Open and Distance Learning System (ODL): An overview with Reference to Indian Scenario

Chaiti Chakraborti

Librarian, Goenka College of Commerce & B.A.

Key words : Open and Distance Learning System, National Policy on ODL System

Abstract : The title of this paper denotes the key terms, open and distance learning to all students (as there is no barrier of age limit) to an open area. This is flexible in nature and opportunity in terms of access comes in multiple mode. Virtual learning is related to this education system. Advancement in the Information and Communication Technology (ICT), the opening of achieving the degrees and opportunities for taking education is enhanced. The increase in number of the open universities being established across the world is highly indicative. Here adaptability is a vital point because both the teacher and the student are not acquainted with each other. In case of learning, if a student can not understand what he /she should read the total programme for this courses will be futile. In this paper I focussed on the national policy of Govt. of India regarding ODL education system ,the role of teachers in ODL institutions, learners' support services in ODL, Academic library and the ODL students and thus the concept of virtual learning environment is coming. The central Govt.,the state concerned play a significant role for the implementation of this programme properly using its machinery at a right manner. So all the governments have a specific line of thinking to enable its people to get academic degrees as far as possible. So the Govt. has to take decisions regarding the rules of execution of this programme. Here comes a view of open and distance learning education . There are several Schools for Distance Learning in India. Centrally, Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) and Netaji Subhas Open University (NSOU) in West Bengal are mention worthy. It is found that Andra Pradesh is the first state to introduce this open system within its territory. There are many other Distance-Courses like correspondence courses (it should be noted that all state governments have a specific rule to implement such correspondence courses) i.e University of Delhi correspondence courses, in West Bengal Burdwan University, Rabindra Bharati University have implemented this type of correspondence courses.

Introduction

Definition : Distance Education is a term used to define the field of Distance Learning. It is a mode of delivering education and instruction ,often on an individual basis, to the students who are not physically present in a traditional setting such as a classroom for hours together. Distance education, Distance learning, Distance students and Distance learners all are same. Columbia State University defines Distance learning as a non-traditional form of education in which a teacher and a student are not located in the same physical space and each is expected to interact through the assistance of teaching The access denotes to availability for all, free from constraints of time and place and lastly multiple modes cater the various learning systems. More related terms refer to Correspondence study, Home study, Independent study, Distance teaching, Open access etc.

Now a days, Distance education is becoming an accepted and indispensable part of mainstream education .The advancement of new technologies for teaching can be possible through distance.

O D L always wants the learner to achieve. This programme must define its aims, objectives, and learning outcomes and will reflect the outcomes of Higher Education Deptts.of any state that are in line with National and Global Developments.

In O D L system there are two major themes .One is methods of learning and other is what should be taught. As the ODL students are not assigned to study in a particular formal manner ,their learning methods should be based on assignment ,project, report, test etc. In the administrative part, there should a strict schedule of internal rules to make an uniformity, consistency and fairness of assessment methods in several ODL centres .Syllabus should be so framed that it is compatible to the current learning systems. Education is an agent of transformation in terms of changing lifestyle, attitudes, and behaviours. The mode of teaching and learning in distance education is less formalised , as compared to campus based education. Moreover it is diversified and flexible. The main feature in the ODL system is that it is not a face to face teaching method , some times not in interactive mode .

National Policy of O D L System : The mission and goal of the Higher Education Department is to provide education and to make graduates through a) provision of up gradation of knowledge and enhancement of practical skills which are based on scientific principles b) development of the quest of knowledge and lifelong learning skills that are essential for continuous up gradation of knowledge c) consideration of other issues that are related to local, national and international level. The main task of the Higher Education Department is to produce access, by the ability of its graduates to carry out their expected roles and responsibilities in the society. The University Grants Commission (UGC) in 1974 released guidelines for correspondence courses, which specified the following objectives of ODL that are still relevant. ODL is useful for:

a) the students who had to discontinue their formal education owing to different circumstances,

b) students coming from different geographical areas,

c) students who had dropped out of the system due to non-development of motivation and interest,

d) those who could not manage to get a seat in regular college and university classes.

