agreed and 10 percent showed the neutrality opinion whereas 8 percent showed their disagree opinion and nobody showed strongly disagree opinion. 32 (64%) respondents showed their strongly agree opinion on different two factors which are vision, mission, educational goals and learning outcomes; and recruitment of qualified academic staff. Exactly 60 percent of the students showed the strongly agree opinion on both the factors credibility of student selection process and proper student support services; and adequate educational resources respectively. Half of the total respondents 25(50%) of students strongly agree with the factor total continual quality improvements. 16 percent to 28 percent of the students showed the agree opinion and 8 percent to 20 percent students showed their neutrality about the different factors mentioned in the Table 2. Here 2(4%) of the respondent strongly disagree about continuous assessment of students.

Table: 3. Percentage Administrator responses to questions about the quality assurance guidelines (n =50) *[Figure in the parenthesis indicates percentage].*

Respondents	Tutors					
	Scales					
Factors	Strongly agree=5	Agree=4	Neither Agree nor Disagree=3	Disagree = 2	Strongly Disagree = 1	Total
Vision, mission, educational goals and learning outcomes	31(62%)	9(18%)	7(14%)	3(6%)	—	50(100%)
Sound curriculum design and delivery system	32(64%)	9(18%)	8(16%)	1(2%)	—	50(100%)
Recruitment of qualified academic staff.	30(60%)	10(20%)	8(16%)	2(4%)	—	50(100%)
Efficient leadership, good governance and administration	27(54%)	10(20%)	10(20%)	3(6%)	—	50(100%)
Credibility of student selection process and proper student support services.	28(56%)	11(22%)	9(18%)	1(2%)	1(2%)	50(100%)
Adequate educational resources.	29(58%)	11(22%)	7(14%)	3(6%)	—	50(100%)
Continuous program monitoring and review system	26(52%)	14(28%)	8(16%)	2(4%)	—	50(100%)
Continuous assessment of students	28(56%)	10(20%)	10(20%)	2(4%)	—	50(100%)
Total continual quality improvements	25(50%)	14(28%)	9(18%)	2(4%)	—	50(100%)

Source: Personal Survey

Table 3 showed the opinion of administrators about different factors which are necessary for quality assurance in open and distance learning. Most of the respondents 32(64%) thought that sound curriculum design and delivery is mostly needed so that they gave strongly agree opinion on this factor. Here 9 (18%) respondents agreed and 8 (16%) showed their neutrality opinion on the same factor and only 2 percent showed the disagree opinion. Hence 25(50%) respondents showed their strongly agree opinion about total continual quality improvements which is the least number among the strongly agreed respondents. 18 percent to 28 percent of the total respondents showed the agree opinion on different factors where 14 percent to 20 percent showed the neutrality. Only 2 percent of the respondents showed strongly disagree opinion about credibility of student selection process and proper student support services.

Conclusion

This study found some similarities and differences in order of their agreement among students, tutors and administrators regarding the quality assurance guidelines. The response provided by the respondents yielded mainly factors, such as, Sound curriculum design and delivery system; Recruitment of qualified academic staff.; Adequate educational resources; Credibility of student selection process and proper student support services; Continuous assessment of students; Efficient leadership, good governance and administration.; Continuous program monitoring and review system; and Total continual quality improvements etc to assess the design of quality assurance guidelines in open and distance learning. This confirms that the guidelines followed in WOU to ensure quality assurance is agreed with a degree of variations by the respondents in this case study.   The findings also suggest that open and distance learning students, tutors, and administrators share their agreement and concern with the quality assurance guidelines and quantifiable factors and criteria seem to be given much weight compared to those that are more qualitative and that are more open to scholarly discretion. So under this study nine quality assurance factors were assessed that influence the choice and priority in ranking quality assurance in open and distance education. The quality dimensions were assessed that could assist academic institutions to design appropriately quality assurance system to attract a sustainable and a large share of higher education in open and distance learning and to protect students and other stakeholders from the low quality education providers as well as to encourage the development of quality that meets the need of open and distance learning.   This study has indicated that there is a variation to comply in the level of agreement in all respects with the requirements of quality assurance. In preparation of quality assurance guidelines, Bangladesh Open University needs to attempt to close the gaps and address those factors of non –compliance and low compliance in agreement.

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Skill Development Education Through ICT (ODL)

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Abstract

All education today is marked by a rapid increase in the use of technology across levels, setting and modes. Be it primary, secondary, higher or technical education; lifelong learning or skill development, in formal or non-formal contexts and indeed whether in a face-to-face setting or in an open and distance learning (ODL) mode, technology informs all aspects. If you see the correct scenario you will find that there is a flood of advanced technology all over the globe but our education system is not benefiting due to the lack of information and knowledge of student, teacher, organization and the administration. The 21st century is the century of IT revolution. To meet the challenges of time ICT are a major factor in shaping the new global economy and producing rapid changes in society. Computer ETV, internet, E-mail, print and electronic media, digital devices, FM Radio etc. E-Learning in naturally suited to instant learning and flexible learning. In a highly competitive, multicultural workplace, integrated skills and personal qualities are in great demand. Technical innovations have altered the way work is performed and new management processes have changed the way people perform it.

Keywords: E-Learning, Education Reform, Framework design, Appropriate Technology

Introduction

An engineer earns a higher wage or salary than a workers, who works in the factory. Why? Because an engineer has skills and abilities to generate more output; the worker in the factory does not have this skill; therefore, he is paid much less, skill is valued, because it contributes to the process of production by raising the level of efficiency or level of productivity.

"Educational technology is an applied or practical study which aims at maximizing educational effect by 'Controlling' such relevant facts as educational purposes, educational content, teaching materials, educational method, educational environment, conduct of students, behaviour of instructors and interrelation between students and instructors " – Takashi Sakamato.

All education today is marked by a rapid increase in the use of technology across levels, setting and modes. Be it primary, secondary, higher or technical education, lifelong learning or skill development, in formal or non-formal Contexts and indeed whether in a face-to-face setting or in an open and distance learning (ODL) mode, technology informs all aspects. Even though technology, in term of the software packages and hardware used to create and deliver learning materials has seen continuous improvements and innovations with corresponding standard of measurement, quality of the content remains an area of concern.

Background

Vocational education has been accorded high priority in the *National Policy on Education,1986*. The NPE, 1986 inter alia states "The introduction of systematic, well planned and rigorously implemented programme of vocational education is crucial in the proposed educational re-organization…. Vocational education will be a distinct stream intended to prepare students for identified vocations, spanning several areas of activity". The NPE, 1986 set the target, to cover 10% higher secondary students under vocational courses by 1990 and 25% by 1995. The POA,1992 reset the targets of diversification of students in vocational streams at + 2 level to 10% by 1995 and 25% by 2000.

Objectives

✦   To ascertain the role of ICT (ODL) skill development.

✦   To explore the benefits of technology in education.

✦   To identity the appropriate technology for Open Schooling

✦   To identity factors which are responsible for limitations in the expansion of ODL technology.

✦   To evaluate the role and responsibilities of stake holders for skill development.

✦   To suggest the appropriate strategies and technology to make the best use of ICT for ODL education.

Need for revamping Vocational Education Programme

The following statistics give an overview of the present status of Secondary and Higher Secondary Schools and enrolment of students in the country in the year 2008-09:

1.	No. of Secondary Schools*	1,23,265
2.	No. of Higher Secondary Schools*	60,383
3.	No. of Students at Secondary level (Classes IX-X)*	2.89 crore
4.	No. of Students at Higher Secondary level (Classes XI-XII)*	1.66crore
5.	Projected Population of 14-16 age group**	4.84 crore
6.	Projected Population of 16-18 age group**	4.86crore

*Source: *Selected Educational Statistics (2008-09)–provisional data,**Census (2001)*

Methodology

The study was conducted in selected cities of UP and Uttarakhand viz. Noida, Ghaziabad, Meerut, Haridwar, Kashipur, Dehradun, in each city, we have selected to respondents (Student, School management, Industry management & society) for research work only. Each group of forty respondents is divided in four segments for collecting primary data, a structured questionnaire was administered on a sample of 240 respondents; when all of the 240 questionnaire were compiled, the data was entered in EXCEL. The data was sorted and analyzed by SPSS program. By a thorough review of literature from secondary sources. The paper examines benefits of technology, identifying appropriate technology, role and responsibilities of stake holders. The goal of this paper is to outline how technology can help to create a vocational education system. In the paper we have analyzed the data derived from the survey of the secondary school and other stake holders of India.

Benefits of Technology in Education

Now, in order to convenience the teacher, student and management to use information technology in education we need to share the following benefits:

Table – 1: Title needed (% of Fully agreed)

S.N.	Detail of benefits	Student	School & etc.	Industry	Society
1	Increase in job opportunities	96	100	100	89
2	Goods career opportunities	83	100	100	81
3	Low Cost	24	97	91	39
4	Hire skilled development	76	94	98	68
5	Higher productivity	81	96	87	83
6	Image improvement	93	99	95	91
7	Saved cost	83	93	98	78
8	Flexibility and mobility	79	89	91	82
9	Work/job satisfaction	66	97	84	61
10	Increase of leaving standard	87	98	92	83
11	Drop-out Less	51	62	59	56
12	Improved earnings	89	98	94	92
13	Increase in Tax Income	95	99	100	96
14	Personal development	92	100	100	91
15	Improvement in efficiency	98	100	100	96
16	Innovative skills/inventive thinking	49	94	66	52
17	Social Justice/equality	43	91	93	53
18	Increase Academic standard	66	100	69	64
19	Updating information/Global Awareness	88	100	69	64
20	Research & Development	70	100	87	66

Source: Self Survey

The Table 1 show that use of technology is the only way that has capability to handle integrated education on the basis of cost pens learner is a huge difference in the average cost per learner funded the government between academic and vocational education. The use of technology in crease in job, income, Image, learning standard, earnings, Revenue, efficiency and standard etc. Organization use technology in general and IT in particular to become more efficient, more effective and to innovate. Almost every aspect of the education and business was supported by or based on Technology. So use of the technology is benefits to all stake holders.

Education Without Technology Versus Education With Technology

To measure the benefits of using information technology we are dividing education into two categories. If we impart education without technology or education with technology then these are the outcomes:-

Table 2: Title needed

Education without technology	Education with technology
It is Passive.	It is Active
It is formal.	It is informal.
It is instructor driven.	It is student driven.
It is time dependent.	It is not time dependent.
Content defined by others.	Content defined by students.
Grade is given only after final evaluation	Up clear to me
Not all the students fully participate.	All students fully participate

Limitations in the expansion of technology used

Technology is used all over the globe but our education system in not benefit due to the lack of information of stake holders. The students have their own restrictions, school have their own and the administration (Government) also admits the fact that the education system really in poor shape today. There are same limitation ranking is given below:-

Table- 3 : Limitions in the expansion of technology used

<div align="right">(Factor Ranking)</div>

S.N.	Factors	Rank	% of 1st Rank
1	Lack of Infrastructure/ Programme	1	21
2	Lack of Government Fund	2	18
3	Shortage of Trained Personnel	3	16
4	Lack of interest (Administrative/other)	4	13
5	Lack of coordination	5	10
6	Lack of continuous updating	6	08
7	Lack of renewal of course	7	06
8	Lack of proper software	8	04
9	Technology	9	03
10	Lack of training programme	10	01

Source:- Self Survey

The Table – 3 Shown that 21% Learner agree with lack of infrastructure/ programme factors. Rank 2 factor is lack of government fund.

Identifying appropriate technology

There are a number of techonologies which can be used in Vocational Education system. With the development of new Tecnologies, more methods of delivery can be used now. The table below provides a possibe combination of different Vocational learning methods and technology used :

Teaching/Learning Method	Type of Education Technology						
	Face-to-Face	Video (TV, VHS)	Audio (Radio, Acasst, Telcom)	Online	Print	Email	CD Room
Lecture							
Seminar							
Tutorial							
Independent study							
Group							

VHS= Video home service (video cassette), = Video conference,

Acasst= Audio cassette, Telcon= Teleconference

Multimedia has been a part of our lives for a long time. The animation and graphics that you watch on telvevision, in movies and advertisements are examples of multimedia. The term multimedia can be defined as the integation of sound, animation, image, vedeo and text with technology. In the last few years, multimedia has been widely used in the field of education. The benefits of multimedia are as follows:

Interactive.

Radical developments.

Longer retention.

Faster recall.

Complex topics in a user-friendly manner.

Self assessments.

Immediate feedback.

Monitor their own progress.

Students to learn concepts at their own place.

Topic repeatedls until they are confident of their understanding.

Evaluation/analysis of roles and responsibilities of stakeholders

Table 5: Title needed

Name of Stake holders/ Factors	Remark for performance
1. Central /State or local level	
a) Policy planning-statistics gathering (Data Bank).	Dissatisfied
b) Capacity building of social partners.	Dissatisfied
c) Enabling environment for stake holders. Dissatisfied	
d) Setting up of monitoring of information.	Dissatisfied
e) Facilitating international co-operation. Fully dissatisfied	
f) Financing mechanism	Dissatisfied

2. Employers/industries:		
a)	Skill demand analysis and curriculum development.	Dissatisfied
b)	Participation in examination and certification. Dissatisfied	
c)	Owning Skill Development activities.	Satisfied
d)	Investing in skill development activities.	Satisfied
e)	Sharing of work place experience, machinery and equipment.	Satisfied
f)	Support by way of physical, financial and human resources.	Dissatisfied
3. Trade unions:		
a)	Facilitate improving status	Dissatisfied
b)	Raising awareness about the benefit of training	Satisfied
c)	Running special skill development institutes	Fully dissatisfied
d)	Promoting investment on skill development	Dissatisfied
e)	Assist in course designing.	Dissatisfied
f)	Assist in developing competency standards.	Dissatisfied
4. School/ Civil society organizations:		
a)	Raising awareness.	Satisfied
b)	Facilitate improving status	Satisfied
c)	Promoting dignity of labour among the public	Satisfied
d)	Sharing experience of learning with others.	Fully Satisfied
e)	Implementing skill development programmes	Dissatisfied
f)	Assist in developing competency standards	Dissatisfied

Framework for use of Technology in providing education

All education today is marked by a rapid increase in the use of technology across levels, setting and modes. Be it Primary, Secondary, Higher or Technical Education; lifelong learning or skill development, in formal or non-formal contexts and indeed whether in a face-to-face setting or in an open and distance learning (ODL) mode, technology informs all aspects. Even though

technology in terms of the software packages and hardware used to create and deliver learning materials has seen continuous improvements and innovations with corresponding standard of measurement, quality of the content remains an area of concern. These is very little by way of assurance or assessment standards available to teachers, developers or and end users that guide or help them determine or identifying the quality of the learning technology that are developed and used, especially in terms of its pedagogic value. Technology refers to computer based learning material which is made available to an individual or a group either online or offline and involves an integration of two or more digital media or technology such as text, images, sound, video, animation, etc. so as to promote effective and quality learning. Steps for framework are as follows:

i) Establishment, Planning, Identifying and Analysis phase/step

    a) Defining the learning needs, identifying the technology need and other needs from the perspective of different stakeholders (Learners-age group 14 to18 and above 18; Subject Expert; Industry – technical, Service and other; Practitioners, teachers, Government and other policy makers.

