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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.

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The Chief Editor, COMOSA Journal of Open Schooling, National Institute of Open Schooling, A-24/25, Institutional Area, Sector-62, NOIDA-201309, Uttar Pradesh (India)

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(continued in inside back cover)

COMOSA JOURNAL OF OPEN SCHOOLING

Volume : V

Number : 2

July-December 2014

CONTENTS

Editorial

PAPERS

Policy Initiatives in Strengthening Collaboration Between ODL Institutions and Stakeholders in Raising Quality of Secondary Education in Tanzania. A case of Dar es Salaam Region 123
Baraka Kionywaki and Mwajuma Mohamed

Learners' Attributes and Perceptions of Effectiveness of Gender-sensitive and responsive Texts and Tutorials of Open and School of Bangladesh Open University. 133
Sabina Yeasmin and C.R.K. Murthy

Professionalizing Teachers through Distance Learning: A Case of D.El.Ed. (ODL) Programme in Bihar (India) 141
Chandan Shrivastava

Admission process of SSC program in Distance education in Bangladesh : An Analysis 153
Iqbal Hussain

Rethinking Alternative Assessment Practices in Open Schooling System 168
Rajendra Kumar Nayak

Need of Open Learners for Counselling 178
Esther. J.E. Shonwang

BOOK REVIEW

Case Studies on OER eLearning Ed. By Som Naidu and Sanjaya Mishra 195
Anamika Ray

WORKSHOP REPORT

Workshops to Review the Guide to Integrating Gender Equity and Equality A Report 199

Report on 3 Day Capacity Building Workshop for Tutors of NIOS 208

Report of the Seminar cum Workshop on 'Values for Universal Well Being and Happiness' 215

Managing 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 several articles/papers on varied themes which cover different aspects of Open and Distance Learning across the commonwealth countries.

The paper on **Policy Initiatives in Strengthening Collaboration between ODL Institutions and Stakeholders in Raising Quality of Secondary Education in Tanzania. A Case of Dar es Salaam Region** examines the process undertaken in formulating national ODL policy by the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training (MoEVT) through Institute of Adult Education and Open University of Tanzania (OAU) and investigate the challenges faced by ODL institutions as service providers in boosting of the secondary education among ODL learners in Tanzania.

The paper on **Learners' Attributes and Perceptions of Effectiveness of Gender-sensitive and responsive Texts and Tutorials of Open School of Bangladesh Open University** addresses overall situation of gender friendliness of tutorial sessions of the Open School programmes of the Bangladesh Open University.

The paper on **Professionalizing Teachers through Distance Learning: A Case of D.El.Ed. (ODL) Programme in Bihar (India)** present an overview of D.El.Ed. (Open and Distance Learning) curriculum and reflect on its relevance for the distance learners. It is also discusses the transaction mechanism and the challenges ahead for this programme.

The paper on **Admission process of SSC program in Distance education in Bangladesh: An Analysis discusses** the challenges & limitations in admission process of SSC program in ODL in Bangladesh and finally provided some recommendations as way out of remedies.

The paper on **Rethinking Alternative Assessment Practices in Open Schooling System** outlines the present assessment practices in open schooling institutions and major initiatives of National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) on assessment like On-Demand Examinations (ODEs), life-skill integration in evaluation, Tutor Mark Assignment. The paper also discusses various alternative assessment practices in open schooling institutions.

The paper on **Need of Open Learners for Counselling** describes the results of a study conducted on NIOS learners enrolled for the secondary level course in the East Khasi Hills district, Meghalaya. The paper also attempts to find out the areas where open learners needed Counselling during their learning period.

The paper on **Computer Technology and Teaching System: Interaction and the Challenges Ahead** throws light upon the teaching system and interaction with various elements of teaching system like method, material, learner and colleagues through computer technology. It also discusses about challenges already met and challenges ahead in this direction.

There is a review of the book on **Case Studies on OER-based eLearning Edited by Som Naidu and Sanjaya Mishra**. Report of the Workshops to **Review the *Guide to Integrating Gender Equity and Equality***, Report of **3 Day Capacity Building Workshop for Tutors of NIOS** and Report of the Seminar cum Workshop on '**Values for Universal Well Being and Happiness**' are also included.

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. We invite comments and suggestions for quality improvement of this Journal.

Best Wishes !

(Dr. Kuldeep Agarwal)
Director (Academic), NIOS
&
Treasurer, COMOSA

Policy Initiatives in Strengthening Collaboration between ODL Institutions and Stakeholders in Raising Quality of Secondary Education in Tanzania. A case of Dar es Salaam Region

Baraka Kionywaki* and Mwajuma Mohamed**

*Institute of Adult Education, Tanzania

basaki2007@yahoo.com

** Institute of Adult Education, Tanzania

mwahamedmwajuma@yahoo.com

Abstract

This paper examines the policy initiatives which have been taken by the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training (MoEVT) through Institute of Adult Education and Open University of Tanzania (OUT) in raising the quality of Education among ODL study centres in Tanzania. The Open and Distance Learning in Tanzania has continued to play a fundamental role in complementing the secondary education, many out of school youths, remote rural dwellers and disadvantaged groups have benefited through ODL programmes. Despite Tanzania's commitment in improvement of all aspects of the Quality of education and ensuring excellence of all in achievement of recognised and measurable learning outcomes, as well as the existence of the Regional Open and Distance Learning Policy Framework of SADC Member state, currently there is no national ODL policy and guidelines which can guide ODL institutions and service provider.

This study therefore aims to examine the process undertaken in formulating national ODL policy and investigate the challenges facing by ODL institutions as service providers in boosting performance of the secondary education among ODL learners in Tanzania. Qualitative research approach using content analysis was deemed appropriate for this study. A total of 52 participants were involved; 6 participants from IAE and MoEVT headquarters 6 study centres coordinators, 10 study centre facilitators and 30 students from 10 study centres. Purposive sampling was used in the selection of respondents and the data was collected using questionnaires and interview. The study found that the process undertaken in formulating national ODL policy in Tanzania included baseline survey, situation analysis, stakeholders meetings

and documentary reviews. However the study revealed that challenge facing ODL institutions and service providers includes; lack of comprehensive and effective national ODL policy, lack proper guide lines to ODL service provider, lack ODL study centre regulator, Mushrooms of un coordinated ODL study centres, in adequate ICT infrastructure and learning resources. Finally the conclusion and recommendation were drawn proposed for effective implementation of ODL Secondary education programme in Tanzania.

Key words: *Policy Framework, Quality Education, and baseline survey*

1.0 Introduction

Until recently educational policies in Tanzania have remained to be a great challenge encountering a number of problems resulting from labour market, economic status and societal transformations. Policy related to Open and Distance Learning in Tanzania which complements the secondary education provision in the country is still not clearly outlined in the national educational framework as proper guidelines for ODL management and implementation in the country are still not in place. Given the commitments in eliminating gender disparities and presence of several initiatives to promote the quality, equity and access at all levels, the secondary education provision has remained to be one of the minimal sectors in the country (UNESCO, 2007) let alone the Open and Distance Learning at secondary education was and is no exception. Worldwide the Quality of education in the developing countries, Tanzania inclusive has continued to be hampered by a number of factors, in which among the most is poor learning outcomes of ODL learners. This suggests that Tanzania is left in a dilemma of reaching the Millennium Development Goals and Education for All Goals (Okkolin *et al*, 2010). This study attempts to investigate the policy initiatives in strengthening collaboration and raising quality of learning outcomes among ODL study centres in Tanzania. The major focus is to examine the process undertaken in formulating the national ODL policy and investigate the challenges facing ODL Institutions and service providers in boosting performance of secondary education among ODL learners in Tanzania.