e) learners who see education as life-long learning. With the success of University of Delhi Correspondence courses and later the first open university in the State of Andhra Pradesh ,the Government of India established Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) in 1985 by an act of the Indian Parliament. The establishment of IGNOU act is a landmark in the history of ODL in India. The govt. empowered IGNOU by giving the dual rights to offer programmes as well as to determine the standards of teaching ,evaluation, researches in ODL .The Govt. of India introduced a draft national policy on ODL on August 28,2009 and emphasized the danger of large number of ODL providers turning into degree mills.ODL has an important role to play and to provide opportunities of learners who do not have direct access to face to face teaching. Indian Higher Education Department has several Councils for regulating professional education ,while the University Grant Commission has been established by the Govt. of India to determine the standards of the university, colleges and the higher education in India. The recommendations of the National Knowledge Commission (NKC), established by the Govt. of India, reflect the importance of ODL, as it called for the radical reforms of the system of Open and Distance Education (ODE) to achieve the objective. Some recommendations of NKC are :

    i)   set up a National Education Foundation to develop Web-based common open resources

    ii)   establish a credit bank to effect transition to a course credit system

    iii)   increase access for learners with special needs.

    iv)   Create a new standing committee for the regulation of ODE

    v)   Develop a system for quality assessment

The practical, intellectual and staff skills are expected to be achieved by the learner at the end of the programme. This programme takes into account the fact that the learner should have analytical thinking ,values, ethics and professionalism .There are many franchise study centres all over the country. It may be noted that ,despite the emergence of ODL as a discipline there are deep rooted cultural practices in support of face to face education which have attracted a lot. Suggested areas of ODL policies are the terminology judgement, curricular design and development, financial assistance from Govt. and other local bodies, staff development and research, framing different modules, learners' support , assistance and lastly develop technical and infrastructural skills.

Role of teachers in Distance Education :

Teaching urged the teaching community irrespective of the mode of education as a discipline and the teacher of a distance course the role of teachers are to frame curriculum (making design and development), execute through the application of that curriculum and content presentation. A teacher should assess the learner's performance

(continuous and term-end) giving support and extension services to the learner by use of media , print, audio, video, web based courses ,multimedia to deliver teaching. In preparing learning materials (the most important thing), the teachers, who are teaching face to face in college and universities will have to share their practical experiences to develop the study material convenient with the recent trends. The teachers take counselling classes as per the syllabus ,key points are analysed and discussed there in order to impart knowledge to the students. The students are assisted with Books, Study-materials as per the syllabus. At the end of the session workshops are held according to the intake capacity of a particular Institution .It should be highly remembered that it is a distance learning course. If the colleges and universities do not make any co-operation, the mission of this learning system will fail. While making the programme for the period of workshop, it is better to consider the availability of the teachers' community and the students' forum. Workshops usually take place in a particular Institution. In the workshop students gather practical experiences. There are other facilities to learn and acquire knowledge on those subjects covered with practical classes by practising in the laboratory. Most of the time the practical classes are short time courses. The teachers try their best to make those classes comfortable and easiest to the student as possible. It should be remembered that the students' front and the teaching community are unknown to each other. In B.Ed courses the students are taught practice teaching like the formal courses and at the end they have to perform final teaching in presence of the supervisors.

Learner support services in O D L : This support system highly depends on the mobile technology for the invisible students. This system is very useful and an innovative way and always try to increase interaction between the students and the learning materials . Tutorial classes, letters, reminders ,assignments all can be transformed through this support system with the help of SMS also. Another services like internet access, e-learning, conceptual explanation can be availed by students. This system helps to be a part to communicate any student at any time anywhere. Mobile learning , mobile computing and the e-learning are accessible resources anywhere. The use of mobile devices in learning can be named m-learning. This is the device of electronic learning material on mobile devices such as mobile phones, tablets, laptops etc. Internet connection is essential for getting success in any time any where.

Academic Library and the student of O D L : An academic library should render face to face assistances, allow ODL students to get access to the physical print and the non-print collection and to pick up the items through inter library loan to the learners .The students of this section have an idea of a virtual library . It is seen that now a days students are getting satisfactory services from the university and college libraries. Academic libraries are trying to meet up the requirement by providing equivalent library resources and services to their own students and the distance learners. If a distance learner fails to come to a particular academic institution, the library resources and services must be delivered to him/her electronically or through other means.