Areas needing training technology are generally broken down into:

- Knowledge - for the person who does not know.

- Skill - for the person who know but can't do.

- Attitudes - for the person who does not care.

- Habits - for the person who knows, can do, cares but just has not made the desired behaviour part of his daily routine.

- Understanding- for the person who is not properly motivated to accept what he is told.

    According to another classification, the important areas which may need education technology are:

- Technical skills and knowledge – manual skills, safety, equipment, operation etc.

- Knowledge of organization and external systems.

- Conceptual and interpersonal skills - Communications, planning etc.

    b) Establishment of Vocational Training provider Institutions ; Study Centres, Virtual Learning classrooms, Web Management Service, ICT Division, Digital Library, Technical Institutions; Collaborations Systems; Data input & output Bank; Technology implementation and linking Centre etc .

    c)   Planning for technology mechanism, budget, goal & objectives, Target group, Curriculum, Quality and Empowerment etc.

ii) Design and development phase

The design Phase considers three sub processes - Instructional Design Strategy, Visual Design and Technical Design. Most of these technology have been developed after an initial survey of the demand for such skills. Technology are specially prepared by experts drawn from different well reputed Vocational & Academic Institutions; Technical University, NVEQF, VET and Industries all over the country as well as in NIOS faculty. These technologies are scrutinized by content experts, supervised by the instructors/unit designers and edited by content languages editors and format editors before they are finally sent for printing. Similarly, audio and video cassettes are produced in consultation with content experts, ICT experts, Industries experts in NIOS faculty and EMPC experts. The technology, thus, prepared is previewed and reviewed by the NIOS faculty as well as outside ICT experts and edited/modified, wherever necessary, before they are finally dispatched to the study centres and downloaded on internet. The technology is aimed at developing competency and skill so that one can share the responsibility of preparing skilled people for diverse situations by using a variety of instrumentalities, including ICTs. The other focused areas including the role of skilled people is changing global socio-economic concerns, Organization of Secondary education in the country, understanding technology in a comparative perspective, meeting the requirements of 'Vocational & Academic Education for all' and ' Training for all' and preparing skilled people to meet the challenges of the 21st century. To achieve this comprehensive goal/objective, the technology seeks to:

- Develop specialized knowledge.

- Develop a working knowledge.

- Develop ability to apply this knowledge and skills.

- Generate awareness and understanding of Vocational education , measurement and evaluation and responsibility.

iii) Deployment Phase putting the technology into action

Technology delivery strategy provides a step-by-step road map for effective implementation that is complete in all respects. In certain case the design and development team would not be a part of implementation process. Technical, content and business methods followed to ensure such durability and reusability is documented. The Delivery mechanisms in term of hardware and software requirements for use of technology is providing education.

iv) Feedback Phase to measure effectiveness, recommendation for technology improvident

Assessing the efficacy of technology and testing strategy is clearly stated and comprehensively covers all key aspects of the testing framework, Evaluation framework a comprehensive approach that outlines the objectives and scope of evaluation, defines the tools and techniques to be used, includes objectively constructed valid and reliable tools of assessment and provides for obtaining feedback from the relevant sources so as to make modification in the technology. An Evaluation - questionnaire is used for assessing the efficacy of technology. Systematic mechanism for improvement/ modification based on feedback is outlined and used for regular technology upgrades.

Conclusion

Use of technology in vocational and technical education has a tremendous amount to offer the new world of work because it is responsive flexible, fosters skills learning, and be set up in away that fosters teamwork and allows the immediate transfer of skill with workplace based learning open learning also survival in today's world public initiative can solve this problem to some extent. Government can allow NIOS to use a repartee television channel or 04-05 houses in the Ghayanvani TV channel the same thing can be done in case of DTH an FM radio. In This paper, we report a framework, benefits of vocational education and technology, limitations in the expansion of technology, identifying appropriate technology, we advocate that such an approach truly utilizes existing technology for realizing cognitive and constructivism concepts to enhance learning in the 21st century further research effort and infrastructure are needed, refine the education system. There can be no substitute for this.

Strategies/ Suggestion for promoting use of technology in Vocational Education

- Administration Support for utilization of new technologies.

- Readily available technical assistance.

- Accessibilities of new technologies, computer etc. to both teachers and students.

- Involvement of teachers in planning classroom use of statewide technologies and learning environment.

- ICT technology will be especially effective when combined with other technology.

- Provide a short foundation course.

■ When planning curriculum, ensures that it is congruent with the educational vision the culture and the context of each region both locally an globally. Develop the vision and standards in stages.

■ Establish the BPO in school, village and city.

■ A national level Board for vocational education should be established.

SSC (vocational) or its equivalent 10th grade certification in vocational stream should be created on similar lines as HSC (Vocational) at both national and state level. Vocational Stream should be introduced at 8th Grade through Bivalent Schools which may provide both conventional and vocational stream of education at secondary level.

11 Industry participation shall be sought on the Board of Management. Industry representatives will be involved in governance and curriculum design. Production oriented Research and Innovation Labs will be set up in collaboration with Industry to promote regional economic growth.

■ Private Participation from Industry and other players must be encouraged and is critical for the success of the vocational education growth in India. Industry participation must be at all levels especially in Governance, Curriculum Design, Placements and Funding, Monitoring Outcome Industry participation is also required for creating production oriented Research and Innovation.

National Vocational Assessment & Accreditation Council should be established to formulate a regulatory and quality/standards framework.

■ A National Vocational Policy should be formulated.

■ To ensure vertical mobility, ITIs, Community Colleges and other State Vocational Education Institutions may be granted recognition and accreditation from the respective State Board for Vocational Education to award SSC (Vocational) certification. Vocational Education Providers, Community Colleges, JSS, CP's, Vocational Junior Colleges may also be allowed to award Diplomas and Associate Degrees in addition to HSC (Vocational) certification.

Teachers training will be given special emphasis by the University. The Vocational University will set up a separate department for Teachers Training and Development in order to build teaching resources and research component.

■ Teachers training is an important aspect for ensuring quality education in vocational stream. Vocational Educational Qualifications should be insisted upon. Higher salaries must be offered to attract skilled teachers.

Panchayats, municipalities and other local bodies will be involved in skill development and employment generation at the local level in collaboration with SHGs, cooperatives and NGOs.

- The coverage of vocations will be expanded.

- Identification of Vocational Education /Training development needs including preparing a catalogue of types of skills, range and depth of skills to facilitate individuals to choose from them**.**

- Participation in Affiliation, accreditation, examination and certification

- Entry barriers such as educational qualification, transportation, loss of wages, language etc.

- The effort will be combined with a major initiative in raising awareness among the target groups about the benefit of skill development, employment and learning opportunities and also about support schemes that enable them to participate in training.

- Establishment of a well structured sector specific Labour Market Information System (LMIS) to assist planning and delivery of training.

- Public Private Partnerships/Public training institutions will be promoted, particularly, in rural, border, hilly and difficult areas, where the private sector may find it difficult to invest.

- Innovative delivery models such decentralized delivery, mobile training, distance learning, e-learning and web-based learning will be used.

- Skill development centres at village and block level will be promoted to provide skill development opportunity

- New innovative schemes and measures will also be devised to ensure full and effective participation by these groups, as well as the accrual of real benefits from skill development initiatives

- Formalization of non-formal skill acquisition and transfer will also be promoted in traditional art and craft sectors.

- This Policy aims to expand the facilities for people with disabilities and to provide reasonable accommodation that enables them to access the facilities through suitable transport and building designs.

- Training will be integrated with efforts to secure appropriate employment opportunities.

- School education will be used as a tool to increase vocational awareness among the young people.

- School drop-outs(leaving the schools before completing XII standard), child labour and out-of-school youth need to be given alternative education coupled with skill development opportunities to bring them into the economic and social mainstream.

- ■ Short term, market oriented, demand-driven programmes will provide a flexible delivery framework suited to the characteristics and circumstances of the target group.

- ■ Multi-skilling, multi-entry and exit, and linkages to Vocational Education/ Training or skill upgradation opportunities in the future, will characterize such programmes. The scheme of Modular Employable Skills (i.e. short-term employable skills) will be expanded greatly to cater to the large size of the group.

- ■ Equal access to skill development is essential for all social groups particularly women and disadvantaged section of society, to help them in securing decent employment and moving out of poverty.

- ■ In addition to vocational skills, the provision of soft (or life) skills – including basic literacy, numeracy, occupational safety and health, hygiene, basic labour rights, team work and confidence building – will be made as an integral component of the curricula.

- ■ Infrastructure and programmes for Vocational Education /Training development are particularly scarce in rural and difficult areas and thus the problem of access to training is most acute in these areas.

- ■ The convergence with national employment programmes, such as Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guaranteed Scheme (MNREGS), will be promoted as an opportunity for imparting skills training in rural areas

- ■ Village or block-based skill development centres will be set up to serve the needs of local communities.

- ■ Various mobile training arrangements will be deployed to reach out to remote and difficult areas.

- ■ Vocational Education /Training development for self-employment will be an important component of these skill development efforts in rural areas.

- ■ Training modules will incorporate specific needs of target groups, e.g. literacy, the level of education and the local language.

- ■ In general, there is a regional imbalance in training opportunities and some parts of the country are quite deficient in Vocational Education / Training development institutions.

- ■ The existing Apprentices Act, 1961 will be revisited to meet desired target.

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Criteria for Enhancing the Accessibility, Availability and Affordability of CALL Environments at Dr. B. R. Ambedkar University

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Abstract

The main focus of this study is to answer the research question, that is, 'Can we formulate criteria for enhancing the accessibility, availability and affordability of CALL environments promoting their use by learners and counsellors?' The basis to answer this particular research question, the opinions of both counsellors and students have collected from different districts of the State of Andhra Pradesh (India) and analysed qualitatively with literature support. The cumulative data is discussed to find the answer to the research question. Opinions of counsellors and students, and the discussions with the relevant literature support would lead to answer the question. The findings of the study showed that it is possible to formulate criteria for the accessibility, availability and affordability of CALL environments.

Keywords: Counsellors' opinion, criteria for CALL, Dr. BRAOU, Andhra Pradesh, distance language education, learners' opinion, etc.

Introduction

The latest technological developments which have created a revolution in the field of information and communications are also influencing distance education. The opportunities and demand for distance language learning too are evolving rapidly. The use of computers has seen an increase throughout the globe because of World Wide Web and Internet. Computers are, moreover, being used for the instructional purposes. Both CDs and Internet have entered into the language learning and language teaching methodologies in English in India.

"Open universities have become powerful instruments for higher educational development of modern societies" (Ramaiah, 2006). The obvious reasons why learners turn to them are: work and study, to up-date their knowledge, to improve their social status, to have personal satisfaction, *etc*. Thus open

universities are called great educational innovations of modern times, which are contributing to the higher education in an unparalleled and unique way, a way in which the conventional universities are unable to. Technology adds to the multiple roles of distance education. The new technological developments have unparalleled solutions for some of the lacunae in distance education. Computers are no exception.

Inhibitions in dimensions like space, time, teaching and learning process are warded off by innovative methods of technology (Devi, 2005). The increasing desire for life long learning opportunities (at places and paces convenient to people) and quality of learning can be greatly enhanced by the application of new technologies (Ramaiah, 2006). The advancement in technology has surpassed many barriers of conventional education. Since the new technological developments resulted in increasing the interaction of the learners, the learners could actively participate with the co-learners, with the teacher who is inherent in the material and sometimes even direct interaction is possible.

India is producing highly-trained computer programmers readily employable in the global job market place (**Moraes *et al.*, 2003)**. The Indian software professionals have gained recognition throughout the world in the global market.

The distance language learning would be the best answer for the continuous growing population of India. During 1960s, when computers entered the market, it was expensive to use them. But now, they are becoming cheaper. It is possible that the prices may come down further. Apart from having personal computers, it is also possible to use the private Internet centers on an hourly basis. This would be a practical solution for the economic problems related to technology use. A number of employers in India require 'computer-savvy' employees.

The power of any course ware can be augmented by web-based training management (Rao, 2003). The majority of the times technology enhances the power of course ware. This is particularly true with the case of web-based training management course ware, since it has both, web-based and CD-ROM based courses. Each of these compensates for the other, that is, CD-ROM has several advantages but it has a few disadvantages like the teacher-student-study material interaction does not happen simultaneously. This can be compensated by web-based course ware. Similarly the web-based course ware has the advantage of synchronous learning but it may not provide ample time and space for distance learners.

What is CALL?

A number of definitions are given in the literature for CALL (Computer-assisted language learning). CALL may be defined as, "The search for and the study of applications of computer in language teaching and learning" (Levy, 1997).

Applications of computer in language teaching and learning include using a CD-ROM, Internet, and any other software for both teaching and learning language.

"In computer assisted teaching, computers are used to support education and instruction" (Tosun *et al.,* 2006). Computers support the print media in distance education. CALL can refer to any language learning or teaching that involves the computer in a significant way.

At present, computer education courses are available in many universities besides Ph.D., M. Tech., and B.Tech. programmes conducted by the IITs and other technological institutions. Diploma level courses are being offered by a lot of polytechnics (Mohanty, 2005).

Objectives

The objectives of this study are:

❏   To formulate criteria for enhancing the accessibility, availability and affordability of CALL environments.

❏   To promote CALL use by learners and counselors.

❏   To explore the opinions of counsellors and students.

❏   To promote the preparedness and acceptance of CALL by the learners and counselors.

Methodology

The counsellors' and students' opinion were collected through separate questionnaires. Based on the analyses it would be possible to suggest the possibilities to formulate criteria for the accessibility, availability and affordability of CALL environments. The opinion of counsellors from different districts of the state has been collected randomly for knowing their opinion about the introduction of computers into the curriculum and the students' ability to learn English through technology. Students' opinion from the different districts of the state has been analysed to find out whether they are using the existing technologies and if they are ready in different ways to use computers for language learning.

Opinions of counsellors and learners of Dr. BRAOU have been collected through two separate questionnaires. Eighty four questionnaires with responses were collected randomly from the counsellors, who are teaching the subject English, "A foundation course" in different districts of the State of Andhra Pradesh. It is assumed that they represent the opinion of all counsellors who are teaching English language in the entire state.

Five hundred fifty five questionnaires with responses were collected randomly from the students, who had completed degree first year. It is assumed that

they represent the students' opinion of the entire State of Andhra Pradesh. Students' opinion is worthwhile, since they have faced the degree first year exams, assignments, contact sessions and have enough exposure to the study material. The data is analysed qualitatively.

1. Counsellors' opinion

What follows is a presentation of counsellors' responses which showed counsellors opinions about language teaching and learning. For the convenience of computing the data, responses were clubbed and shown together as the percentages for all responses.