Tanzania is committed in the provision of quality education in both formal and the non-formal system of education. Regardless these commitments a number of factors have been encountered in the process of fulfilling this need. These factors include the financial resources, Absence of policy and proper guidelines in the provision of Open and Distance Learning in the country has adversely contributed in the mushrooming of uncoordinated ODL centres, massive failure of ODL students. These have greater consequences in the

labour market and socio- economic aspects in the country. However in the SADC countries open and distance learning is playing an increasing role in education.

1.1 Definition of key term

1.1.1 Policy Framework

A policy framework is a logical structure that is established to organize policy documentation into groupings and categories that make it easier for employees to find and understand the contents of various policy documents. Policy frameworks can also be used to help in the planning and development of the policies for an organization.

1.1.2 Quality education

Quality education is a system of learning that produces well-educated individuals who can handle matters of concern within their area of study proficiently. The system should impose desirable qualities such as moral ethics in the individuals.

1.2 Research Objectives

The objectives of this study are;

1. To examine the processes undertaken in formulating National ODL policy?
2. To examine the challenges faced by ODL Institutions as service providers in boosting performance among ODL learners in Tanzania

1.3 Research Questions

This study was guided by the following questions;

1. What are the processes used in the formulation of National ODL policy?
2. What are the challenges in the processes of formulating National ODL policy?
3. What are the challenges faced by ODL Institutions and service providers in boosting performance among ODL learners in Tanzania

2.0 Literature Review

Till date the Open and Distance Education in Tanzania is not clearly outlined in the national policy documents. However, Distance and its provision to the learners can be traced back prior to the country's independence in 1961, when Tanzania became independent sovereignty, the government had a

responsibility of ensuring all citizens to avail their educational right be it through formal or non-formal education approach using different modes of delivery. In the early 1960s till date, the main Institutions responsible with the provision of distance education were; the Cooperative Education Centre(Moshi Cooperative College-1964), the Institute of Adult Education(1975), the Southern African Extension Unit(1984), The Open University of Tanzania(1992), University of Dar es Salaam and the Tanzania Global Development Learning Centre. Parallel with these, various educational policy documents were initiated towards achieving the Education for All (EFA) goals as affirmed by Tanzania. Following the Salamanca and the Dakar Conference Tanzania has continued developed different policies in response to inclusive education, to ensure that distance education was given attention as a substitute mode of delivery for every citizen. Among these the important policy documents were;

- ◆ The Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (2000),
- ◆ The Tanzania Development Vision 2025
- ◆ The Education Sector Development Programme(1998)
- ◆ The Teacher Education Master Plan (2000)
- ◆ Secondary Education Master Plan (2000),
- ◆ The Higher Education Sub- Master Plan 2003-2018
- ◆ and the National ICT Policy (2003) (Komba, 2000),
- ◆ The Primary Education Development Plan (PEDP) and
- ◆ Secondary Education Development Plan (2004),
- ◆ The Child Development Policy, The National Policy of Disabilities(NDP),
- ◆ Education Sector Development Policy(ESDP)

Access and equity and existing level of poverty in the country, numerous educational approaches were considered a prerequisite to ensure that every citizen gain this public good. Following the Arusha Declaration (1967), towards the beginning of the economic liberalisation in 1980's, educational policies in Tanzania were proclaimed in the form of resolutions and decrees as part of government program of socialism and self-reliance. Whilst this the government was taking into account putting clearly the promotion of ODL. Educational policies still does not adequately reflect. The education and training policy in the country(ETP) of 1995 which has yet to be reviewed is still emphasizing

the decentralisation of the educational management and boosting of the educational quality. However, none of these stress on ODL. The need for a fundamental administrative reforms is quite essential to ensure effective implementation of policies (Swainson, 2000)

It is known that in Tanzania conventional system mainly accommodates the needs of full-time students from a particular age group registered in an identified learning institution of a particular level of education it primary, secondary or tertiary level. The entry qualifications are usually ascertained by the legally authorised body (school/university). These criteria mostly eliminate the groups of people who were for one reason or the other could not enroll in the traditional age system for schooling. On these bases, Open and Distance Learning approaches are considered appropriate as it has high potential of transcending barriers induced by space, time or distance. As a consequence distance education becomes an alternative in educational provision.

However, there have been some initiatives by the MoEVT, Institute of Adult Education and The Open University of Tanzania to ensure that this policy is formulated to provide equal opportunities for all. There has still been lack of explicit National Policy on Open and Distance Learning in the country (Komba,2010)

The Tanzania Development Vision 2025

This document put in place the education sector with a focus of reaching better life, tranquillity and stability with a focus that education is a key to socio-economic transformation by creating well-educated nationals who can positively and competently address stumbling blocks in developmental initiatives, thus modernization of educational structures is essential for the enhancement of creativity and addressing problems (URT, 2000:19).

Education and Training Policy (ETP)

The Education and Training Policy document (1995) is a national scaffold which stipulates the linkage amidst the state actors and other educational providers which guarantees access, equity in the educational provision (URT, 2007).

Although all of these documents affirm that education is an important tool for socio economic development and key in the reduction of poverty. This has largely affected the educational provision in the country. Among the SADC countries Tanzania has yet provided proper guidelines or having policy in place which assists in the implementation and management of Opening and Distance Learning in the country.

3.0 Methodology

This study was a descriptive, qualitative study. Questionnaires and Semi structured Interviews were employed to grasp data from participants and other secondary sources. These methods were purposely used in order to obtain the actual experience related to the topic. Questionnaires were administered to different stakeholders in their respective working place and responses were collected soon after completion. Both structured and unstructured questionnaires were used to enlist stakeholders view points regarding their involvement in policy formulation. Where as for learners, the aims were to assess quality of education provision in the open schooling. Twenty (20) questions were structured of which five were open ended. The application of questionnaire was considered necessary for this study because of their economic nature in terms of financial resource, time and respondents' convenience. Likewise, semi-structured interviews were employed as they had great potential to provide opportunity to respondents to give their own perception related to the topic. Semi-structured interview were conducted among centre Coordinators and facilitators. These interviews were informally conducted and took place in different venues depending upon the convenience of the respondents. For both centre coordinators and facilitators, interviews took place at their work premises. The decisive factor on the selection of respondents to engage in the interview was based on experience and the social position. The interview last between 30-40 minutes.

In this study both simple random sampling and purposefully sampling technique were used. Participants were purposely selected on the fact that they would provide appropriate information and spotted to have realistic familiarity in the area of the research theme. On the other hand, simple random sampling was applied since this constituted a larger population where every member had an equal chance of being included in the sample.

Moreover, documentary review was used in gathering secondary data in a situation whereby information was obtained through reviewing various relevant documents. This method was used to obtain accurate data since many events that happen in many institutions are normally recorded to keep information of those events.

The data was analysed using qualitative content analysis. Qualitative content analysis entails the process designed to reduce the raw data into categories or themes based on acceptable interpretations and inferences. AS defined by Hsieh and Shannon (2005 .1278) Qualitative Content Analysis is a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of the text data through

the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or pattern.

4.0 Results and Discussion

This part presents the findings of the study and their analysis. The findings are categorized and organized into three themes: The processes used in the formulation of National ODL policy, the challenges in the processes of formulating National ODL policy and challenges faced by ODL Institutions and service providers in boosting performance among ODL learners in Tanzania.