Rabindra Mukta Vidyalaya :

In the case of school education The West Bengal Council of Rabindra Open Schooling (erstwhile State Open School) set up as a wing of the School Education Department in 1997 by Government of West Bengal to provide open and distance mode of learning to the disadvantaged learners at an early level. The Council imparts open learning through self study materials and personal contact programmes.

At last I will make a focus on **Virtual Learning Environment (VLE)**. A VLE is a web based platform for the digital aspects of the course study, usually within an educational Institution. VLE always participates to be organised into groups and roles and present resources ,activities and instructions within a common structure and provides the different stages of assessment report on participation and some level of integration with other Institutional systems. The VLE has some course syllabus, a) a notice board for current information about the organising course b) support as communication such as e-mail, chat rooms, twitter and other materials like blogs etc..

Conclusion :

The aim of this study is similar to that of the formal education. But there is a difference between the nature of disseminating knowledge to the students. Although we are depending highly on the use of mobile phones but its services depends on the availability of towers , potential of purchase for the rural areas ,more or less their acquaintance with the technology used in the set. Distance Education is providing greater accessibility and up to date educational resources. The faculty and the department should consult relevant stakeholders particularly potential users maintaining aims and objectives of this course. While framing the syllabus, the quality should be judged ignoring the quantity.

After completing the degree and getting a pass-out certificate , a student have to share his academic knowledge with a student of formal education. Here is the essence of framing syllabus. On the other hand, the quantity should not be so vast that an O D L student cannot cope with this bulk. There should be a balance between quality and quantity so that after passing out a student can judge his role and responsibility in the society. In teaching method there should be a thorough vigilance for the students to enhance the upgradation of practical skill, social skill, leadership skill, communication skill and build responsibilities in the society. At first the **modules** of different courses ,the schedule of different **Term-end examinations, the assessment methods,** should be arranged so clearly for the student to feel comfortable to cope with this system .It should be clear ,consistent, effective and valid. I am again uttering it clearly that the student community of this section comes from different geographical areas irrespective of their age ,social strata and social obstacle. I think it is a need based course. All Open Education Systems, whether they are of national, or state level or a particular university based (correspondence courses),it should have an uniform syllabus. At the time of framing syllabus there should be some representatives from different levels i.e. from school board ,academic council etc..Self reflection is needed in framing the syllabus. To implement methodology of the study material for O D L students the scenario of rural mass and rural India should be considered strongly. This learning system is non formal in nature. All the librarians of the academic institutions should render assistance to the O D L students as far as possible. Many adults who are working full time or part time ,maintaining a balance with their family responsibility, come to colleges to take degree. This education system is a common platform of disabled, working mothers, the mass backward classes, and economically handicapped persons..But the attractive mission of this education system is to show paths by overcoming all the barriers.

References :

i) **"Guidelines for good Practices : Open and distance learning (GGP-ODL)"** *(2011), retrieved from* http://www.mqa.gov.my/garispanduan/GGP%20ODL.pdf

ii) *Mishra,Sanjay,* **"Need for National Policy on open and Distance Learning in India"** *University News,52(07),February 17-23 ,2014,pp.65-69* http://cemca.org.in/ckfinder/userfiles/files/University%20News_2014_2.pdf

iii) *Vyas-Doorgapersad,S,* **"ODL for sustainable development in   India",** *progressio,33 (2),2011, pp.51-54*

iv) *Mishra Sanjay* **"Role of teachers in Distance education"** *, [Web log post] retrieved from* http://teachknowlogist.blogspot.in/2009/08/role-of-teachers-in-distance-education.html

v) **"Academic librarians and Distance Education : challenges and opportunities",** *References and user services Quarterly,43 (2),pp.138-54, winter 2003.*

vi) *Chrispen,Chiome ; Paul,Mupa ; Primrose Kurusha,* **"Learner support services in ODL : Using Mobile technology as support services for the invisible student",** *world Journal of Management and Behavioural Studies 1(2) pp 53-59,2013*

vi) *Wikipedia (the free encyclopaedia)*

vii) http://www.twbcros.org/home.php, *Retrieved on 13.02.2016.*