For the convenience of readers, each question in the questionnaire is followed by cumulative responses of the counsellors, its interpretation and discussion. Opinions of counsellors and students, and the discussion with the relevant literature support would lead to answer the question, that is, 'Can we formulate criteria for enhancing the accessibility, availability and affordability of CALL environments promoting their use by learners and counsellors?'

i) Communication perception and computers

Q. What are the facilities available in your study center?

(a) Television (b) Video player / DVD (c) Computer (d) Radio (e) Tape recorder

Throughout the state, about 39% of the study centres have tape recorder facility. About 36% of the study centres have computer facility. Almost 25% of the study centres have TV facility, 15% have radio, and the remaining have DVD facility.

The main intention of asking this question is, whether any modern technologies are already in use in the study centers for the academic purposes. It indicates the awareness of learners and counsellors about the modern technologies for learning purposes.

Every study center has some facility such as TV, DVD, computer and tape recorder. When we see the advantages of different technologies it includes motivation, support, individual attention, variety, *etc.* So having every technology has some advantage. Every center may not have a computer. Students can have access to a computer either in a private Internet center, or can own one.

An audio CD can be played in a CD or DVD player, while a CD-ROM requires a computer. Even if a study center has a computer, it is not possible for every student to access it. If we provide a self-access CD-ROM, every student would need a computer, and then only can one take full advantage of a CD-ROM.

Having some technological aids such as a DVD, TV, computer, etc., in

the study center is not enough, since distance learners do not spend most of their time in the study center. Even if they are in the study center once in a week, they are mostly in the class rooms and not using any technical aids. The students need to have the supporting aids in some kind of ways available to them. These are to own a computer, using an Internet center, using a computer at work place or any other possibility to use a CD. Suppose a study centre has a computer, a student may not use it either individually or in a group, even if a CD is provided with the study material.

Q. Which of the above do you recommend for use for English language learners of degree first year?

The intention behind this question is to gauge whether the counsellors accept the importance of using technology for language learning. Some counsellors recommended only TV, some both TV and computer, some computer, radio, video, TV and tape recorder, *etc*. There are various combinations of recommendations (Table 1).

Table 1: Facilities recommended by counsellors for English language learners of degree first year

Recommended facility	% of counsellors, who recommended the facility
TV	25
DVD/ Video player	35
Computer	51
Radio	11
Tape recorder	20

More than half of the counsellors have recommended computers for English language learning of degree first year. The reasons for their choice would be intervention of computers in every field, success stories related to use of computers, computers facilitate opportunities for language learning, and the other innumerable advantages of computers. In choosing a technology, the price of the chosen facility is also considered. Unlike the other technological aids, one can have computer access in an Internet parlour as well. So, in that respect it is a better-mode to recommend because of its advantage over other modes.

ii) Communication immediacy

Q.   Is communication immediacy (i.e., involvement and closeness) between student and faculty important to you? How are you obtaining/ maintaining this?

Though counsellors opined that the communication between a teacher and student can be maintained by talking, questioning, interacting, discussing, *etc.* - all these are possible for a distant learner only through writing or speaking over a telephone. A majority of the times it is not easy to communicate with a specific teacher. For Indian conditions, it is not always possible to have communication of every student with the teacher of a specific subject, apart from their contact sessions. But, students can communicate orally with teachers in class rooms during the contact sessions, through assignments and examinations in written form. However, some students may contact their teachers on telephone as well.

Q.   *Do you perceive that any student may feel isolated? Yes / No. If so, to what do you attribute this? Do you personally ever experience isolation or feel the need to interact with other counsellors? Yes/No*

About seventy percent of the counsellors perceived that some students may feel isolated because of shyness, fear, and inhibition. The intention of asking this question is, to find out if the students are feeling isolated and to find a solution to their isolation through the study materials.

Table 2: Use of different communication channels when communicating with students

Communication channel	% of counsellors, who use the particular channel
Electronic	4
Telephone	68
Written	27

Majority of counsellors (68%) communicate over the telephone with students, followed by written and electronic communication channel (Table 2).

A majority of the counsellors believe that some students feel isolated. Students can overcome isolation by either student-student or student-teacher interaction. Interaction plays an important role in language learning. Some of the interactive CALL material, CDs or Internet, can help to fill the gap between a student and a teacher. Since the students should not feel isolated, the study material should be prepared in such a way that the learner may feel a part of a cohort. When students see their teacher sometimes on the screen and listen to the voice of the teacher while explaining the topics they need to study, the learners may not feel isolated.

It is quite natural that distance learners feel some kind of isolation which they have not experienced previously. As far as possible, we should try to reduce the feeling of isolation through the interactive CALL study material, helping the students to form small groups, encouraging them to attend the counseling sessions, face-to-face sessions and communicating with the students during

the non-teaching sessions.

Feedback plays a critical role for distance language learners, not only as a response to their performance, but also as a means of providing support, encouragement and motivation to continue (White, 2003). As every response is received with much care by the distance learner, feedback of the teacher is very crucial to him / her. The teacher should provide the feedback in a positive and constructive way, so that, the learner benefits from it and shows progress in language learning. As the distance learner expects more support from the teacher, this support, encouragement and motivation which s/he expects should come regularly through the teacher.

Empathy and encouragement – both of which require the appreciation of learners and their circumstances – are essential components to effective interaction in distance language teaching (White, 2003). For any kind of learning constant support and encouragement are essential and this is particularly true with distance learning. An empathetic approach towards a learner is essential to understand the learner's feelings, necessities and problems. Empathy is an essential quality every teacher should have. In the case of a distance learner, the empathetic approach of the teacher is included in the study material. The learners should be able to perceive the teacher's empathy.

iii) Counsellors' experience

Counsellor's experience varies starting from three years to twenty seven years. Inspite of being senior teachers it is heartening to note that they are not negating conditions towards use of technology. On the contrary, they appear to be willing to learn and use CALL for effective language learning practice.

The counsellors' opinion is extremely useful for the present study. A majority of them have more than five years of experience. Their experience with the students and study material would help to give valuable information. They are teaching to both students, English and Telugu medium, of Dr. BRAOU and also to the conventional degree courses. Thus, they have experience in dealing with different kinds of students and texts. Further, if CALL is introduced it is through them that it will be popularized and used apart from being given directly to learners.

Experience plays an important role in every field of work; this is particularly true in the teaching field. A majority of the counsellors who had participated in this study have more than five years of teaching experience. They are teaching 'English: A foundation course', correcting students' assignments and final examination papers, and teaching English for regular course degree students as well. The counsellors have experience in dealing with the distance learners as well as face-to-face learners. The varied experience of counsellors plays a major role in creating an awareness to introduce CALL environments for the better performance of the learners.

2. Students' opinion

What follows is a cumulative data of students' opinion. Every question from the questionnaire is followed by collective data in percentages, its interpretation and discussion. The entrants into the degree course (B.A. / B.Com. / B.Sc.) have different language learning backgrounds and proficiencies. They are either secondary School Certificate holders or Board of Intermediate Examination certificate holders from English / Telugu / Urdu medium or without formal education. With all these variations of backgrounds, the learners enter through the entrance examination into the degree course, which has a compulsory English course, that is, "English: A foundation course". Thus, the learners need study material, which caters to the needs of varied language proficiency levels of learners.

i) Communication perception and computers

Q. *Do you feel / experience that your counsellors are readily accessible via your choice of communication channel? Yes / No. If so, what is your preferred mode of communication?*

   (a) e-mail (b) telephone (c) writing (d) any other

The question is intended to find out the importance of communication, its recognition by the students, its possibility and whether computers have the possibility of acting as a communication channel.

About 60% of the students feel that counsellors are readily accessible via their choice of communication channel. For 33% of the students the preferred mode of communication channel is e-mail, followed by 17% each for telephone and writing.

Those who are attending the face-to-face classes may have more chance of face-to-face communication with their teachers once a week or less. Communication with counsellors is essential for students. It develops interaction, motivation, and clarification of doubts resulting in better learning. When they are away from their teachers, they may want to have communication either through e-mail or telephone or writing.

Q. *Do you use computers in your day-to-day life? Yes / No*

On an average more than 60% of students use computers in their day-to-day life at present throughout the state. The use of computers can increase day-by-day, when we compare the use of computer in the past decade with the present decade, the students have practice in using computers. If CALL material is provided either through a CD or Internet, they have no difficulty in using it.

It is a generally known fact that, the use of computers is increasing day-by-day. A majority of degree first year students are already using computers in

their daily life. Students can easily use a language CD for practising the language skills. CALL material can be used for giving exposure to the language, as a supporting aid for the study material, as a reference material, and as a part of study material.

Q.   *Do you use the Internet to communicate with fellow students? Yes / No. How often?*

   (a) Once in a month (b) twice in a month (c) more than two times

About 66% of the students use the Internet to communicate with fellow students. About 39% of the students use Internet more than two times to communicate with fellow students. About 39% of the students use Internet once in a month to communicate with fellow students. About 21% of the students use Internet two times to communicate with fellow students.

Use of Internet can increase the use of language and give greater exposure to language. A majority of the learners use Internet which means that they have some means of communication in English. They are also using computers and have some familiarity with the Internet. They would be able to use CALL material either in CD form or Internet, if they are given. Students are already using Internet for various purposes, thus they have familiarity in using the Internet. A majority of the students may not need special training in using a CD. It is possible that these students might be using music CDs, DVDs, *etc.* in their day-to-day activities; thus, they do not require training to use a language CD, if it is given.

It is evident that distance language learners need a substantial amount of support, if they are to develop the capacity to become increasingly involved in their language learning (White, 2003). Almost all the distance learners need support. This support varies from person to person. But some of the common needs are always there. At least, these needs can be catered. These needs can be both academic and non-academic. A majority of the specific needs of the students can also be catered. Where the academic needs are concerned, some students and counsellors feel they must have more exercises in grammar, vocabulary, *etc.* To cater to such specific needs, additional supporting material is necessary. This supporting material may not be a part of the main course material. Another possibility is there should be a mention of reference material in almost every unit of the study material. Thus, whoever needs an additional support and have a specific interest in the concerned topic would refer to the necessary material.

Some of the non-academic needs of the students are: feeling of isolation - which they may not have experienced through their earlier courses, separation of a teacher, separation of fellow students, delay in getting a response readily from their teachers and lack of moral and psychological support.

ii) The impact of new technologies on distance language learners

Q. What are the learning aids you use (including the course and other teaching-learning sources)

(a) Radio (b) Television (c) audio cassettes (d) Phone-in programmes (e) CD-ROM (f) any other (please specify)

Students (15%) are using radio as a learning source. About 33% of the students are using Television as a learning source. About 17% of students are using audio cassettes as a learning source. About 5% of the students are using 'Phone-in' programmes as a learning source. About 17% of students are using CD-ROM as a learning source. About 13% of the students are using the other sources for language learning. None is specified which other learning sources they use generally, though they marked in their questionnaires.

When the students have said that they are using different learning sources, they have not mentioned what kind of learning sources they have been using. For example, when they are using CD-ROM as a learning source, it is possible that they may be getting broadcast radio and television lessons copied on to CDs for their personal study at a convenient time. Another possibility is that, they might have answered casually that they are using CDs as a learning source because they do not know that CDs can be used as a learning source.

It is already known that students feel computers are important for language learning. But a majority of them are not using them because of:

❖ Lack of information regarding the availability

❖ Not having enough confidence that CDs are also can work as a learning source

❖ CDs are not referred to either in the study material or by their teachers or administrative support staff

It is clear that every student is using at least one of the technological aids for language learning. This implies that, students have a positive approach towards the technological aid. It seems that, if in future a CALL material is given, they will use it.

Though students have awareness about the use of computers for language learning, they are not using them. They require initiation for the use of computers for the purposes like entertainment, social network, paying bills, banking, booking tickets, *etc.* In the study material if there is a reference to CALL material students may take some initiation in using CALL for language learning. Every student is using some technological aid for language learning. Thus, the students are inclined towards the use of computers for language learning.

Q.   Do you have access to the computers / Internet? Yes / No

About 68% of the students have access to the computers. Internet centres are available even in small towns of Andhra Pradesh. The price of the computers is also decreasing continuously. The needs of the people are also increasing and they have to use computers to avail of themselves the latest services such as banking, online ticket purchase, ticket reservation, payment of the bills, literature search and many more services. All these would prompt many people to own a computer to make their lives more comfortable.

When the students get initiated into the use of computers through the latest research developments and its advantages, it is an added advantage to their knowledge. Many Internet centres are available in every nook and corner of the state (Andhra Pradesh). Thus, there are high chances for the practical application of the new technologies. Apart from this, because of the availability of many Internet services, many people may own a computer in the near future as is the case with a television set or mobile phone.

iii)   Use of computers in language learning

Q.   Do you know that our university library has CDs for English language learning? Yes / No.

The intention of this question is to check whether the students have a general awareness about the use of computers for language learning. Some of the students (33%) know that BRAOU library has CDs for English language learning but no one is using them. The obvious reasons could be:

- ◆   CDs are not issued outside the library

- ◆   Every student may not have access to the university library

- ◆   Students are mainly examination focused and have other personal reasons for example, like shortage of time.

A majority of the students do not know that the university has CDs for language learning. Mainly for administrative purposes students may go to the university, for study purpose they may not go to the university, so they are not used to asking for study support through CDs. They know about the learning resources which they are using at present either through their fellow students or through the teachers. It is possible that there is no reference to CDs anywhere else around them.

That the university has different kinds of learning sources is known only to some of the students. Usually students are habituated to collect the study material and may not ask for any other learning sources or aids. Though the university has CDs for language learning, they are used as reference material. Thus, the students may not have access to them. There can be reference books in the library so that, a learner can use them while s/he is in the library. But for degree first year students, reference CDs from the library may not be

accessible, since they need a computer and headphones to use CDs within the library.

Q.   Given a unit on CD (Compact Disc), would you use it for the language learning? Yes / No. Why?

The reason for asking this question is to find out the learners' interest in and preparedness for accepting CALL material for language learning. About three fourths of the learners would use it for language learning since students may have an interest in using a CD, because it is fashionable and popular and many more reasons. There is enough awareness about the use of CDs. The remaining students who have answered negatively have perhaps no knowledge about what a CD can do for language learning, no one gas evertold them about a CD for language learning and so they have limited knowledge about the CDs and have more confidence only in books for scoring high in the examination or for passing examinations.

At present, if a CD is given to students a majority of them are ready to use it. It can be because of many common reasons and some individual reasons. The use of computers in different sectors has proved to be successful, it is fashionable to use computers, computers give a feeling of being modern, it is interesting to use the new equipment, and many more. However, all the students do not opt for using a CD, when it is provided. These students may not know what computers can do for a distance language learner or because of their ignorance or because of little interest in knowing the advancements in the distance language learning.

Q.   Would the learning material provided through a CD be more interesting? Yes / No. Why?

About 64% of the students feel that the learning material provided through a CD is more interesting. Learning material through a CD (CALL material) is more interesting because learners can welcome using a CD and they may use it. Many of them freely expressed their interest. Through these kinds of questions the students may express their view freely without inhibitions. Students welcome learning through a CD because:

■   it breaks the monotony of learning only through books

■   it has innumerable advantages

■   they are excited to operate new technologies

■   it is recognized throughout the world as a successful tool in different service sectors and software courses and jobs.