4.1 Findings Regarding the Processes Used in the Formulation of National ODL policy.

This part of the study sought to examine the processes used in the formulation of National ODL policy. In this regard 30 percent were involved in providing the responses. Generally the process in the policy formulation incorporates various organisations and institutions which were very important in the process of policy formulation. Among the stakeholders who have been involved were Non Governmental Organization (NGO), Community Based Organization (CBO), Faith Base Organization (FBO), politician, government officials, open and distance learners and open schooling facilitators. The study revealed that the process used in policy formulation includes feasibility study, documentary review, and dialogy which involved the key actors in ODL programme. It was noted that 90 percent of the people who involved in process of policy formulation pointed out that feasibility study as one of the way used in the policy formulation. Like wise 75 percent of the respondents indicated that documentary review was used in process of policy formulation. On the other hand one of the respondents pointed out that regional policy document like regional ODL policy and national Education and Training policy document were of great assistance in the process of policy formulation. On top of that 80 percent of the people who were involved in the interview outline that dialogue was used in the process of policy formulation.

4.2 Findings Regarding the Challenges in the Processes of Formulating National ODL Policy

This part of the study explored the challenges in the process of formulating National ODL policy. Regarding to this objective all 30 respondents participated in providing the responses. Generally, lack of political will, financial resources, bureaucracy, the reviewing process of the existing Education and Training Policy were identified as among the challenges.

Lack of Political will

The finding of the study revealed that 29 (97 percent) of respondents pointed out that lack of political will was one of the challenge facing the process of policy formulation. This was also supported by one of the key member in policy formulation team through the interview who argued that *".....during this process we encountered a number of problems particularly from government senior officials who argued that there is no need of having ODL policy as far as there is an existence of National Education and Training Policy in the country..."* This response implied that political will is an important component for the success of any policy formulation. Therefore much effort should be done to change the mind set of senior officials who have great authority in decision making. This was also supported by the study of Samson (2011) who argued that senior official play an important in policy formulation as they are directly concerned in policy process and the endorsement.

Financial Resources

Findings of the study revealed that 23 (93 percent) of the respondents acknowledged that, there is either no funds or minimal funds provided in the process of formulating National ODL policy in the country. It was realised by one member of national ODL policy formulation team that 85% of the funds were provided by SADC-ODL project, while only 15 percent of the fund was acquired from different sources within the country. It was also been revealed that some activities were not implemented at all or delayed due to lack of funds. One of the respondents from the National ODL policy formulation team stated that the following activities were not implemented due to lack of fund; developing national ODL strategic plan and dissemination of the draft of national ODL Policy to the Social Committee to the members of parliament for recommendations and improvements. This hinders the process of policy formulation. In this regard the findings confirmed that lack of fund is a big challenge in the process of policy formulation.

Bureaucracy.

The study revealed that, 26(87 percent) of the respondents outlined that bureaucracy was one among the challenges experienced in the process of policy formulation. One among policy formulation team members agrees that there had been a lot protocol to be adhered in the process of policy formulation, such that the policy draft should pass through the following channels till its endorsement, these channel are from policy formulation team to stakeholders,

stakeholders to the Management of Ministry of Education and Vocational Training (MoEVT), Management of MoEVT to the Social Committee of members of Parliament, Social Committee of members of parliament to the Cabinet Ministry. Finally is to the members of parliament for endorsement.

The Reviewing Process of the Existing National Education and Training Policy.

On this related matter, the study revealed that, 7 of 10 members (70 percent) from the national ODL policy formulation team who were interviewed argued that the reviewing process of the existing ETP is a challenge. Likewise the study revealed during the interview with one member from the management of MoEVT who stated that it was difficult to link the national ODL Policy with the ETP policy since the existing ETP of 1995 is currently under the reviewing process. This statement suggests the developed draft ODL policy will not link with the expected newly ETP Policy planned to be approved by 2015. This creates the challenge whether the ODL policy should wait for ETP to be in place by 2015 or should the process continue by aligning with the ETP 1995.

Findings Regarding the Challenges Faced by ODL Institutions and Service Providers in Boosting Performance Among ODL Learners in Tanzania

This part of the study examines the challenges faced by ODL Institutions and service providers in boosting performance among ODL learners in Tanzania. Regarding this, all 30 respondents participated in providing responses. In general, challenges faced by ODL Institutions and service providers in boosting performance among ODL learners in Tanzania were identified as; lack of national ODL policy, poor ICT infrastructure, lack of teaching and learning facilities, lack of guidelines for ODL secondary education service providers.

Conclusion

Generally the study revealed that the process undertaken by national policy formulation team were appropriate and widely employed by different sectors nationally and internationally in the process of national policy formulation. Regardless the challenges, Tanzania has made a significant effort to ensure that ODL Policy draft is in place and currently is in the process to be approved. Similarly, the guidelines developed for secondary education to assist the implementation of ODL programmes are waiting for approval at the ministerial level.

Recommendation

1. It has been recommended that the government of Tanzania through the MoEVT should look for funds from the external source to ensure that the process of national ODL Policy is effective.
2. It is recommended that ODL institutions should improve ICT infrastructure and facilities so as to boost performance among ODL learners.
3. It is recommended MoEVT should ensure that draft of guideline for ODL Secondary Education Service provider is approved

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Learners' Attributes and Perceptions of Effectiveness of Gender-sensitive and responsive Texts and Tutorials of Open and School of Bangladesh Open University.

Sabina Yeasmin* and C.R.K. Murthy**

* Associate Professor, Open School, Bangladesh Open University
[sabina_d@hotmail.com]

**Professor & Director of STRIDE, Indira Gandhi National Open University
[murthycrk@hotmail.com]

Abstract

Open School (OS) of the Bangladesh Open University (BOU) has passed more than an era in imparting school education at par to the formal education using mainly self-learning materials (SLMs) and face-to-face (f2f) tutorial sessions at the weakened near to the learners' place. Both male and female have been the learners of the OS programs named Secondary School Certificate (SSC) for grade-9-10 and Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) for grade 11-12. There have always been questions; do tutors provide a gender-sensitive learning environment – are girls encouraged to answer questions, do the texts present stereotypical images of girls? This paper aims to study on this issue. Selected stakeholders including learners are interviewed as per the objectives of the study. Subject group of this study is learners and tutors and the control group is non-user of OS SLMs. The questionnaires and interviews are taken place based on the various variables inherited in the research questions, and also be matched with the policy and status analysis so as to formulate the framework of gender sensitive and responsive OS programs. In order to study the attributes and perceptions of the learners on the effectiveness of gender sensitive and responsive texts, a questionnaire is developed. A five-point Likert scale of 1 to 5, ranging from 'strongly agree' and 'strongly disagree' as anchoring points are used for main items.

Keywords: SLM, f2f, tutor, learner, gender, learning, stereotype etc.

1. Introduction

Bangladesh Open University (BOU) offers three pre-University programmes – Junior School Certificate (JSC) for Grade: 6-8, Secondary School Certificate (SSC) for Grade: 9-10 and Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) for Grade: 11-12 (Rahman *et al*, 2010). There may be question- why BOU runs pre-University programmes along with the graduate and post-graduate programmes as core activities. The answer lies in its prime objective that is to transform the country's vast human resources into an educated and trained workforce, by extending to them a wide range of formal and non-formal academic programmes. BOU started its operation through a project under loan arrangement with the Asian Development Bank (ADB). The project profile describes:

“potential beneficiaries will be the middle and lower class rural youths with primary and secondary levels of education, untrained teachers at primary and secondary schools, rural women including housewives, extension agencies in the field of agriculture, rural development, family planning, health and those professional groups who upgrade their skills for professional development. The rural disadvantaged youths who have very limited access to conventional education will be the special beneficiaries of the BOU establishment project. The NGOs working in the field of environmental stabilization, health care, skills training, functional literacy etc. will also be the potential target beneficiaries” [ADB, 1993].