Changes around us

As a result of India's success in software development, the University of Santa Catarina Brazil, Graduate Program in Engineering in 1996 created the Distance

Education Laboratory (**Moraes *et. al.,* 2003**). When the other countries can imitate India and take the initiative from Indians for starting computer-enabled distance learning courses, why are Indian universities still lacking high impetus to move forward in using computers for distance language learning?

Summary

The major research findings of this paper are summarised below.

Criteria for the accessibility, availability and affordability of CALL environments

Accessibility: Every student is using some technological aid for language learning. Thus, the students are inclined towards the use of computers for language learning. **The students have practice in using computers. If a CD is given as a learning aid, they have no difficulty in using it. The use of computers can increase day-by-day, when we compare the use of computer in the past decade with the present decade.**

Availability: If the students are feeling isolated, we have to find a solution to help them overcome their isolation through the study materials. Some of the interactive CDs can help to fill the gap between a student and a teacher. A majority of the learners use Internet which means that they have some means of communication in English. They are also using computers and have some familiarity with the Internet. They will be able to use CDs, when they are given.

Affordability: In choosing a technology, the price of the chosen facility is also considered. Unlike the other technological aids, one can have computer access in an Internet parlour as well. So, in that respect it is a better-mode to recommend because of its advantages over other modes.

Conclusions and future implications

Counsellors recommended the use of computers for English language learning of degree first year.

- It is possible to introduce CALL for degree first year students

- CALL can be introduced in a step-by-step manner

- Language can be learned unselfconsciously through computers

- CALL can be initially introduced on an experimental basis

Ambedkar Open University with over two decades of experience has been able to develop an appropriate media mix in its own way (Ramaiah, 2006). At present Dr. BRAOU is using different media for educational purposes successfully. It gives further scope for introducing multi-media for distance language learning.

Where possible, distance education courses should make use of computers

and applications which either provide a new, worth while learning experience or improve on existing methodologies (Abrioux, 1989). To overcome the gaps in distance education, it is essential to introduce computers for distance language learning. The use of computers for distance language learning gives a unique experience to a distance learner.

The use of media technologies at IGNOU may give an impetus for starting a CD for distance language learning in BRAOU, since it has brought significant improvements in the delivery of educational programmes and services to the learners. Except using computers, BRAOU is using the other media for distance language learning. However, it is proved that using appropriate media would improve the quality of distance language learning significantly. According to Sharma and Garg (2005) the recent initiatives at IGNOU to encourage research on media and development of a systematic policy framework for adoption of educational media in the programme planning stage itself will go a long way in institutionalizing multimedia strategy for educational transactions.

Research on the effectiveness of new technologies in education, including the use of computers in language teaching, has been an ongoing process (Warschauer and Healey 1998). Before and after introducing CALL material for distance language learning at BRAOU, conducting research is a necessary step for knowing the suitability of the material. Many research studies are going on in CALL throughout the world.

In the present study, it is found that students and counsellors are willing to accept computers for language learning at Dr. BRAOU. Several research studies also support the use of computers for distance language learning.

Distance education has several advantages including life-long learning for empowering an individual in different ways; skills development, better employment opportunities, confidence building, *etc.* According to Gooley *et al.* (2001) life long learning is a continuous process that motivates and empowers individuals – it assists them to acquire new knowledge, skills and understanding that can be applied confidently in new circumstances and environments. These trained and motivated persons can in turn assist in empowering communities.

The findings of the study showed that it is possible to formulate criteria for the accessibility, availability and affordability of CALL environments promoting the development and the acceptance of learners and counsellors.

The awareness about the importance of the CALL material has to be created for every learner. Depending on the learners' requirements, it is necessary to prepare the CALL material.

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Present Scenario of Open and Distance Learning in India: Development and Challenges for Student Support Services

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Abstract

Open and Distance Learning in India is not as old as the conventional system. In 1960's and 70's it was started in conventional universities and further it was spread to establish open universities. At present 14 Open Universities are operating in India including one National Open University i.e. Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) and 13 State Open Universities in different States. Besides this, more than 200 dual mode universities are also providing education both in regular and distance mode. For regulating Open Universities in India and Distance Education in dual mode universities, the Distance Education Council (DEC) is functioning. Tremendous development of students' enrolment and academic programmes in Distance Learning has been realised in the last two decades. Around 20 percent of students' enrolment in India has registered in Distance Education. Besides the success story of Open and Distance Education in India, the other challenging aspect is the developing and practising better support systems for the learners. Six basic elements of students' support services i.e. demand of the programme, geography, management system, scale, technological infrastructure, and students' characteristics need to be addressed for establishing learner friendly environment in Open and Distance Learning. Large scale challenges have been felt during the years which need to be solved for better students' satisfaction. Among the challenges, the key issues need to be addressed like; academic counselling and students guidance, dispatch of self-learning material, assignment, face-to-face practices, use of multi-media and online system, and examination & continuous evaluation.

Key Words: *Open and Distance Learning, Student Support Services, dual mode universities.*

Background

India is the largest democracy and second most populous country in the world. A multi-cultural and multi linguistic country, with 18 constitutionally recognised languages and as many as 1652 spoken dialects.

Starting from 17 universities and above 400 colleges at the time of independence, India today has 634 universities and 33023 colleges, over 16 million students including seven millions of girls' enrolment, more than 8 lakhs of teaching staff in universities and colleges and perhaps one of the largest higher education systems in the world. Around 86 percent students enrol for graduation courses, 12 percent enrol in post-graduation courses, and one percent each in research and diploma/certificate courses (UGC 2012 and Panda 2006). Realising the growing demands of higher education the committees and commissions established in our country after independence like; University Education Commission 1948-49, Education Commission 1964-66, and National Education Commission 1986 felt that there is a need of distance and correspondence education in the country. The Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) in its meeting in Jan 1961, recommended that a detailed study of correspondence courses will be made by a small committee. The Union Ministry of Education constituted an expert committee under the chairmanship of Dr. D.S. Kothari, the then Chairperson of UGC. The committee suggested to enter slowly into correspondence education as it was new to India. It considered the kind of educational and administrative problems that might arise from the opening of an alternative channel of education in which there will be no regular classroom contact between teacher and the student. Drawing on the experiences of the other countries erstwhile Soviet Union, Australia, UK, USA, and the Scandinavian countries, the committee felt that it would be possible to maintain high standard in education and achieve economy.

All the essential conditions for making correspondence education an effective alternative channel i.e. flexibility, well written materials, training of staff, contact programmes, provision of study centres, etc. were perceived and underlined by the committee. It did not however take into account the difficulties involved in operating a new system within the framework of the existing conventional university system whose rules, regulations, method processes, techniques and organisational structures were set by and geared towards face-to-face education (Satyanarayana, 1995 from Panda 2006). A positive direction of distance education put forth towards the progress of the countrymen.

In 1962, University of Delhi established the School of Correspondence Courses and Continuing Education (SCCCE) and started B.A. Courses in selected subjects with 112 students in the first year; later B.Com was started in 1970 onwards. That was the beginning of distance education in the form of correspondence courses in our country.

Inaugurating the correspondence courses the then union minister of education Sh. K.L. Shrimali highlighted three main objectives (Chib, 1977):

✳ to provide an efficient and less expensive method of educational instruction at a higher level in the context of the national development of India;

✳ to provide facilities to pursue higher education to all qualified and willing persons who had failed to join regular university courses due to personal and economic reasons or because of their inability to get admission to a regular college; and

✳ to provide opportunities of academic pursuit to educated citizens to improve their standard of knowledge and learning through correspondence instruction without disturbing their present employment.

In 1964, the recommendations of Education Commission chaired by Dr. D.S. Kothari, impressed the mind of government and intellectuals to deeply think on correspondence and distance education. In 1967 UGC sent a delegation to Soviet Union to study their system and to implement it in India. The delegation consisted of union ministry of education, faculty of education and Psychology, MS University of Baroda, and NCERT. After experiencing in Soviet countries, the committee strongly favoured correspondence courses in India especially in teacher education and training (Singh 1978).

During the first decade of correspondence education (1962-72), 13 correspondence units of conventional universities were set up which offered different graduate and certificate level courses (Ananda, 1985).

By the end of the first decade (i.e. 1972), correspondence education in India gained considerable recognition and acceptance in October 1974, UGC invited all the CCIs for a conference at Delhi to asses the functioning and to discuss their problems and make suggestions for their improvement. The observations and recommendations of the conference was clarified under five heads:

✟ Scope of correspondence education in India.

✟ Preparation of reading materials.

✟ Future of correspondence education and the role of the states.

✟ Organisational and the administrative set up in a directorate of correspondence courses.

✟ Ancillary services such as radio talks, TV presentations etc.

The 11th world conference of the International Council for Correspondence

Education (ICCE) was held in Nov. 1978 at New Delhi. The journey of correspondence education is marching in its progress since then.

Era of Open Universities

In India, the first proposal for establishing an State University was made in early seventies. Govt. of India appointed a working group with Mr. G. Parthasarathi, the then Vice Chancellor of Jawaharlal Nehru University in 1971 to examine the feasibility of establishing an open university in India. The group recommended establishment of an open university under an act of parliament with jurisdiction over the entire country. The recommendations did not materialise till 1985, because of lack of attention of the educationists and planners. In 1982, a committee was appointed to enquire into the working of the central universities, appointed by the UGC under the chairmanship of Dr. (Mrs.) Madhuri R. Shah. The committee recommended that practical steps for creating a national open university of distance education in India be taken up without delay.

In 1978, a proposal was made in A.P. to open an start university. The then vice chancellor of Osmania University was requested by the Andhra Pradesh Education minister to visit British Open University and submit a report, how far it is feasible to open a state university. In 1982, the Government of Andhra Pradesh decided to establish an open university to provide "access to higher education to the adult population of the state, for upgrading their functional capacity and improve quality of their life in the context of broader social and political objectives and equalisation of educational opportunities and the emergence of a new concept of life long education". That was the first Open University in India called Andhra Pradesh Open University (APOU), and further it was named as Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University (BRAOU) in 1992.

Realising the national need and importance, the Govt. of India decided to establish a National Open University in the year 1985. The then Prime Minister, Late Shri Rajiv Gandhi, in his first broadcast to nation on Jan 05, 1985, announced the new Govt policy relating to education and establishment of a National Open University. Then The Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) was established in the name of the late Primi Minister Indira Gandhi by an act of the parliament (No. 50 of 1985) in 1985 with the objectives:

❖ to promote the open and distance education system at the tertiary level in the country;

❖ to democratise higher education by taking it to the doorstep of the learners;

❖ to provide access to high quality education to all adults who seek it, irrespective of age region, religion, and gender;

❖ to offer need based academic programmes by giving professional and vocational orientation to the courses;

❖ to enhance the level of skilled workforce in the country; and

❖ to set and maintain the standard of distance education in the country as an apex body.

In 1987, it had an initial student enrolment of 4528 with 02 academic programmes.

Present Status

At present we have 14 Open Universities existing in different parts of our country, in which one National Open University i.e. IGNOU at New Delhi and other 13 State Open Universities as follows:

1. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University (BRAOU), Hyderabad, A.P. (1982)

2. Vardhman Mahaveer Open University (VMOU), Kota, Rajasthan (1987).

3. Nalanda Open University (NOU), Patna, (1987)

4. Yashwantrao Chavan Maharashtra Open University (YCMOU), Nashik (1989)

5. Madhya Pradesh Bhoj Open University (MPBOU), Bhopal (1991)

6. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Open University (BAOU), Ahmedabad (1994)

7. Karnataka State Open University (KSOU), Mysore (1996)

8. Netaji Subhas Open University (NSOU), Kolkata (1997)

9. UP Rajarshi Tandon Open University (UPRTOU), Allahabad (1998)

10. Tamil Nadu Open University (TNOU), Chennai (2002)

11. Pt. Sundarlal Sharma Open University (PSSOU), Bilaspur (2005)

12. Uttaranchal Open University (UOU), Naintal

13. Krishna Kanta Handique State Open University(KKSOU), Guwahati

Besides the 14 single mode Open Universities many dual mode universities are functioning in our country. They are mainly conventional universities but running both regular and correspondence courses. They have there separate Unit/Department like Directorate/Institute of distance and continuing education. Presently 200 such dual mode universities including some private universities are functioning in India which are offering correspondence courses. For regulating distance courses in our country like; teacher education, technical education, medical education, management and agricultural education separate regulatory bodies are there. They have the functionaries of setting the norms and standards for establishment of institution, eligibility of faculties and eligibility of candidate. We have 17 such regulatory bodies, Distance Education Council (DEC) being one of them. Till the establishment of DEC, IGNOU was coordinating and strengthening distance education in the country confined to the system of State Open Universities (SOU), and the UGC continued to look after the correspondence education offered through the conventional universities. DEC has three roles: the promotional role, the role of coordination and maintained of standards, and the role of financial support. The DEC extents financial support to distance education institutions for development of infrastructure, institutional reforms, academic improvement, staff development, and training, students support services, computerisation and networking of institutions for improvement of quality of education.

Student Enrolment and Other Development

In a report of working group on Open and Distance Education of National Knowledge commission (NKC) mentioned that about 10 percent of the relevant age group in India currently enrolled in higher education, where as in developed countries corresponding figure/stand between 30 percent to 50 percent of the relevant population. Out of this 10 percent, the Open and Distance Education (ODE) system in India accounts for about 20 percent of the total enrolment. Among 20 percent enrolment of ODE, the share of State Open Universities is about 5 percent and that of IGNOU is 15 percent. If we only observe the status of Indira Gandhi National Open University, we can understand the vastness of its functioning. Presently it is the largest Open University in the world with a cumulative student's strength of more than 3.5 millions, offering 445 academic programmes, 64 regional centres covering all the corners of India, with 3107 learner support centres.

Let us look at the year wise students' enrolment, degree awarded and growth of academic programmes:

Table 1: Year wise enrolment, awarded degrees, and growth of academic programmes

Year	Enrolment	Growth Degree	Awarded Pass out	% of Programmes	Programmes (%)	Growth of
	of Enrol. (%)					
1987	4528	-	-	-	2	-
1988	16811	371.27	-	-	5	150.00
1989	42324	251.76	-	-	7	40.00
1990	48281	114.07	1171	2.43	8	14.29
1991	52376	108.48	3807	7.27	13	62.50
1992	62375	119.09	4907	7.87	26	100.00
1993	75333	120.77	4444	5.90	28	7.69
1994	84180	111.74	7580	9.00	28	0.00
1995	91398	108.57	9246	10.12	34	21.43
1996	130228	142.48	12301	9.45	36	5.88
1997	163307	125.40	16150	9.89	39	8.33
1998	163394	100.05	25196	15.42	39	0.00
1999	172550	105.60	33119	19.19	47	20.51
2000	196650	113.97	53298	27.10	50	6.38
2001	291360	148.16	62369	21.41	62	24.00
2002	301724	103.56	78074	25.88	72	16.13
2003	316547	104.91	81931	25.88	78	8.33
2004	334415	105.64	74603	22.31	89	14.10
2005	366161	109.49	71298	19.47	101	13.48
2006	429542	117.31	75174	17.50	125	23.76
2007	468444	109.06	111699	23.84	129	3.20
2008	560600	119.67	101346	18.08	138	6.98
2009	608614	108.56	137169	22.54	175	26.81
2010	650598	106.90	133628	20.54	338	93.14
2011	696772	107.10	215364	30.91	445	31.66

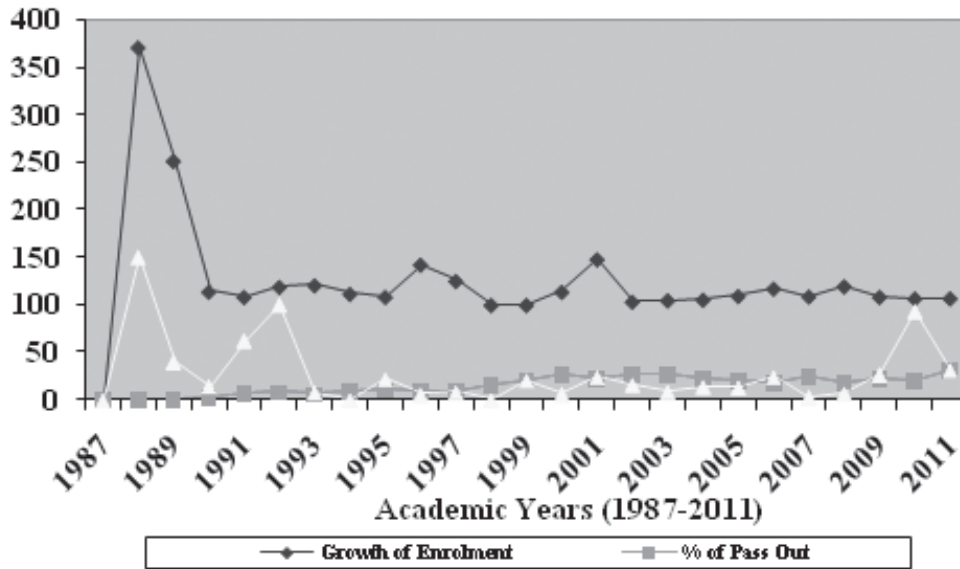*(Source: Annual Report, 2010-11, IGNOU, New Delhi)*

Figure 1: Growth of Enrolment, Academic Programmes, and of Pass Out (Figures are in %)

Table 1 & Figure 1 speaks growth of enrolment, pass out, and growth of academic programmes in IGNOU. Data revealed that starting from 4528 students enrolment in 1987 now it has reached annual enrolment of near to 7 lakhs. That clearly speaks more than 154 times just in 25 years. It shows the demand of distance education in India. Again, when we consider pass out percentage of students in distance education, it makes us worry to rethink the strategies we adopt presently and strategies to be adopted in future. Less pass out percentage in distance education is not only a problem of Indian Distance Education rather it is a global problem. So far only 15-20 percent pass out rate has been observed which needs to be taken care and resolved soon. Regarding growth of academic programmes, it seems an impressive development since last 25 years. In 1987 it had started with 2 programmes and in 2011 it reached at a cumulative growth of 445 academic programmes. It is worthwhile to note that the programmes offered by IGNOU touche all areas of knowledge and skill development starting from humanities to healthcare and management to technology.

If we look at IGNOU at a glance (2010-11), it makes us surprise how to manage such a mega structure.

Table 2: *IGNOU at a Glance*

Status	Achievement
Programmes on Offer	445
Students Enrolment in 2010-11 (July 2010 and January 2011)	6,96,772
Students on Rolls	26,85,949
Schools of Studies	21
Regional Centres	64
Learner Support Centres	3107
Overseas Centres (in 40 Countries)	67
Academic Counsellors (Approximately)	39000
Students Appeared for Tear-End Examination in June and December 2010	729485
Students awarded Degrees / Diplomas / Certificates till 2010	1108452
Total Volume of Course material printed in 2010	16299063
Audio / Video Programmes produced till date	1537 /3482
Teachers and Academics	752/447
Administrative (including Group D Staff)	1291/1219
Recognised State Open Universities	13
Dual Mode Universities and Institutes by Distance Education Council (DEC)	200

(Source: Annual Report 2010-11, IGNOU, New Delhi)

Table 2, depicts a clear picture of IGNOU in its present functioning and the achievement in the last 25 years. Accordingly distance education in coming days in India may be a challenge for the administrators to maintain the same gravity and quality in all aspects. The programmes which are offered by IGNOU have been widely accepted by the country and the global knowledge society. Growing scenario of Indian Distance Education raises the expectations of learners. Some how, students satisfaction and dissatisfaction has become an issue in Indian Distance Education System. The Teachers and the Academicians felt it very closely to renovate the system and provide adequate Learner Support Services.

What Does Student Support Services Mean in ODL Context?

According to Alan Tait (2000), the primary functions of student support are three fold, like;

1. **Cognitive:** Supporting and developing learning through the mediation of the standard and uniform elements of course materials and learning resources for individual students;

2. **Affective:** Providing an environment which supports students, creates commitment and enhances self-esteem; and

3. **Systemic:** Establishing administrative processes and information management systems which are effective, transparent and overall student-friendly.

Students Support Services in Open and Distance Learning is not only a matter of administrative processes rather the cognitive and affective functions are equally responsible for that though there is little practice of face to face elements in distance education but still pedagogical points of view self learning material and self assessment strategies make the open learning system more objective and learner centred. In more concrete terms, support services for students may be summarised as typically including:

♦   Enquiry, admission and pre-study advisory services

♦   Tutoring

♦   Guidance and counselling services

♦   Assessment of prior learning and credit transfer

♦   Study and examination centres

♦   Residential schools

♦   Library services

♦   Individualised correspondence teaching, including in some cases continuous Assessment

♦   Record keeping, information management, and other administrative systems

♦   Differentiated services for students with special needs of one sort or another e.g. disability, geographical remoteness, prisoners

♦   Materials which support the development of study skills, programme planning or career development.

For better student support services a definite planning and execution is required. Students Support Services demand a comprehensive work out of the total system of Open and Distance Learning. Alan Tait (2000), from the UK Open University has stressed up on six elements of basic framework for planning student support services i.e. student cohort characteristics, demand of the programme, geography, management system, scale, and technological infrastructure. The six elements stated above can not be arranged in order of priority or rank.
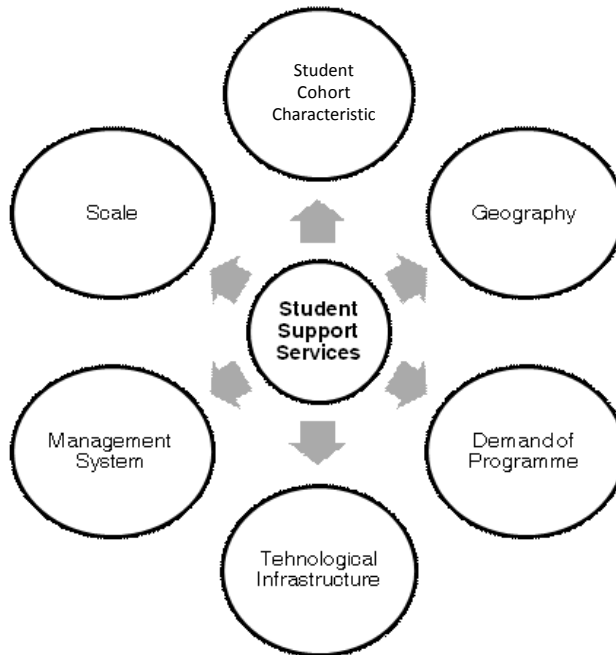
Figure 2: Development of a students' support system

(Source: Alan Tait, 2000, Planning Student support for open and distance learning)

In figure 2, six elements of students' support system have been discussed. In which technology system occupies a pioneer position to transact programme and other instruction. Decision about the use of technological infrastructure need to be decided at the very beginning of programme development. Curriculum transaction can be done manually, or by using multi-media technology. Now a days operating online programmes are used in most distance learning institutes. Indian distance learning institutes also practice it. In this regard Staff Training and Research Institutes in Distance Education (STRIDE), IGNOU, New Delhi has transacted it and also have trained to the state open university faculties on a large scale. Other technological infrastructure needs to be developed in distance education like; audio and

video material, radio and video telecast (teleconferencing and interactive radio counselling), use of ICT, mobile learning, and e-learning etc. Demand of academic programme also another key element of providing support system to the students. Inbuilt characteristics of the programme and outside system is some times feel neglected by the administrators or academician. Large scale and small scale programme are the other element for better support system. Number of learners in distance learning may it be 100, or 10000, or 100000 determine the mode of transaction of the curriculum. Face-to-face constituents and distance deliberation depends on the scale of academic programme. Again geography of the learner cannot be neglected when to decide support system of the students. Distance, locality, and physical system needs to be cared of when to decide support system for the students. More over learner cohort characteristics like; age, job status, earning and economic standard, educational background, geographical situation, ethnic and cultural practices, communication and technology connectedness are the important factors for providing support services to the learners. Let us to discuss the challenges of students support services:

Challenges of Student Support Services

Irrespective of its vastness, many challenges have been experienced during the years which need to be addressed soon for the betterment of the learner society. The product of any education system is the learner. If we are unable to make the facilities available to the learner, it may ruin the system. Let us discuss first some of the best practices over the globe in distance education.

In UK Open University, all students have the opportunity to be linked to a personal tutor, i.e. one tutor to 25 students. All students have access to personal tutor counsellor (Simpson & Gibbs, 2004). In Papua New Guinea University of Technology, tutorials offered from Monday to Friday, residential courses are offered at the beginning and at the end of each year, audio conferencing is provided, a lecture from main campus teacher teaches and the lecture is relayed to a number of sites (Njondo, 2002). In Singapore Open University, associate teaching staffs from tertiary institutions or industry are used as tutors, students are encouraged to keep in close touch with tutors who also mark assignment, grade them, provide detailed and constructive feedback and encourage student interaction, tutors are challenged to use various media and technologies to provide academic counselling, a formal mentor programme supports the tutors, providing guidance and encouragement (Aggarwal, 2004). In Hong Kong University, a number of study / learning centres have been established, study material is in the interactive mode, library facilities are provided at study centres, continuous evaluation is done through assignments, weekend counselling classes are provided at study / learning centres (Fan, 2004).

Analysing the major points related to student support service practices over the globe, we consider that it is the prime responsibility of any distance

education institute. In this connection, in Indian Distance Education two observations have been marked, first; rich infrastructural facilities are available in IGNOU at the same time most of the State Open Universities are running with scarcity in all the respects like human or material resources. A nation wide network has observed for the part of IGNOU in terms of its regional centres, programme study centres, appointment of academic counsellors, arranging fixed contact programmes during summer, tutors interaction in every Sunday at the Programme Study Centres, orientation to the counsellors, monitoring, use of multy media approaches i.e. teleconferencing through Gyandarshan channel, Interactive Radio Counselling (IRC) through Gyanvani, use of audio and video recorded materials, and many online experiences.

Irrespective of rich facilities provided to the learners, it has been observed that there is very little turnout of the learners in the teleconferencing and IRC. In this context continuous communication is required from head quarters to the regional centre, from the regional center to programme study centre, and from the programme study centres to the direct learners. Other related issues that need to be addressed regarding student support are timely assessment of assignment and intimation to students in time. In the present scenario there is the need of proper monitoring of the following:

Academic Counselling and Student Guidance

➡ Whether the counselling sessions are planned and held as per the prescribed norms, guidelines, and schedules of the university?

➡ Are the counsellors well approved by the university?

➡ Are the counsellors well acquainted with distance education system?

➡ Are the counsellors sharing continuity, commitment, and willingness?

Dispatch of SLM

➡ Are the SLM ready before launching the programme?

➡ Is it sent to concerned Regional Centres well in advance?

➡ Did the learner receive SLM in time?

➡ To ensure whole / partial material dispatch to the students.

Assignment and Evaluation

➡ Whether assignment questions sent to the students and up loaded in the website are well in advance.

➡ Timely receiving assignment from the students.

➡ Submission of completed assignments by the students.

➡ Assessment of assignment and communication to the students.

➡ Entry of assignment grades and correct reflection of grades in certificate.

Electronic Media

➡ Learners need to be informed well in advance about the complete schedule of teleconferencing and interactive radio counselling.

➡ Availability of adequate audio video materials at the Study Centres.

➡ Motivate the students to avail the electronic facilities provided by the head quarters.

Examination and Evaluation

➡ Informing the students to fill in the forms in time is the joint responsibility of headquarter, RCs, and the SCs at their level.

➡ Timely dispatch of hall tickets.

➡ Arrangement of examination with full gravity and sincerity.

➡ Evaluate the copies with necessary remarks, course as general and individual copies as particular.

➡ Proper entry of course grades in certification of TEE.

The above points need to be taken seriously as it is not a conventional system. Students enjoy very limited face-to-face contact experiences in Distance Education system. That's why it emphasises that distance education learners never be neglected at any stage during their studentship. Starting from students' registration to certification, proper assistance and support in academic and co-academic matters need to be provided to the learners. As the system is very vast and the instructions are practised at a distance, there is the chance of some error in between which may be human in nature. In this case if it is noticed, it should be resolved as early as possible. Establishing an environment of mutual co-operation, faith, work in unity with full of dedication, honesty, and service for the nation is need of the time. A distance teacher, academics, administrator, and learners should not forget this.

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Harnessing Open Educational Resources and Practices for Excellence in Teacher Education

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Abstract

This paper deals with the scenario of Indian Teacher Education System in the light of analysis and recommendations of the Report of the High-Powered Commission in Teacher Education under the chairmanship of Justice Verma (Aug., 2012) and various other bodies and specialists of national prominence. The paper tries to bring out the lacunas and deficiencies in the Teacher Education system owing to basic assumptions about a Teacher Education course or organizational set-up and tries to analyse its effectiveness in making teachers reflective practitioners specially in the light of various economic and educational reforms undertaken. The paper posits that Open Educational Resources (OERs) and Practices are very important medium which can go a long way in making TE more responsive to the needs of teachers (both pre-service and in-service). OER can play a very important role in making good quality instructional material available to all at minimal cost and also in the sharing of issues and experiences among the student-teachers as well as practitioners which ultimately will result in teachers being reflective practitioners. The paper discusses in detail the different OER practices which if utilized can make our Teacher Education programmes very efficient.