Therefore, the Open School (OS) makes the provision available to women in particular and always tries to give the answers to the following questions:

Is the curriculum gender-sensitive?

Are the SLMs gender-responsive?

Are the broadcasted audio-video materials representing both genders?

Are the tutorial sessions gender-friendly?

Though the first three are normally checked very carefully by the OS, but tutorial sessions are conducted by different tutors of different background. Therefore, their attitude may differ from each other which may in turn create trouble to the female learners who may not stay in the programme up to the completion. Nnaka and Anaekwe (2005) states that development of gender –unfriendly tutors creates problems in motivating a particular gender, may create an uncomfortable position for others. This study addresses overall situation of gender friendliness of tutorial sessions of the OS programmes of

the BOU.

2. Objectives

The objective of this study is to evaluate gender-friendly behavior of tutors in tutorial sessions of the BOU OS programmes.

- i) To seek learners' view, on whether the SLM used by tutors are gender friendly or not;
- ii) To analyze the environment of the session room with particular emphasis on the friendliness for both genders;
- iii) To enquire whether the supplementary materials used by tutors use in the sessions are gender friendly or not; and
- iv) To find out that group done works in the tutorials are have a gender-friendly atmosphere.

3. Methodology

Most of the researches in open and distance learning (ODL) are in the form of popular article & where the processes are described. But, presently, the distance education (DE) research has by far been experimental method which involves extensive interviewing of learners. This research sought to allow the participants' responses defined the nature of the finding through developing themes. Two in-tutorial sessions surveys of BOU OS programmes' learners (N = 80) – one at the city and two at the rural area- assesses perceptions and attitudes of learner-tutor interaction with particular emphasis on gender friendliness. Both quantitative and qualitative approaches and parametric and non-parametric analysis has been used for the current study. The research instrument for the study is a five-point Likert--type scale questionnaire, titled gender-fairness of tutorial session's questionnaire (Annexure A). The questionnaire was administered to learners at the tutorial sessions. Learners were requested to indicate the extent of their perception of gender-fairness of their tutors on each item. Scoring on the scale was done as follows; strongly agreed (5) agreed (4), undecided (3) disagree (2) and strongly disagree (1) for statements. The researcher also discussed the matter with the learners at tutorial centers who attended the tutorial sessions of the programme. The research was conducted during the participants' second year of study. The questionnaire also incorporated some statements to collect the background information. The background of the OS learners is very similar in nature (Yeasmin & Murthy, 2010). Therefore, the sample size has been limited with compared to the large population. It is assumed that because of same culture and socio-economic background of the learners, small sample would represent

the large population. The researcher positioned herself as one of the faculty members of the BOU OS. At the time of interview, it was found that learners were making programme queries related to the research questions right from the onset of the research.

4. Administration of the tutorial services

BOU's 6 academic schools run nearly 20 programmes and 10 administrative divisions support for successful implementation of these programmes. Amongst the divisions, the Student Support Services (SSS) Division is crucial to programme offer, and it provides a central co-coordinating focus for the 12 Regional Resource Centers (RRCs) each with a Regional Director. RRCs are the local level administrative body of the University. The Director of SSS is the executive head of the RRCs and the University's senior responsible officer for regional matters and is also responsible for the overall co-ordination of RRC administration. 80% works of the RRCs are for OS programmes. It is reported that RRCs do not take efforts for existing non-formal education (NFE) programmes of the University. Font s are responsible for the followings:

- ❖ Advice on and support services to enquirers, applicants and students;
- ❖ Recruitment, development and management of (part-time) tutors;
- ❖ The tutorial programme and tutorial centre accommodation;
- ❖ Administration of examination centers under the rules specified by the examination regulation;
- ❖ Recruitment of external invigilators for the examination centers; and
- ❖ Liaison with other educational institutions and other organizations in their region particularly for tutorial programmes, examination centers.

SSS's feedback is very essential in maintaining the gender responsive tutorial sessions for the OS programmes. Because the OS tutors are located throughout the country, therefore each one is attached to one of the 12 RRCs. The formal responsibility for the appointment of tutors rests with RRC Directors, advised of members by the School. As SSS is the recommending division for tutors' appointments, it has the responsibility for implementing University's central policy of gender-responsive and sensitive programmes. In this regards, SSS division recommends the tutors keeping the ratio of male-female which balances both the gender.

There appears to be a consistent pattern of bi-weekly face-to-face (f2f) tutorials for all courses for 20 weeks per year, most likely 20 per year per course. Special practical activities in some courses are also held at the TCs. Female learners usually attend these sessions, which may be 10-15 kilometers

from the centres. They occasionally face eve-teasing or some other problems on the way to the TC. In spite of these, they attend the session. Do they feel the sessions rea gender friendly?

5. Findings

Founding Vice-Chancellor of BOU, Professor Dr. M. Shamsher Ali (1994) spoke on a coordinating meeting; which the researcher herself attended, said that women are to be partners in development; therefore, OS programmes should put emphasis on catering to the female learners as much as possible. Suleiman (2004) asserts that gender imbalance in education attainment have been a major reason that contributes to low representation of women in mainstream of economic activities. Therefore, it is of paramount importance that tutorial sessions of the School has to be gender-sensitive. UNICEF (2011) prescribes for gender-sensitive classroom as follows:

- ❖ Promote gender equality in enrolment and achievement;
- ❖ Eliminate gender stereotypes;
- ❖ Guarantees girl-friendly facilities, curricula, textbooks, and teaching-learning processes;
- ❖ Socialize girls and boys in a non-violent environment; and
- ❖ Encourages respect for each others' rights, dignity, and equality.

Class size affected each of these dimensions. BOU uses the local school/ colleges for its tutorial centres (TCs) which are connected with good communication and in frastructurally well-developed and well-equipped. It also allows only 50 learners for each centre. Class size is standard and there is no problem for male-female sitting arrangement as the mean responses was 2.2 only. Gender of learners was significant with males participating more in the session where the mean response was 3.32, but this gender difference was not due to tutors' discrimination. Female tutors are more likely to create a participatory climate for all students. Creating a better tutorial support climate for female students creates a better learning environment for all learners.

In the research the interactions in the tutorial session was observed and found in relation to the session room behaviors:

- ❖ Male learners talk more than female learners in the tutorial;
- ❖ Males had more control over the topic of conversation in the group and
- ❖ Male's participation have a tendency to interrupt women's contribution in the session room.

Table 1: Learner's Responses on Gender Issues on Texts and Tutorials

Parameters	Percentages of learners' opinion					Mean Responses
	Strongly disagree	Disaggre	Undeci- ded	Agree	Strongly agree	
73 Tutors use gender-sensitive supplementary materials in the session	4.1	12.3	31.5	34.2	17.8	3.49
76 Tutors use SLMs in the session are gender-responsive	5.3	17.1	35.5	28.9	13.2	3.28
78 Tutors allow male-female friendship for sharing learning	2.6	12.8	33.3	35.9	15.4	3.49
76 Tutors put special attention to the boys over the girls only in particular to the feedback	2.6	9.2	19.7	21.1	47.4	4.01
79 Tutors are cooperative and give an equal chance of participation to both genders	7.6	15.2	20.3	20.3	36.7	3.63
76 Female learners sit separately in the tutorial session	42.1	19.7	17.1	13.2	7.9	2.25
73 While doing participatory work in the tutorial session, tutors make group combining member from both genders	5.5	17.8	28.8	31.5	16.4	3.36
77 While presenting group's work, tutors allows equal opportunity to both gender	10.4	15.6	20.8	24.7	28.6	3.45
75 While doing pair works in the tutorial session, tutors make pair consisting male-female	5.3	18.7	20.0	24.0	32.0	3.59
72 Male learners put more feedback than female in the interaction with tutors	11.1	23.6	18.1	16.7	30.6	3.32
73 Humorous situation while attending session	17.8	31.5	23.3	16.4	11.0	2.71

In addition to the academic support, the tutors provide some administrative and social support to the learners. Learners' interactions at the centre are as follows:

- ◆ Tutors address male learners more frequently, and use their names;
- ◆ Humorous characteristics are more frequently applied to females e.g. making fun of them.
- ◆ Humorous treatment with women is offensive, but some female learners expressed that they sometimes are the victims on the way to attending the sessions (mean responses is 2.21). They also reported that tutors are sometimes also informed about these issues. Teasing is the main problem on the way to the session.