Key words: Teacher Education, Open Educational Resources (OERs), Open Educational Practices

Teacher Education Status in India

Teacher Education (TE) programmes have existed in our country now for over a century and it has been widely recognized that *the quality and standards of any educational system largely depends on the quality, characteristics and commitment of the teachers to their profession* (Mohanty, 2003). The Education Commission (1964-66) had pointed out that "*For the qualitative improvement of education a sound programme of professional education of teachers is essential*". Hence, the teachers and their education have come to

occupy a central space on the issue of concern for quality in education. But very few steps have been taken in the last three decades to operationalise this (NCF-2005). Report of the High-Powered Commission in Teacher Education under the chairmanship of Justice Verma (Aug., 2012) has also pointed out that TE has remained unchanged for over half a century on *two crucial aspects*: the institutionalized *intellectual isolation* of the school teacher and *circumscribed engagement with pedagogy as mere technique*. The report also has pointed out that TE curriculum is more or less seen as a congregation of a number of rituals (such as conducting morning assemblies, slogans, icons, formulating lesson plans within predetermined rigid frameworks, developing teaching aids etc) be performed by pre-service teachers as a prerequisite to qualify themselves as professional teachers.

The design and practice of current teacher education programmes is based on certain assumptions, which impede the progress of ideas and the professional and personal growth of the teachers. It is generally assumed that disciplinary knowledge is 'given', which the trainees 'acquire' through general education and which is independent of professional training in pedagogy. Also conventional teacher education programmes, train teachers to adjust to the needs of the existing system through (a) the meticulous planning of lessons in standardized formats, (b) the ritual of fulfilling the required number of lessons delivered and supervised, (c) the ritual of organising school assemblies and other routine activities and (d) the ritual of completing the required number of written assignments and projects. Lesson Planning, as it is taught during the teacher training, is merely a formal routine which masks the acculturation of the young trainee into the profession without disturbing its underlying assumptions about knowledge and curriculum and also without making the new entrant aware of these assumptions and the consequences of the practices based on them (NCF, 2005). Justice Verma Committee (2012) has observed that these rituals gradually assume the character of rules, fostering normative dispositions. Also there is a divorce between the classrooms realities a teacher has to face and the teacher education programmes he/she receives also finds an expression in the World Bank Report of 1997……..the orientation provided in teacher education institutions through foundation courses is often too theoretical and provides only unrelated and fragmented knowledge to the teachers. It fails to develop a deeper understanding in student teachers about the learners, their socio-cultural environment, their developmental stages, physical and psychological changes they are undergoing and influence their learning styles. Therefore, considerable diversity is needed in content and pedagogy" (Pandey, 2009). Justice Verma Committee (2012) has pointed towards the ritualistic exposure to fragmented knowledge which is neither linked to the larger aims of education and discipline knowledge, nor to the ground realities of classroom practice. Various domains such as educational psychology, philosophy, sociology etc. are taught in isolation without any meaningful integration.

The system of Teacher Education in India is presently in a state of turmoil. As

an offshoot of the policy of liberalization, in the past few years there has been an unprecedented expansion in the number of teacher training institutes under the aegis of different private players. With privatization and liberalization in the field of education, the share of self-financing teacher education institutions in the sector of teacher education has become disproportionately large. Currently, about 85% of teacher education institutions are in the private sector while more than 80% of elementary school children are educated in State schools (Justice Verma Report, 2012).   There is a perception that there has been deterioration in standards due to the uncontrolled expansion of the system in the private (self-financing) sector, without proper assurance of maintaining quality in teacher education by not providing the required infrastructural and instructional facilities or by not recruiting the required number of properly qualified staff (Siddiqui, Sharma and Arora, 2009). Justice Verma committee has also pointed out the problem of sub-standard teacher education institutions and rampant non-adherence to prescribed norms and the inability of NCTE as a statutory body to control the proliferation of sub-standard teacher education institutions.

Different committees and commissions have reviewed the programmes of teacher education and have pointed repeatedly at a number of limitations in the Indian Teacher Education programmes (Mohanty, 2003):

❏ The curricula of TE are rigid, stereotyped and divorced from the realities of schools and national life.

❏ The methods, media and materials that are used in TE institutions are not relevant, economical and practicable in day-to-day life.

❏ There is isolation among the TE institutions and the schools

❏ The programmes of TE leave the student-teachers with very little time for and energy for reading pedagogy and education.

❏ Practice teaching is mechanical, ritualistic and superficial without necessary involvement and understanding of student-teachers.

◆ Vitality and realism are lacking in the curricula and programmes of work in the TE institutions.

◆ Evaluation procedures are mostly subjective, unscientific and unsystematic.

◆ Supervisions of student-teachers is perfunctory, biased and subjective.

The divorce between the classroom realities a teacher has to face and the teacher education programmes he/she receives also finds an expression in the World Bank Report (1997): "in India teachers need but do not receive preparation for teaching in the situation that two-thirds of them have to face: multigrade classrooms with many first generation learners who attend school irregularly". Similar concerns have been expressed by Raina (1999): "teacher

training programmes in India have remained procrustean, offering the same menu to all without slightest regard for varying cultural and physical settings. They remained unresponsive to vast cultural, linguistic, regional and geographical diversity". *It is high time that various contexts in which teachers have to engage students of different stages find adequate space in the teacher education curriculum* (Pandey, 1999). In the same light it has been emphasized by Behari and Menon (1999) that for *a child-centered pedagogy to sustain* (as also emphasized by NCF 2005), *teachers would have to be reflective practitioners and not just assembly line workers*. The continuing 'factory model' does not augur well with the strategies used to implement pedagogic changes. Thus, a call for a thorough overhaul of the content and process of teacher education is required. Chattopadhyaya Commission (1983-95) notes that *if school teachers are expected to bring about a revolution in their approach to teaching....that same revolution must precede and find a place in the Colleges of Education*.

Another very pertinent issue brought forward by the Justice Verma Committee (2012) is *the reliance of students on low-quality literature* (available in the form of dubious help-books). *There is an urgent need to replace such literature with authentic reading materials in education. These need to be made available in English and the languages of the students of pre-service teacher education across the country*. The committee has advocated development of Anthologies of readings and supplementary multi-media support materials for pre-service teacher education programmes and for the professional development of teachers within stipulated time frames. To institutionalize the above given ideas the mechanisms laid down by NCFTE 2009 for teacher education programmes should:

➡ Engage teacher with school curriculum, syllabi and text books; to critically examine them rather than take them as 'given'

➡ Engage with theory along with field experiences to help prospective teachers to view knowledge not as external to the learner but as something that is actively constructed during teaching-learning processes

➡ Provide opportunity for reflection and independent study without packing the training schedule with teacher-directed activities alone;

➡ Engage teachers with children in real contexts rather than teach them about children through theories alone. This would help them understand the psycho-social attributes and needs of learners, their special abilities and characteristics, their preferred mode of cognition, motivation and learning resulting from home and community socialization;

➡ Help teachers develop social sensitivity and consciousness and finer human sensibilities through processes of self-reflection and the study of biographies

➡ Educate teachers to connect school knowledge with community knowledge and life outside the school

➡ Engage teachers with hands-on experience as a pedagogic medium

In order to cater to the above discussed issues and problems plaguing the teacher education system in India, Open Education System (OER) can play a very important role.

Open Education Resources in Teacher Education Practices:

The NCF-2005 has visualized a major epistemological shift in the nature of knowledge and learner from behaviourist to constructivist perspective that calls for subsequent reforms in teacher education curricula in order to prepare teachers to play the role of facilitators of learning utilizing the experiences of learners as no reforms could succeed unless teachers are equipped with relevant content knowledge and pedagogical skills to carry those reforms inside the classrooms (Siddiqui et.al, 2009). Behari and Menon (1999) have insisted on a second generation pedagogic reforms in which there is a need to invest in building on the teachers' capacity to act as autonomous reflective groups of professionals who are sensitive to their social mandate, to the professional ethics and to the needs of their rather heterogeneous client groups. In bringing about these pedagogic reforms, Open Educational Resources (OER) and Practices can play a very important role in making good quality instructional material available to all at minimal cost and also in the sharing of issues and experiences among the students as well as practitioners which will go a long way in developing reflective practitioners. Commonwealth of Learning (COL) and UNESCO (2011) describe the concept of Open Educational Resources as any educational resources (including curriculum maps, course materials, textbooks, streaming videos, multimedia applications, podcasts, and any other materials that have been designed for use in teaching and learning) that are openly available for use by educators and students, without an accompanying need to pay royalties or licence fees. Jan Hylen (2007) has described OER as digitised materials offered freely and openly for educators, students and self-learners to use and reuse for teaching, learning and research. OER includes learning content, software tools to develop, use and distribute content, and implementation resources such as open licences.

OER have come to be recognized as educational resources which have tremendous potential for improving the quality and effectiveness of education in general and teacher education in particular by the national and international fraternity as these can go a long way in developing of new curricula and course content on a national front with focus on improvisations and reflections of students and practitioners in the field. As pointed out by the Justice Verma Committee, that there is an urgent need to replace the dubious and low-quality literature with authentic reading material in education for the benefit of students as well as teacher-educators, OERs can play a very important

role in incorporating the following aspects of curriculum transaction in Teacher Education (as advocated by Justice Verma Committee, 2012):

➡ Portfolio of readings for each course, theory and practicum in the language of the student-teachers. Currently teachers are being educated through sub-standard reading materials available in the form of 'guides' or 'pass books' which are conceptually confused and are regressive in perspective.

➡ Well-defined tasks and assignments for practicum courses with the use of case materials.

➡ Well-designed assignments that require individual writing as well as group/collaborative work

➡ Systematic hands-on activities including analysis of textbooks, curriculum and syllabi, choosing and designing activities for classrooms

Preparation of OERs for Teacher Education at the national level has a huge potential to develop and improve the already existing Teacher Education Practices, developing and validating the educational programmes and course materials, planning of contact sessions with students, development of quality teaching and learning materials, and design of effective assessment i.e. all activities aimed at improving the teaching and learning environment. It is been widely recognized that curricula of teacher education in majority of Indian universities has not kept pace with the changes and challenges happening on the national and international front. Also the students or student-teachers don't have access to quality and updated course materials in regional languages. With the ushering of numerous private colleges this problem has compounded. The teacher educators are ill-trained and lack proper orientation. Also as already pointed out earlier in the paper that there is a huge gap between classroom realities and TE programmes and again these programmes are generally transacted in a very automated fashion which leave little scope for teacher educators and student-teacher to become reflective practitioners. In such scenario OER can be fruitfully utilized in creating a national data base of quality content. The focus has not only to be on creating quality content but **contextualizing** and **localizing** it for different regions and their issues and also focusing on reflective analysis of the content by students and teacher educators. COL and UNESCO (2011) have outlined the transformative educational potential of OER which revolve around the following three linked possibilities:

1. *Increased availability of high quality, relevant learning materials can contribute to more productive students and educators.* Because OER removes restrictions around copying resources, it can reduce the cost of accessing educational materials. In many systems, royalty payments for text books and other educational materials constitute a significant proportion of the overall cost, while processes of procuring permission to use copyrighted material can also be very time-consuming and expensive.

2. *The principle of allowing adaptation of materials provides one mechanism amongst many for constructing roles for students as active participants in educational processes,* who learn best by doing and creating, not by passively reading and absorbing. Content licences that encourage activity and creation by students through re-use and adaptation of that content can make a significant contribution to creating more effective learning environments.

3. *OER has potential to build capacity by providing institutions and educators access, at low or no cost, to the means of production to develop their competence in producing educational materials and carrying out the necessary instructional design* to integrate such materials into high quality programmes of learning.

OER Practices in TE

In order to properly implement OER practices in the Indian context, national bodies such as UGC and NCTE need to play a very important role. NCTE needs to create an online national platform for OERs where universities, colleges, teacher educators and student-teachers can collaborate in tandem in an endeavour to become reflective practioners. Measures will have to be taken to ensure that this platform becomes a vibrant ground for practioners coming up and putting forward their ideas. Following are some OER Practices which should be adopted:

➡ **Dialogue in OER**: Dialogue has been used by thinkers of the east and west like Socretes, Martin Buber, Paulo Freire, J. Krishnamurti and many others. According to Passi (2009) in a dialogue, the classroom or platform is envisioned as a site where new knowledge, grounded in the experiences of students and teachers alike, is produced through meaningful interaction. *Dialogue involves engaging in a cycle of theory, application, evaluation, reflection and then back to theory*. OER can be a very powerful platform for building a Dialogue culture among education practitioners in the country fostering analytical and reflectivity among teachers across the country discussing their issues and classroom experiences and critically analyzing theories based on experiences.

➡ **Simulations and lab in OER**- there are a number of initiatives in India and abroad which include teaching, learning and research resources that reside in public domain that permits their free use or customization by others (Bissell, A 2007). Initiatives by ILab by MIT, UNESCO, COL and in India by BITS and Digital Library of India are worth mentioning. By these initiatives maths and science students and teachers can access the world's best labs. These models should be facilitated by the national agencies like NCTE so that they can serve the need for continuous life long learning of students and teachers working in the field of science, technology and maths education and thus can update their professional skills.

➡ **Launching a national e-content and curriculum**: A Model e-content for Model Teacher Education Curriculum can be developed by specialists and updated from time to time. Adequate avenues for readers to update the content and post their remarks should be provided.

➡ **Focus on review, access and use of OER**: mere development of OER is not going to be sufficient. Sufficient measures will have to be taken so that teachers at different levels are aware of the resources available. At places where IT facilities are rare, these resources in printable medium will have to be made available. Also focus has to be garnering local experiences and contextualizing the materials.

➡ **Students to review content critically based on own experiences in classroom and sharing of experiences**: this has to be the most important aspect of all OER. Until and unless the students go through the content from a critical perspective, the whole purpose tends to get defected. The main idea has to be application of theories into practice and sharing of experiences at a national platform, deliberating upon the varied experiences at different levels, different subject-areas, and different backgrounds on a nation-wide basis.

Facilitation of OER practices

The government and the institutions of Higher Education need to play a very important role in recognizing and encouraging use of OER and Practices for the common benefit of all. The following are some ways in which these practices can be facilitated:

➡ **Role of the Government:** The governments need to play an important role in setting policies for higher education systems and thus can facilitate OER in the following ways (adapted from COL-UNESCO,2011)

   (a) *Support the use of OER through their policy-making role in higher education.*

   (b) *Consider adopting open licensing frameworks*

   (c) *Contribute to raising awareness of key OER issues.*

   (d) *Promote national ICT/connectivity strategies*

   (e) *Support the sustainable development and sharing of quality learning materials*

   (f) *Public-private partnerships to be used as a way to combine know-how and resources*

➡ Role of Higher Education Institutions in consonance with the Regulatory Bodies (adapted from COL-UNESCO,2011): There can be provisions with respect to granting of affiliation and accreditation to institutions of

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teacher education based on the following points for encouraging OER movement in the country:

(a) **Develop institutional strategies for the integration of OER**

(b) **Provide incentives to support investment in the development, acquisition and adaptation of high quality learning materials.** Institutional policies should be reviewed to:

- Encourage judicious selection and adaptation of existing OER, as well as development of new materials where necessary;

- Promote the publication of educational materials as OER within institutional protocols;

- Promote research on using, reusing and repurposing OER;

- Promote students publishing their work (with the guidance of academic staff and within institutional protocols) under an open licence as OER;

- Build OER into mechanisms for institutional and individual monitoring;

- Promote collaboration both within and beyond the institution in developing materials;

- Provide staff with appropriate incentives and rewards for the development, acquisition and adaptation of learning materials; and

- Ensure that staff work load models allow for curriculum, course and materials design and development.

(c) **Recognise the important role of educational resources within internal quality assurance processes***.*

(d) **Consider creating flexible copyright policies.** Such policies could make it simple for staff to invoke some-rights-reserved copyright or other licensing permutations when this is deemed necessary.

(e) **Undertake institutional advocacy and capacity building**. Ongoing awareness-raising, capacity-building (staff development) and networking/ sharing for both women and men can be carried out to develop the full range of competences required to facilitate more effective use of OER

(f) **Ensure ICT access for staff and students**. This means striving to ensure that academic staff and students have ubiquitous access to the necessary ICT infrastructure, software and connectivity to access the Internet and develop or adapt educational materials of different kinds.

This should include software applications, such as Web content editing tools, content management systems, templates and toolkits that facilitate the creation and use of adaptable, inclusively designed educational resources. It might also entail developing a repository of the work of academic staff and students that could serve as a powerful teaching and learning resource, while raising awareness of the distinction between appropriate sharing/collaboration and plagiarism. Staff and students should also have access to training/professional development and support to use these systems.

(g) Develop institutional policies and practices to store and access OER. This includes the capacity to store, manage and share resources and content, both internally and externally, so that academic endeavours build on a growing base of institutional knowledge.

(h) Review institutional OER practices periodically. Such reviews are very important for an institution to determine the value of its policies and practices. They could include reviewing the extent of the use of openly licensed educational materials in higher education programmes. They could also include assessing the effects of this use on the quality of educational delivery and its impact on the cost of developing/procuring high quality teaching and learning materials for undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. Where relevant, this might be extended to showcasing examples of good practice, in both marketing publications and academic research publications.

Adopting the above measures will go a long way in developing reflexivity in teachers; which acquires all the more significance because of increasing racial, cultural and linguistic diversities in schools as well as in our society which demands reflective and broad-minded citizens and teachers with vision……Open Educational Resources in Teacher education curriculum, therefore, needs to be planned and developed to develop the spirit of inquiry, initiative, scientific temper, conceptual clarity and linguistic skills through reflective practices of teacher preparation.

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BOOK REVIEW

The Next Generation of Distance Education: Unconstrained Learning

by

Leslie Moller and Jason B. Huett Springer

New York, 2012, pp.266, Rs.9718

The book is a collection of papers on the future shape of distance education which are divided into 16 chapters by the editor. The book primarily deals with inner aspects and intricacies of distance education. The chapters in this book offer first important efforts towards a coherent consensus for the definition of next generation of distance learning environments. In the first chapter itself the authors try to explore the possibilities of the new technologies which are based on internet undermining the distance and more focus on the depth of the technology enabled spaces that can eclipse early internet capacity. As one thinks about the how of learning, the chapter (Moller, Robison & Huett) frames the discussion by proposing principles to guide the next generation of learning including "learning experience design" and encouraging us to harness strengths of technology. The more use of technology the greater the tools we can have in our hands. In another chapter the writer, Michael J. Spector, who is an expert on educational and instructional psychology argues that in the times to come technologies will become smaller and faster but the emphasis should remain on the learning, irrespective of cultures, space or language between the learner and the instructor.

In the chapter 'Rethinking design and learning process in Distance Education', the author tries to invoke the idea of innovative learning methods and design processes which can heighten the quest for new approaches for better concepts of guides for the learners. Elements that inform our instructional design profession are maturing and are available for application and implementation at all levels to help bring how people will learn in line with how people are taught which is the basic idea of distance education. Greater reliability on the technology is the need of the hour but it should also be kept in mind that the design process for these distance learners should also be according to their process. This book tries to find out these concepts about the next generations of learning and teaching which is the main focus of this book. As greater understanding in neuroscience, coupled with technology enabled teaching and learning and the inspiration of the internet become

more attainable, the nature of education and training has changed when it was started as mere concept imparting education through distance learning mode. How do we design effective instruction and harness ideas that begin to foster change and greater learning? The book also envisages the concept of online learning as a medium of instruction and learning for the future. New techniques of instructional designs are being made and further research and development is still going on how to enhance it. Apart from few all the chapters deal with technological breakthroughs that are taking place in the area of online learning in distance education. The book also gives some insight into the idea of 'playful learning as chapter on Cygames, a concept which is quickly taking shape as the next step of learning. The chapter discusses in detail how game based technologies will help in learning and assessment.

This book presents several ideas, such as Hokanson's thoughts related to design review as an important aspect, or ideas from Spector that distance education is becoming commonplace throughout all educational venues and is an experience occurring in a technology-enabled learning environment that is no longer two dimensional but multi-dimensional. Technology-enabled learning is at the doorstep of sweeping changes, formats and environments for learning in today's society.

Cleveland-Innes and Garrison's chapter describes how the teaching and learning emphasis has shifted – from what to learn to how to learn. Impending and current changes in technology, financial realities, ever more information to be learned and applied, the culture, and the world are examples of factors impacting how education will be 'done' in the future. This book formalizes some of the ideas about how technology helps everyone learn in new ways. Consider a recent study (Landeros, 2011) about creating 'travel apps' for disabled learners when travelling by bus in their communities, enabling greater independence, access to resources, school and jobs.

Chapters in this book provide insight into the future of instructional design, teaching and learning, concluding with a compilation of classic articles about instructional design prior to 1990. While an important foundation for today's thinking. The challenge may be in finding leaders, brave enough to allow the dam to flow with inspired thinking to begin shaping education for the future that is here today.

In the ever changing face of technological development in the field of distance education, this book comes up as lighting guide for all those who are working in the area of learning and assessment in distance education. This book can help shape thinking and prepare for changes that are knocking at our professional doorsteps.

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International Conference

Education for all: Role of Open Schooling - A Brief Report

*(Report prepared by Dr. Kuldeep Agarwal,
Ms. Asheema Singh and Ms. Puja Akshay)*

A 3-day International Conference on "Education for all: Role of Open Schooling" was organized by National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS). It was held on March 13-15, 2013 at IDSA, New Delhi, India. The partners in the conference were Commonwealth of Learning (COL), Vancouver, Canada, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) India, and Intel South Asia.

Conference Chairman was Dr. S.S.Jena, Chairman, NIOS; Conference Director was Dr. Kuldeep Agarwal, Director (Academic) NIOS; and Mr. Sukanta Kumar Mahapatra, Academic Officer (Sociology), NIOS was Conference Convener.

The objectives of the conference were to:

➢ Exchange and share existing national and international experiences/ practices for achieving Education for all

➢ Discuss issues and concerns pertaining to education for all at different levels and types of school education

➢ Suggest strategies and interventions to achieve the goal of Education for All through open schooling

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THEMES AND SUB-THEMES

Issues of Access & Equity:

➡ Expansion and meeting of demand; Retention/completion

➡ Awareness Building and Advocacy for open schooling

Issues of Quality (materials, curriculum, delivery system, evaluation)

➡ Relevance (need based); contextualized; goal-oriented

➡ Learner Support Services and delivery system

➡ ICT & Multimedia

➡ Capacity Building

➡ Research and Development

➡ Innovation

Institutional related issues and operational strategies:

➤ Management of open schooling

➤ Financing of Open Schooling

➤ Monitoring and Quality Assurance in Open Schooling

➤ Networking and Collaboration

➤ Resource Mobilization

➤ Documentation of Success Stories

Issues pertaining to Skill Development through Open Schooling:

◆ Levels (elementary, secondary and senior secondary)

◆ Types (general, vocational)

◆ Integration of Academic Education and Vocational Education/Skill Development.

Spread over three days the conference involved six key note addresses, delivered by world renowned educationists of India and abroad, three Panel Discussions and seventy papers presented in eleven sessions. A Session on Poster presentations was also organized. The conference was attended by more than 200 delegates and guests from nearly twenty countries from all over the world.

The International Conference was inaugurated by Dr. M.M. Pallam Raju, Hon'ble Minister, Human Resource Development, Govt. of India. Mr. R. Bhattacharya, Secretary, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Govt. of India was the Guest of Honour. Ms. Frances Ferreira, Education Specialist, Commonwealth of Learning, Canada was also present at this event. Dr. S.S. Jena, in his welcome address informed that although much has been done in open and distance learning system more needs to be done to ensure that Right to Education (RTE) is observed in letter and spirit. Dr. Kuldeep Agarwal, Director (Acad.), NIOS, spoke about the cherished goal of EFA and the movement towards universalization of secondary education and the importance of access, equity and quality. Ms. Ferreira conveyed that COL is proud to partner with NIOS and Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD). She stated that the conference is a fit platform for open and distance learning (ODL) stakeholders from all over the world to share, consult and collaborate. She congratulated NIOS for organising the conference. Mr. Bhattacharya discussed the merits of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) and Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) and the role of open schooling to cater to 15% of children aged 14-18 years.

Dr. Pallam Raju released the Framework of Recognition of Prior Learning drafted by NIOS. While speaking on the occasion, he outlined the success of SSA and how it means that secondary education must also become universal. He felt that open schooling has a significant role to play in achieving the target of Education for All. The vote of thanks was delivered by Mr. U.N. Khaware, Secretary, NIOS.

The first Conference Keynote Address "From Education for All to Learning for All" was delivered by Ms. Frances Ferreira, Education Specialist, Commonwealth of Learning (COL), Vancouver, Canada. It was chaired by Dr. S.S. Jena, Chairman, NIOS. Talking of the challenge to bring children to school she said that it was a greater challenge to keep them in school. She said that children who leave school early represent lost opportunities. She also brought up the issue of gender parity, equal treatment and equal access. The need of the hour she said was to provide what children want to study.

The second key note address "The Future of Learning" was delivered by Dr. Sugata Mitra, Professor of Educational Technology, Newcastle University, U.K. The Chair for the session was Ms. Shweta Khurana, Head, K12 Education, Corporate Affairs Group, Intel South Asia. He pointed out that learning and education do not mean the same thing. He said that education is still stuck in a model which has become irrelevant.

The third Keynote Address, which was chaired by Prof. A.K. Sharma, Former Director, NCERT, on "Access and Equity in School Education: Issues and Concerns for Open Schooling" was delivered by Dr. Vinod Raina, Bharat Gyan Vigyan Samiti. He discussed the elusive triangle of access, equity and quality. He pointed out that without equity, there cannot be quality. The inclusive model of education means that bright and slow children, and rich and poor children, are study in the same class.

The fourth keynote address was on the topic "Quality in School Education: Issues & Concerns for Open Distance Learning". The chair for the session was Mr. Shigeru Aoyagi, Director UNESCO, New Delhi & Representative to India, Bhutan, Maldives and Sri Lanka. The speaker was Prof. Shyam B. Menon, Vice Chancellor, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar University, Delhi. Prof. Menon cautioned that to realise the goals of EFA and the MDGs greater political will, readiness of the bureaucracy to transcend the routine manner of working and greater civil society participation was paramount.

The fifth keynote address was on "Planning for Instructional Strategies in School Education: Implications for Open Schooling" by Dr. Santosh Panda, Professor, Distance Education, STRIDE, IGNOU. The chair for this session was Prof. N.K. Ambasht, Former Chairman, NIOS. Enumerating the interests of the various stakeholders – policy makers, teachers, parents, evaluators and employers he said that these are often at odds with each other.

He focused on the factors in learning, cognitive and non-cognitive, as well as the capacity to learn, and discussed the merits of blended learning.

The sixth keynote address which was chaired by Prof. R.B. Shivagunde, Joint Director, PSSCIVE, Bhopal on "Integrating Skill Development in School Education: Implications for Open Schooling" was delivered by Prof. (Dr.) Mukti Mishra, President, Centurion University, Odisha. Dr. Mishra expressed that since education policies for rural areas are often decided in capital cities education for the children of rural areas loses its relevance. He pointed out, skill is not a business model – it's a social model. In this context, the importance of the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) could not be underestimated.

Panel Discussion on "Issues of Access and Equity" was chaired by Fr. T.V. Kunnunkal, Founder Chairman, NIOS, and moderated by Ms. Lystra S. Ovid from Trinidad & Tobago. The panellists were Prof. Usha Nayar, Professor (Retd.), NCERT, discussing Gender Perspective and Prof. Janaki Rajan, Professor, Jamia Millia Islamia, talking about Holistic Perspective.

Discussing the education of girls in India Prof. Nayar noted that the notion of women being the weaker sex was an import of the colonial rulers; pre-colonial Indian women were neither weak nor disadvantaged. However, the need of today is to focus on both sexes. Prof. Rajan stated that discrimination is rampant and flourishing in the Indian education system, whether its caste based or gender based. She pointed out that the universal right to education is most often least realizable by the most underprivileged and that equal access alone does not translate to equal opportunity. She discussed that open schooling can play a pivotal role in ensuring social justice through education as it shifts from exclusionary to universal, reclaiming equitable traditions. Ms. Ovid thanked Prof. Nayar and Prof. Rajan and noted that these issues could have come from any country in the Commonwealth. She said that we must demystify the concept that open schooling is sub-standard. Fr. Kunnunkal concluded the session by noting that India has a diverse culture and it sometimes manages to nudge the issues of equality to periphery. He said that we need to rewrite the definition of functional literacy to be fair to the children; otherwise, we run the risk of producing misfits who can barely read and write.

The second panel discussion was on "Vocational Education and Skill Development". The discussion was chaired by Ms. Fancy Amey, Director, Learner Support, Botswana College of Distance and Open Learning (BOCODOL), Botswana. The moderator for the session was Mr. Joshua Mallet, Director, CENDLOS, Ghana. The panellists were Dr. Joginder S. Sodhi, Shri Ram Centre for Industrial Relations, Human Resources, Economic & Social Development, New Delhi; Ms. Ankita Mishra Bundela, Dy. Secretary, Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD). Govt. of India, New Delhi;

and Dr. K.P. Wasnik, Director (Vocational Education), NIOS, NOIDA. Dr. Sodhi stressed the need for industry involvement in formulating vocational education. He also pressed for erasing the stigma that vocational education training (VET) condemns a student to remaining a labourer. To combat that stigma, more needs to be done to understand the youth's aspirations and to improve career counselling and career guidance. Ms. Bundela discussed the MHRD's order for the National Vocational Education Qualification Framework (NVEQF), issued in September 2012. NVEQF establishes national principles for providing vocational education at an international equivalency. NVEQF has launched a pilot in 40 schools in Haryana. Pilots in West Bengal (60 schools) and Assam (93 schools) are also in the pipeline. Dr. Wasnik discussed the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and its benefits to learners, employers and society by providing a certified skilled workforce. The assessment methods used must be appropriate, fair and manageable.