Researcher's observations were as follows:

- ◆ Tutors keep eye contact more with male learners;
- ◆ Slow learners incline to feel ignored by tutors more often than do fast learners;
- ◆ Tutors have a tendency to gesture more often in response to male's questions and interpretation than to female's

Gender-fairness of tutors in TCs of the OS has been found which are, favorably, and appropriately applied to both male and female learners during interaction in the tutorial sessions (mean responses are 4.01). Table 1 above offered answer to the research questions showing the level or quality of perception of male and female students of gender-fairness exhibited by tutors. In other words, there seems to be no discrimination in the observations or perceptions of the two sexes as regards gender-friendliness of the tutors. This, therefore, implies that the tutors are less discriminatory and ensured gender equality treatments in the tutorial sessions. Their use of supplementary materials and self-learning materials are also gender-representative because it shows mean responses 3.49 and 3.28 respectfully.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

The study of the gender friendliness of the BOU OS tutorial sessions attempts to identify what environmental factors are conducive for gender-sensitive and the reasons why these factors have such influence. The key texts from which OS tutors work are gender friendly. The study revealed that both male and female learners had same level of perception towards the gender- fairness of the tutorial sessions of the Open School programmes. This implies that

the tutors give equal treatment to all in tutorial session irrespective of the sex factor. Still there is scope for further development. It is therefore recommended that more awareness on gender equality and more empowerment should be given to tutorial sessions to enable them promote and uphold gender-fair behaviors during the sessions particularly for participatory approach applied. For this tutors would need the gender training and this will develop their attitude and preference towards gender-friendliness of the tutorial sessions. Future research may be conducted on the issue like: How does one make the classroom gender friendly if the curriculum itself is not gender friendly? Another issue is the legitimacy of the material is often questioned if it is too "man" centered, which can be another study area.

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Professionalizing Teachers through Distance Learning: A Case of D.El.Ed. (ODL) Programme in Bihar (India)

Chandan Shrivastava

Central Institute of Education, Department of Education, University of Delhi
chandan.edu@gmail.com

Abstract

Professional preparation of teachers is very significant for quality education. As per Right to Education (RTE) Act-2009, it is mandatory to have trained teachers in schools. However, there are still many untrained teachers working in the elementary schools of Bihar, which is a matter of concern for the State. Due to compulsion of the RTE act, the State has taken some initiatives to professionalize those untrained teachers. Therefore, a distance learning programme called as Diploma in Elementary Education (D.El.Ed.) is developed by State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT) of Bihar. This paper is an attempt to analyze the curriculum and the transaction mechanism of this programme. The paper will present an overview of the D.El.Ed. (Open and distance learning) curriculum and reflect on its relevance for the distance learners. It is also discussing the transaction mechanism and the challenges ahead for this programme.

Keywords: Curriculum development, Distance learning, Elementary Education, Professional preparation, Teacher Education

Introduction:

Professional preparation of teachers is an important prerequisite for quality education. The National Curriculum Framework (NCF, 2005) expects a teacher to be the facilitator of students' learning in a way that create space for knowledge construction and acknowledge personal experiences. This can only be possible if the teacher is kept professionally alert and academically sound. However, a notion that still seems to prevail is that the primary requirement of the teacher is to have sufficient knowledge to pass on to the students. This leads to the simplistic conclusion that if teachers have enough

knowledge they will be successful in directing the learning of others. With this notion, there was huge recruitment of teachers for elementary schools in Bihar during last decade. Most of them, were professionally under-qualified, had no grounding in teacher training. This reminds to that problematic assumption that lower academic qualifications are acceptable for teaching at the elementary stages of school education, which is criticized in Justice Verma Commission Report (2012, pp.12). In Bihar, those teachers were called as '*Niyojit*' teachers, due to their recruitment contract which regulates their teaching job up to sixty years of age but with some consolidated payment.

This recruitment of about three lac '*Niyojit*' teachers had helped in maintaining the student-teacher ratio, opening new schools and increasing students' enrolment. However, the professionally under-qualified status has always created a doubt about their teaching quality. This issue has been also highlighted by Common School System Report (Govt. of Bihar, 2007) as "Nobody will doubt that the conditions in which the teachers function in India, particularly in Bihar, leave much to be desired". However, But to meet the requirement of large number of untrained teachers in time bound situation also were teaching in schools therefore only distance-mode programme would be suitable media to train them. So, the responsibility of training those untrained teachers was given to Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) initially. But, in a national review it was found that the D.Ed. programme of IGNOU was not able to match the quality expectations of teacher training (NCTE Review Report, 2010). Therefore, the Government of Bihar had decided to develop its own mechanism to train the teachers and the accountability was given to SCERT, Bihar. The immediate training of all under-qualified '*Niyojit*' teachers was also necessary because of the Right to Education Act (2009), which stresses that only professionally qualified teachers are eligible to teach in schools.

Along with the above backdrop, schools in Bihar are still facing huge shortage of teachers. So, the state government has recently recruited many more untrained teachers to minimize that shortage. This adds to the backlog of those untrained teachers of last decade. Since SCERT, Bihar has been given the responsibility to train those teachers, so a two year Diploma in Elementary Education Programme (D.El.Ed) has been developed by the institution in 2012 and state-wide mechanism is being prepared to deliver that programme through distance learning mode. NIOS was also given responsibility to offer D.El.Ed. through Distance mode. However, it is very critical issue that the

state had no such prior experience to conduct any distance course of teacher education. Therefore, which kind of distance learning curriculum has been developed in Bihar and how it is being transacted, is very significant to study with reference to the role of distance learning in the professional preparedness of teachers. The study is also very important since it is the latest post-NCFTE distance learning curriculum for teacher education in India. However, there may be many dimensions to study about this programme. But, this paper is only focussed to analyze the curriculum of the Diploma in Elementary Education (Open and Distance Learning) Programme in Bihar and its mechanism of distance learning.

Understanding the Curriculum of D.El.Ed. (ODL) Programme:

Before preparing any curriculum, many basic documents are usually referred to conceptualize the contemporary context, objectives and structure of that curriculum. It is found in the preface of the D.El.Ed. (ODL) curriculum document that National Curriculum Framework (NCF)-2005, Common School System Report-2007, Bihar Curriculum Framework (BCF)-2008, Right to Education Act-2009 and National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (NCFTE)-2010 have been taken as key documents to understand the current demands from a teacher education curriculum. Along with the above documents, a comprehensive mapping of elementary teacher education programmes around the world was also done. Especially, teacher education course of National Institute for Open Schooling (NIOS), model D.Ed. Course of NCTE and the earlier intervention offered by IGNOU were taken into the process of framing this new distance learning programme.

In discussion with the stakeholders of this curriculum, it immersed that the initial process of curriculum development was focused on collaborative co-creation taking into account the unique needs of distance learners. Many new subjects were introduced to make the curriculum contemporary and relevant to the need of learners. Tryout of the content of different subjects and several vetting process were done to make the curriculum comprehensive and useful. In total, the process of curriculum development took place for about one year. Then, the Diploma of Elementary Education (Open and Distance Learning), or D.El.Ed (ODL), is envisaged as a two-year course, prepared to train elementary school teachers who are already in service. The curriculum has four semesters with a series of subjects. A brief overview of the programme is given in Table-1.

Table-1

Semester 1				Semester 3			
C.C.	Course/Paper	T.E.E.	I.A.	C.C.	Course/Paper	T.E.E.	I.A.
S1.1	Perspectives on Education-1	60	40	S3.1	Perspectives on Education-2	60	40
S1.2	Child Development and Psychology-1	60	40	S3.2	Child Development and Psychology -2	60	40
S1.3	Language and Education	60	40	S3.3	Literature of Education	60	40
S1.4	Pedagogy of Mathematics 1	60	40	S3.4	Pedagogy of Hindi-1	60	40
S1.5	I.C.T. in Education-1	20	30	S3.5	I.C.T. in Education-2	20	30
S1.6	Art Education-1	20	30	S3.6	Art Education-2	20	30
Semester-1 Total marks		280	220	Semester-3 Total marks		280	220
			500				500
Semester 2				Semester 4			
C.C.	Course/Paper	T.E.E.	I.A.	C.C.	Course/Paper	T.E.E.	I.A.
S2.1	Understanding of school and classroom management-1	60	40	S4.1	Understanding of school and classroom management-2	60	40
S2.2	School and Education Policy	60	40	S4.2	Pedagogy of Mathematics-2	60	40
S2.3	Pedagogy of English-1	60	40	S4.3	Pedagogy of English-2	60	40
S2.4	Pedagogy of Environmental studies	60	40	S4.4	Pedagogy of other languages : Hindi-2, Bangla, Mathili, Urdu	60	40
SBP-1	School Based Program (internship)	40	60	SBP-2	School Based Program (internship)	40	60
Semester-2 Total marks		280	220	Semester-4 Total marks		280	220
			500				500

All Semesters total marks 500+500+500+500 = 2000

Abbreviation: CC (Course Code), T.E.E. (Term End Exam), I.A. (Internal Assessment)

Reflecting on the Curriculum of D.El.Ed. (ODL) Programme:

The duration of D.El.Ed. (ODL) curriculum is two year, which was also endorsed by National commission on teachers-I (1985). Considering elementary education as a crucial level, it was strongly recommended by the commission that the professional training for elementary teachers should begin only after the twelfth class and the training should be of at least two years duration. However, how to structure those two years really matters more. The curriculum document is providing some inputs for this.

As per the written document of the curriculum, each course has an overview, outlined objectives, course structure, suggested task and references. In every paper, after the content of every unit a rationale has been given which provides a vision to understand the given content. At the end of each of the papers, practicum and project work are suggested. However, a complete plan of follow up is very clear in the document. Only exemplar of practicum has been given at the end of each paper.

The NCFTE 2009-2010 emphasizes to prepare humane teachers, who will not perform their tasks mechanically but intellectually. This can only be possible when teachers' experience is given due significance in the process of teacher education. The pedagogic discourses, like teachers' work, are not decontextualized, stable or value free. Rather, pedagogic discourses are both socially constituted and socially constitutive (Sriprakash, 2011). Therefore, the discourse of teacher education should also be inquired with respect to the contextual understanding of a teachers' world. This led to the shift of our focus from the 'teaching skills development' to 'process-based teacher development'. The curriculum is showing some evidence of this shift. The nature of curriculum is more centred to build the understanding of student teachers about teaching learning process and sensitivity towards their profession. The curriculum talks about teacher identity, teachers' professional development and teachers' knowledge building. Pedagogy is not understood only as methods of teaching or teaching skills in the curriculum. It is more focussed on understanding the nature of subject in respect of the context of the learners.

Today's educational discourse talks about opening the horizon of teacher education subjects as well as bridging the gap between them. It is emphasised to depart from the traditional isolated nature of subjects and to formulate interrelated subjects. With reference to this, it is observed that the foundation courses don't carry traditional titles and have some fresh titles such as 'School and Education Policies', 'Literature of Education', 'Language and Education'

etc. The content of the papers also show a shift from the traditional content. The paper 'Perspective of Education' has a shift from its philosophical nature. The paper is more focussed on understanding a child in contemporary world. However the paper 'Child Development and Psychology' is still very traditional and don't reflect any shift from traditional one. This reflects the conventional hegemony of psychology discipline on Education, very difficult to revise its content.

Most of the foundation papers have their extended curriculum in second year. The curriculum attempts from completely theory to practice approach. However, the papers such as 'Perspectives of Education' and 'Child development and Psychology' reflect dearly theory to practice approach. The other papers such as 'ICT in Education' and 'Art Education' have more practice to theory approach. However, the interdisciplinary perspective is not visible in the curriculum. Some foundation papers have opened their horizon to bring fresh content but most of pedagogy papers are not flexible in nature. Issue of contemporarily and diversity are taken into consideration to some extent.

The pedagogy papers have two basic parts: 1. Contents related to the subject and 2. Content related to the teaching of that subject. It is observed that the most of the pedagogy papers are continued in some other semester. Some papers such as 'pedagogy of mathematics have theory-practice interface however the paper such as 'pedagogy of English' is more theory oriented. The curriculum has also acknowledged the need of the teaching of third language. Teaching of languages such as Maithili, Bangla and Urdu is also included in the curriculum which reflects its sensitivity towards the regional languages.

According to Griffin (1985), "The programme must be embedded in a school context and be context sensitive, purposeful and articulated, participatory and collaborative, knowledge-based, ongoing, developmental, and analytical and reflective". Using these features, effective teacher education programmes are based on a conception of teachers' growth and development, acknowledge the complexities of classroom, school, and community, and are grounded in a theoretical knowledge base. The programmes should be sensitive to the ways teachers think, feel, and make meaning from their experiences. This curriculum is providing such space through two School based Program (SBP) activity in second and fourth semesters, in which the trainee teachers will have an organised 'internship' experience of the teaching-learning process in their own schools. Traditionally, the SBP is the major follow up practicum for pedagogy papers. Some space for the practicum other than teaching

practice is also there in the curriculum. The tasks include subject teaching, peer observation, Action research, School activities, School reform plan, profiling students, developing teaching, resource materials, journal writing.

The process of mentoring is also included in the plan of SBP. Here, mentoring can be understood as a way of helping and supporting a colleague. It is a reflective process which leads to the professional development of both mentor and mentee. Mentoring by one or more experienced and skilful colleagues should be emphasized. If we critically see the curriculum, then the role of mentor is not very emphasized there. Secondly, it seems that the role of mentor is more or less resembles to the role of a traditional supervisor.

The nature of evaluation is an integral part of the curriculum. It is formative and summative both. There is both internal and external evaluation. The foundation papers and pedagogy papers have 40 marks for internal assessment and 60 marks for term end examination. The practicum papers i.e. 'ICT in Education' and 'Art Education' have internal assessment of 30 marks and 20 marks of term end exam. It seems that the evaluation is more process-based but marks centric also. However, the nature of evaluation can only be judged when it is in process. In this way, we can see that the curriculum is a balance form of traditional and innovative contents.

Reflecting on the Transaction Mechanism for the programme:

Any curriculum can only be transacted in its true sense when it is widely debated and shared. As mentioned by one of the stakeholders that there were maximum involvement of teachers and teacher educators of different institutions of Bihar in design of this curriculum, so that they could own this programme and get an informed understanding which would help them in transacting it better. It was also emphasised that the implementation plan needs to be dynamic, with flexibility to adjust to different contexts of practice and with contingency plans in place for foreseeable challenges.