The third panel discussion was on "Institutional Related Issues and Operational Strategies". The discussion was chaired by Prof M.M. Pant, Former Pro-Vice Chancellor, IGNOU. The discussants were Prof. M.N. Deshmukh, Former Director, SSA, IGNOU; Dr. R.C. Sharma, IGNOU, New Delhi; Dr. Kuldeep Agarwal, Director (Academic), NIOS, Delhi; and Sh. S.K. Prasad, SAP, NIOS. Prof. M.N. Deshmukh spoke on 'Resource Based Learning in Open Schooling: A Case of OER Project of NIOS India'. He stated that information is now in abundance, so the new challenges are selecting and converting information into actionable knowledge. He touched on the basic tenets of constructivism, as well as the paradigm shift from behaviourist to constructivist; from content to context; and from inform to perform. Dr. R.C. Sharma talked about Virtual Open Schooling. He began his remarks by noting that the various measures and initiatives in place are still inadequate because a large number of students remain to be covered. He pointed out that virtual schools are the fastest growing trend globally and that the key is to de-link the degree from the job, thus emphasising the skill. Dr. Kuldeep Agarwal deliberated on 'Life Skills Integration in Open Schooling: Towards Holistic Education'. He outlined the paradigm shift with regards to the emphasis on learning, the constructivist approach, experiential learning and RPL. He linked the life skills integration to the UNESCO Pillars of Education: learning to know; learning to do; learning to live together; learning to be. Sh. S.K. Prasad was the final speaker for the session and addressed OER for Vocational Education: A Case of NIOS. His topic was Mukta Vidya Vani – NIOS Initiatives – Free Audio Content to Learners. This web based, live audio streaming programme, launched in July 2012, is a fine example of virtual schooling. Its attributes are that it is live, interactive, participatory and cost effective.

Valedictory Programme was organized on March 15, 2013. Dr. S.S Jena Chairman NIOS and Conference Chairman welcomed Ms. Fredricka Meijer,

UNFPA Representative India and Country Director Bhutan who was the Chief Guest for the programme.

Dr. Kuldeep Agarwal, Director Academic NIOS and Conference Director presented the conference recommendations. Speaking on the occasion. Ms. Fredricka Meijer said that she was deeply honoured to have been invited to the conference. She noted that UNFPA places great emphasis on life skills for health. With the Adolescence Education Programme that UNFPA is engaged in with Government of India they were also working with school education. However, with NIOS they have understood the importance of making curricular interventions. She said that the development of life skills enriched secondary education materials has been a great learning experience and a very valuable partnership for both NIOS and UNFPA.

Sh. U.N. Khaware, Secretary, NIOS, then delivered the vote of thanks. He quoted Swami Vivekananda's exhortation that we arise and awake, and not stop until the goal is reached. The conference was officially closed on this poetic note.

Conference Recommendations

Placing on record the importance of attaining both the EFA (Education for All) Goals as well as MDGs (Millennium Development Goals) for all signatory countries;

Recognizing that ODL (Open & Distance Learning) is a cost effective and efficacious mode of education at all levels;

Realizing that Open schooling is crucial for attaining EFA Goals; and

Understanding the need for all governments to include Open Schooling as an acceptable mode of education in any policy/legislation on Education for All;

The participants of the international conference on "Education for All: Role of Open Schooling" held on 13-15 March, 2013 at IDSA, New Delhi in partnership with Commonwealth of Learning, UNFPA and Intel South Asia, after detailed deliberations made the following recommendations for attaining EFA Goals and MDGs.

A.   Recommendations for all countries and national governments

1.   ***Taking steps*** to introduce ODL at school/pre-degree level in all countries, particularly developing countries, where resources are an issue;

2. ***Ensuring*** acceptability of open schooling by maintaining quality in curriculum, study materials, programme delivery, evaluation and student support;

3. ***Enhancing*** the quality of courses & programmes by addressing hidden curricula including life skills and livelihood skills;

4. ***Recognizing*** Prior learning and building learning imperatives on it;

5. ***Optimizing*** the use of ICT (Information & Communication Technology) to make learning more accessible and to provide equitable learning opportunities;

6. ***Supporting*** the OER movement to bring cost effective quality material to distance learners;

7. ***Encouraging*** research and capacity building of all ODL functionaries; and

8. ***Developing*** action plans for collaborating, and cooperating with other nations/ organizations/institutions as well as individuals to boost the Open Schooling Movement for achieving the EFA Goals as well as MDGs.

B.   Recommendations for Ministry of Human Resource Development, Govt. of India

1. ***Including*** open schooling in the definition of school as an accepted mode of schooling under the RTE Act, 2009;

2. ***Establishing*** State Open Schools in every state to cater to 15% children of the relevant age group through open schooling under the RMSA Framework for universalization of secondary education;

3. ***Notifying*** NIOS as the National Resource Organization in open schooling and raising its status to the level of NCERT for providing academic and technical support and advice to state governments; and

4. ***Supporting*** NIOS to set up a National Resource Centre for RMSA.

C.   Recommendations for National Institute of Open Schooling

1. ***Playing*** a crucial role towards universalization of secondary education and in attaining the cherished goal of Education for All at secondary level by addressing the needs of priority groups girl children/women, socially & economically backward groups, persons

with disability, minorities, etc. keeping the triangle of Access, Equity and Quality in mind;

2. *Evolving* an action plan to promote gender equity and equality;

3. *Integrating* Life Skills in all policies and programmes of NIOS;

4. *Drawing* up of a special programme for persons with disability;

5. *Planning* to establish at least one regional centre in every state;

6. *Extending* its outreach by providing study centres in all Blocks, particularly in Educationally Backward Blocks of India;

7. *Instituting* a National Resource Centre for RMSA to provide academic and technical support to state governments, capacity building of open school functionaries as well as undertake quality research for expanding the knowledge base in open schooling;

8, *Initiating* advocacy with all state governments to set up open schools or strengthen the already existing State Open Schools;

9. *Developing* curriculum framework for open schooling;

10. *Optimizing* the use of ICT and Media and explore innovative ideas inter alia Virtual Schooling, OERs, e-Learning;

11. *Expanding* its skill development/vocational education programme in tune with the NVEQF, revising all courses in consultation with National Skill Development Council and Sector Skill Councils; and

12. *Playing* an active role as world leader in open schooling by providing consultation to national governments, particularly in the Commonwealth for setting up Open Schools and reviving the International Centre for Training in Open Schooling (ICTOS) set up with the help of COL (Commonwealth of Learning) and UNESCO for capacity building of open school functionaries at international level.

D. Recommendations for State Governments

1. *Establishing* and / or strengthening open schools in consultation with NIOS;

2. *Undertaking* advocacy activities for promoting open schooling and

3. *Tracking* out of school children and bringing them into the fold of education through open schooling.

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24th Foundation Day (Silver Jubilee) of NIOS 23rd November, 2012

REPORT

With a vision of sustainable inclusive learning that gives universal and flexible access to quality school education and skill development, the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) was set up on 23 November, 1989 as an autonomous institution by the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), Government of India.

The NIOS has deliberated to give a huge thrust to its programmes and activities during its Silver Jubilee year beginning from 23 November, 2012 to 23 November, 2013. Keeping this in consideration, the NIOS celebrated its 24th Foundation Day on 23rd November, 2012 at Mavalankar Auditorium, New Delhi.

Part I

I Silver Jubilee Lecture by Dr. M.B. Menon (Assistant Vice-Chancellor, Wawasan Open University, Penang, Malaysia)

Dr. S.S. Jena, Chairman, NIOS welcomed Dr. Shashi Tharoor, Union HRD Minister for the State, Shri Apoorva Chandra, Joint Secretary to MHRD and Dr. M.B. Menon, Assistant Vice-Chancellor, Wawasan Open University, Penang, Malaysia to mark the beginning of the first silver jubilee lecture. Thereafter, NIOS's official song was sung by the artists of All India Radio.

In his welcome address, Dr. Jena explained the roles and programmes of NIOS, since its inception.

Dr. Jena then invited Dr. M.B. Menon (Assistant Vice-Chancellor, Wawasan Open University, Penang, Malaysia) to illuminate everyone with his 1st Silver Jubilee lecture.

Dr. M.B. Menon gave his Silver Jubilee lecture titled 'A New Paradigm for Open Distance Learning for India'. He deliberated on the NIOS and IGNOU association and dedicated his lecture to late Prof. J. Rama Reddy and Mr. K.C. Pant. He propounded on the emergence of Open University System in India, well called by late Prof. Rama Reddy as 'ivory towers thrown open'. He also mentioned some ODL's arguable areas, for instance, social commitment

versus revenue generation, expansion of programmes within the framework of ODL philosophy and system versus expansion, competition versus cooperation etc. He also explicated OERs which are manifested by open license, open access, open format and open software. He emphasized on the need of flexibility and inclusion in the ODL system, and closed his lecture by reckoning new paradigms for inclusion in ODL such as resource based learning, course specific study guides, face to face/virtual learning support, assessment and certification.

Thereafter, Shri Apoorva Chandra (Joint Secretary to MHRD) was invited to share his views. In his brief speech, he highlighted some important issues such as ODL being one of the effective modes of study because it includes assignments, projects and other forms of learning; the debate on social responsibility and revenue generation; and the MHRD's support to NIOS in all aspects for opening more regional centers. Overall, he emphasised on the issue of quality and urged NIOS to take care of the same.

Dr. Shashi Tharoor (Union HRD Minister of State), the Chief Guest of the first session was then invited to put his views forward. He first congratulated NIOS for completing 24 years and proudly entering into the silver jubilee year. He emphasised on the need, quality aspects and effectiveness of Open and Distance Learning System. He opined that certain aspects have to be relooked in terms of education-content and accessibility to the targeted groups in particular and others in general. He also stressed on bridging the gap between learners and NIOS through effective accessibility of technology. Dr. Tharoor underlined the idea of building a knowledge based society and appreciated the role of NIOS for providing education for the enhancement of literacy. He concluded with the idea that though much has been achieved by NIOS, a lot remains to be done.

Finally, Dr. Kuldeep Agarwal (Director, Academic) proposed a Vote of Thanks. He thanked all dignitaries, delegates and everyone present in the Mavlankar Hall.

Part II

Inaugural of 24th Foundation Day Celebration

Dr. S.S. Jena (Chairman, NIOS) began the second session by welcoming esteemed Prof. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, (Former President of India), erudite Dr. M.M. Pallam Raju, (Minister, Human Resource Development, Government of India) and honourable Shri R. Bhattacharya (Secretary, School Education & Literacy MHRD). All the dignitaries lighted the glory lamp of NIOS to initiate the celebration.

Shri R. Bhattacharya (Secretary, School Education & Literacy MHRD) was then invited to share his views on the propitious occasion of Foundation day. Shri Bhattacharya greeted all dignitaries and propounded on the need of strategic improvement, barrier-free and sustainable education in the area of Open Schooling.

Thereafter, Prof. A P J Abdul Kalam (Former President of India) was invited to deliver the Foundation Day Lecture. He shared his delight of being a part of this event and focused on the main topic, 'Light a Lamp of Knowledge'. Furthermore, he shared his experiences of knowing Sethu Ramaswamy, an unknown Indian Woman with doughty spirit to acquire a master's degree at the age of 88 and the great spirit of a car driver to obtain a doctorate degree.

Adding further, he said that the autobiography of Sethu Ramaswamy 'Bride at 10 and Mother at 15' is an archetype of motivation that age does not matter at all if one has a great aim.

He urged all teachers present on the occasion to exude knowledge and be true enablers of learning. He made the teachers take an oath promising: "First and foremost I love teaching and teaching will be my soul, shaping the students and igniting them I will continue myself for a great teacher. I will bring an average to the Best performer by the way of my teaching the class. I will be a mother, a father in whole a builder and will impart quality education with constant endeavor".

The session was presided over by honourable Dr. Pallam Raju (Minister, Human Resource Development, Government of India) who was then invited to share his views. He traced NIOS's growth from a modest project to an institution of national importance. For him, NIOS is a key to Education For All (EFA) and its effective universalization.

Amidst all, Secondary Science and Technology study material was also released by Prof. A P J Abdul Kalam (Former President of India), Dr. M.M. Pallam Raju, (Minister, Human Resource Development, Government of India) and Shri R. Bhattacharya (Secretary, School Education & Literacy MHRD).

Shri U.N. Khaware (Secretary, NIOS) proposed a Vote of Thanks and expressed his heart-felt thanks to Dr. Kalam for igniting so many minds. He expressed his gratitude for Dr. Raju for his consistent support to NIOS, Shri Bhattacharya for his patronage and Dr. Jena for his continuous inspirations and efforts.

The NIOS also conferred awards on the Best Coordinator, Best Study Centre and Best Regional Centre. Also, the successful learners of NIOS were felicitated for their achievements.

Later during the evening cultural items were presented by the NIOS learners such as Ganesh Stuti and contemporary dance by Tamanna School which works for the cause of mentally challenged, multi-disabled and autistic; Rajasthani folk dance performed by Deepalaya School which works for the economically marginalised; a play 'Udan' performed by Prerna which exhibited true story of a girl Fatima Bi who was rescued by the NIOS to fulfill her dream of education; a contemporary dance by Akshay Pratishthan; a 'Qawwali' and Punjabi dance by Shikhar Organisation which works for social development and runs NIOS's Hunar Project, Basic Education and Vocational Education; and lastly a Rajasthani folk song by All India Radio artist. The celebration ended with a promise of many more to come.

The entire day's programme was video streamed live through **Mukta Vidya Vani** on the NIOS web site.

(Report prepared by Dr. Soumya Rajan & Dr. Chunnu Prasad, Academic Department, NIOS, India)

Note for Contributors

The articles for COMOSA Journal of Open Schooling should provide useful information about Open Schooling system. In order to ensure the quality and standard of the articles/papers, the received articles/papers are reviewed by a panel of experts in the field of open and distance education and only the selected articles/ papers are considered for publication in the journal. If the article is print worthy with certain modifications, the author may be asked to do the needful.

Format of the Paper/Article/Research Report for COMOSA Journal

Depending upon the nature of contribution, the following formats may be followed:

a) *Articles/Papers in Open and Distance Learning (ODL)*

1. Abstract, Keywords (in about 100-150 words in a separate page (A-4 size).

2. Title

3. Author's Name, Address in the footnote of the first page.

4. Introduction/Context

5. Sub-items with headings relating to:

   – Field Situations/Scenario

   – Emerging Issues, sub issues

   – Critical analysis

6. Innovative initiatives to address the problems, implications for ODL in the country's context/context of other countries, action points (if any)

7. Conclusion

8. Acknowledgements (if any).

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3. Author/Name of Institution/Organisation/Country/Year of study in the footnote of the first page.

4. Introduction/Context

5. Objectives

6. Description of the case, methodology, quantitative/qualitative aspects, critical analysis, comparison of the case study with other countries in the concerned area.

7. Special Features/Innovative Initiatives/Success Points

8. Conclusion – Implication and needed follow up, replicability,

9. Acknowledgements (if any)

10. Reference

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6. Sample Size, Sampling Technique

7. Study Tools

8. Methodology

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10. Conclusion - major findings, implications, needed follow-up action, suggestion for further research in the area.

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