The purpose of the programme is to train a sufficient number of teachers to meet the need of the Right to Education Act-2009. This initially involves the training of about thirty nine thousands unqualified serving teachers by 2016. The training will aim to assist teachers to become more effective classroom practitioners and to build an enriched infrastructure for the teachers that can also support other needs, initiatives, and programmes in teacher education in Bihar. As per the written curriculum document, the programme expects a mechanism which uses a blend of independent resource-based learning, face-to-face interaction, and ICT to enable teachers to learn and teach at the same time.

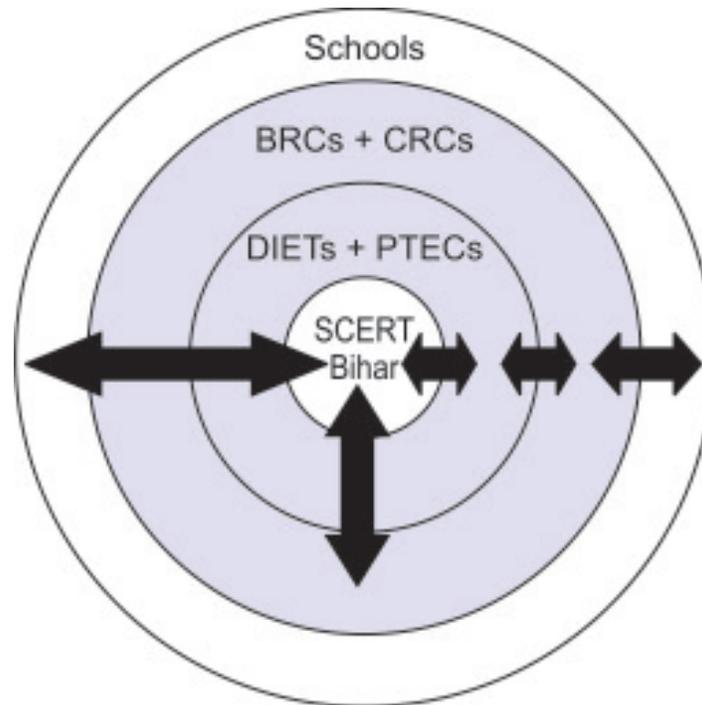


Diagram 1: Interconnectivity of the Distance Learning Mechanism

Since, it is a distance learning programme, so an effective decentralized learner support strategy must be an integral component of this D.El.Ed. (ODL) Programme. It is observed that support is being provided at different levels in an interlinked mechanism. The different levels are SCERT (Bihar), District Institute of Educational Training (DIETs) & Primary Teacher Education College (PTECs), Block Resource Centre (BRCs) & Cluster Resource Centre (CRCs) and Schools. The diagram-1 is showing the interlinking of these institutions.

Even in a decentralized mechanism, the role of SCERT is very central to the functioning of whole process. The major role of SCERT (Bihar) is comprised of the suggested departments such as student support, academic administration, training and materials supply, assessment, quality monitoring, ICT support. Along with the above, the institution is also accountable for keeping a continuous track record of the trainees' progress, identifying their challenges and initiate supportive interventions if not already in process. The body also ensures that the curriculum meets the national and state requirements.

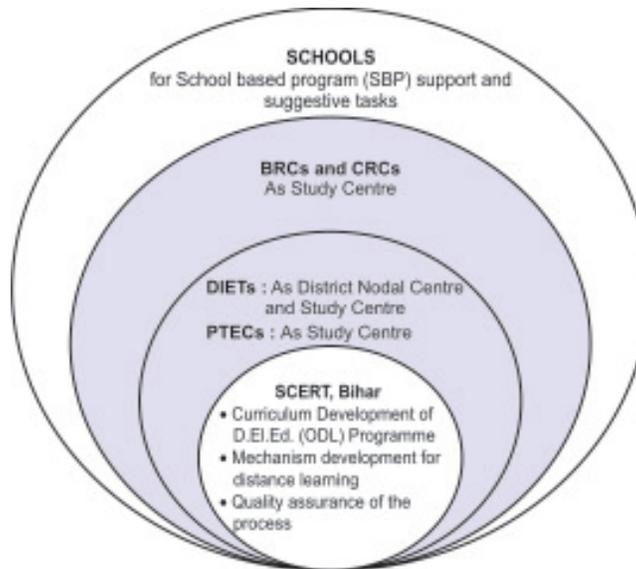


Diagram 2: Role of the Institution at different levels of the mechanism

Even being a distance course, there is provision of compulsory academic support at local level. The support is being provided through study centers, as outlined in diagram-2. A study centre may be a DIET, PTEC, BRC or CRC. DIET also functions as district nodal centre. Study centers are providing support in many ways. There are weekly meetings as ‘contact classes’ at study centers for discussions on the contents and activities under various subjects. They generally held on every Saturday and Sunday at the study centers. Along with above, one orientation workshop for each semester is also held at designated study centers. The study centers are being run by various resource persons and one coordinator. All resource persons and coordinators have been trained by the SCERT to perform their role at the study centre. Their major role at the study centre is to discuss the problems of trainees and to do their assessment. The discussion at the study centre should ideally have three components i.e. Reading materials discussion, Assignment related discussion, day-to-day problems faced in the classroom. A minimum of 90% attendance at the study centre is compulsory for all trainees. This is one of the remarkable features of the programme which is generally not very visible in other distance learning programmes.

Since, this programme is specially developed for those teachers who are already teaching in schools. So, the Schools of trainee teacher have been also taken as an important component of this programme. It will be the sight of School based programme (SBP), where demonstration classes and other school-based activities etc. will be conducted under the supervision of a mentor

(a trained experienced teacher from the school) and resource persons from the related study centre. Since, the School is completely under the access of trainee teachers so it creates more space for doing various activities, projects, case studies, etc.

Challenges of the programme:

The concept of distance learning is based on the idea of convenient quality learning for a distant learner. But in distance learning more is a challenge of dropout. This challenge is very less in this programme since the teachers have the compulsion to complete it. However, it is found in discussion with a stakeholder that a small number of teachers have been dropped out from this programme due to their inability to accommodate with it.

Another challenge is about the passing rate of the trainees in a distance learning programme. In general, distance education passing rates are lower than for similar programmes offered on a full-time basis. Generally, the average achievement score of a distance education learner is also very low from the average of a full time learner. This is one of the major challenges for this programme which can raise the structural drop-out rate. The ongoing student support and timely constructive feedback on assessment are important ways to mitigate drop-out and stop-out challenges, but in addition it is important to make the learning process more manageable. How it is being done in this programme, is very crucial for its success.

In distance education, it is normal practice to offer registration and examination opportunities more often so that students are able to see faster progress, which is motivating, and so that they do not get overloaded, such as needing to write 10 assignments or write 10-12 examinations all in a short period. This issue is taken care in this programme.

The programme is in semester mode so that trainee teachers need to focus on only five to six papers at a time and can manage their study in a better way.

One more challenge as raised by the NCFTE 2009-2010 is that trainee teachers and teacher educators often find it difficult to relate theory and practice, even though they are inextricably intertwined. The genesis of this problem is both in the curriculum and in its transaction process. How to discuss the content of curriculum and who is qualified enough to facilitate that discussion, is a major concern for the effective implementation of this programme. Since, the training is going on at mass level, so the issue becomes more critical due to unavailability of qualified resource persons.

Along with this, we have a tendency in our traditional assessment strategies to do them in a highly fragmented way. If we want to transform classroom practices, as indicated in the purpose and stated objectives of the programme, the focus of the assessment strategy and of the contact discussions must be on praxis i.e. an integrated form of theory and practice. So, there is an emphasis on continuous and comprehensive assessment of our trainee teachers with informed and evidence based evaluation process. But, managing such kind of evaluation at mass level is very difficult as per ground reality depicts. So, an efficient system is required to perform this task. Since, the state has no any prior experience of assessment in distance learning so there may be some challenges ahead about it.

It is also a central issue of this programme that the trainee teachers who enter this programme are generally underprepared for the independent resource-based and information & Communication technology (ICT) supported learning approach which is envisaged in the programme. Therefore, the success of this process is doubtful if it is highly dependable on ICT based learning.

Conclusion:

After reflecting on the curriculum and its transaction mechanism, it can be concluded that the curriculum is a blended form of distance and contact learning. The National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (NCFTE, 2010) also emphasizes that as adults and professionals, teachers are critical observers of the contents of in-service activities. The extent to which they learn from the training is a function of their assessment of its quality and the extent to which it relates to their needs. Therefore, the constructive understanding of trainee teachers towards their profession will itself provide the evidence of the success of this programme. In a distance learning programme, this can only be possible by raising the frequency and level of interaction with the learners. The trainee teachers should be given some mode of regular interactive space to engage with the content of the programme so that they could critique and problematize them and not simply do the rote memorization.

Since, about two third of the time, trainee teachers are working independently, so the learning resources must help effectively in meaningful learning and self-assessment. Constructive and formative feedback from different sources is needed to help trainee teachers pace themselves and to confirm their self-assessment. It must be provided timely so that students can learn from one assignment to improve the next. Finally, this distance learning programme should transact in the way so that there mustn't be any distance from learning.

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Admission process of SSC program in Distance education in Bangladesh: An Analysis

Dr. Iqbal Husain

Assistant Professor (Sociology), Bangladesh Open University, Bangladesh
[ihusain1979@gmail.com]

Abstract

To make a prosperous Bangladesh, there is to alternative of education. If most of the people become educated, country will go ahead. So, the government of Bangladesh has given more emphasis on education. There are many ways has been introduced by the government to make the nation educated. Distance education is one of the more popular programs in Bangladesh. School Secondary Certificate (SSC) is one of the bigger programs in distance education in Bangladesh. Thousands of dropped out learners try to take admission at SSC program every year. But they are not so aware. Most of the learners of SSC program came from illiterate, poor and vulnerable family. They face different types of difficulties in admission process. Difficulties in admission process are creating many challenges for SSC program. Specially in conventional system, SSC program become very easier. Passing rate, free book, low cost, stipend etc. is protecting drop-out. So, SSC program in Open and Distance Learning (ODL) is facing many challenges day by day. We have analyzed the challenges & limitations in admission process of SSC program in ODL in Bangladesh and finally provided some recommendations as way out of remedies.

Key Words: Limitations and Challenges in admission process of SSC program in Distance Education.

Introduction

Bangladesh is a developing country in the South-East Asian region and has made some pleasant progress in the last two decades. Enrollment in school (both girls and boys), hygienic sanitation system, literacy rate, per capita

income, average life expectancy etc. has increased. Simultaneously child and maternity mortality rate, different type of infectious diseases have also been reduced. There is a unique achievement of Bangladesh regarding Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The United Nations and the World Bank has also recognized the achievement of Bangladesh several times. But still Bangladesh faces many problems, challenges and threats, in development Natural disasters, over population, poverty, illiteracy, unemployment etc. are the major barriers for better Bangladesh. 42.47% people of 7 years and over can't read and write (BBS,2011). 39.8% students have in 2008 dropped out from primary education in 2010. Which was 49.3%¹. To address this huge number of unreached and dropped out students the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) has created an opportunity to get education through distance education. Secondary School Certificate (SSC) is a significant program in distance education. Bangladesh Open University (BOU) is the only public institution in the country that imparts education in distance mode. It was established to increase equitable access to education, to develop the human resources of the country and improve the quality, relevance and efficiency of the education system². It supports the government's current and long term education policy on eradication of illiteracy and thus helps alleviate poverty in the country³. The main theme of the university is to reach up to the unreached. At present BOU has six schools (faculties), 21 programs and 4,86,195 students (male- 2,84,652, female- 2,10,543)⁴. Which provides education through Open and Distance Learning (ODL) mode by using technology including electronic devices to reach people in different corners of the country. It has introduced Secondary School Certificate (SSC) program through distance mode in 1995.

Objectives of the study

The major objective of this study is to analyze the admission process of SSC program in open education. The specific objectives are to: -

- ❖ find-out the existing process of admission of SSC program in open education
- ❖ point out the challenges and limitations of SSC program in open education
- ❖ Recommendation way and means to overcoming these challenges

¹ BANBEIS 2012

² Government of Bangladesh, BOU Act 1992

³ Md. Mizanoor Rahman, Expansion of Open and Distance Learning at the Bangladesh Open University,

Journal of Teacher Education, Vol. 3, 2005,

⁴ *Student Support Services, BOU, May- 2014*

Methods & Techniques

To achieve the objectives mentioned above the research has followed both the quantitative and qualitative methods for data collection. It has been a participatory process through ensuring maximum involvement of the researcher. A quantitative data questionnaire survey has been conducted to collect data from the randomly selected five schools. 130 learners have been interviewed. Qualitative data has been collected through Focus Group Discussion (FGD), Key Informant Interview (KII) and observation based on experience. We have conducted 3 FGD with the relevant persons. One FGD has been conducted at field level (Study center and Sub-regional office), another at BOU main campus with Students Support Service (SSS) officials). We have also compared the process between conventional (regular) and open education of SSC program.

Meaning and characteristics of Distance Education

By distance education, we generally mean provision for learning in a flexible manner, taking into account geographical, social and time constraints for individual learners rather than those of educational institutions⁵. Distance education offers a new format of teaching and learning. In this field technology offers many promises. University hopes to save money by delivering education to students who are unable to attend classes because of time and distance. Providing the convenience of time and space is a big promise made by distance education⁶. Which aims at driving out the restrictions and weakness of the conventional education system. For example.

- a) It has - no age, gender, ethnic or any other barriers, for admission.
- b) correspondence texts, radio, TV, audio-video cassette, internet and other electronic devices are used as a medium for teaching.
- c) Attendance at a particular place or classroom, is not required
- d) Open course contents provides a learner freedom to choose the course she/he like and found useful.

Distance education system shares almost all the above mentioned characteristics⁷. ODL democratizes education, offers need-based academic programs, promotes and takes quality education to people's doorsteps⁸. A grant step towards providing education for all.

⁵ Mian, Md. Shamsul Hoque & Hossain, Md. Touhid, Education for all: Open and Distance Learning Mode, Journal of Teacher Education, BOU, Vol.3, 2005, School of Education, P. 18.

⁶ Akhter, Zobaida, Knowing Facts: Women empowerment and distance education, Journal of Open School, BOU, Vol.3, December 2006, P. 2

⁷ Mian, Md. Shamsul Hoque & Hossain, Md. Touhid, Ibd P. 20

⁸ NIOS & COL: Goa Conference-2003, Cited by Md. Mizanoor Rahman, Expansion of Open and Distance Learning at the Bangladesh Open University, Journal of Teacher Education, Vol. 3, 2005, P. 93.

Present status of SSC program in Distance education in Bangladesh

Distance education started in Bangladesh in 1992 through Bangladesh Open University (BOU). The Government established this university to increase equitable access to education, to develop the human resources of the country and improve the quality, relevance and efficiency of the education system⁹. It supports the government's current and long term education policy on eradication of illiteracy and thus helps alleviate poverty in the country¹⁰. Now SSC is the 2nd largest program in Open and Distance Learning (ODL) in the country. But admissions are not rising.

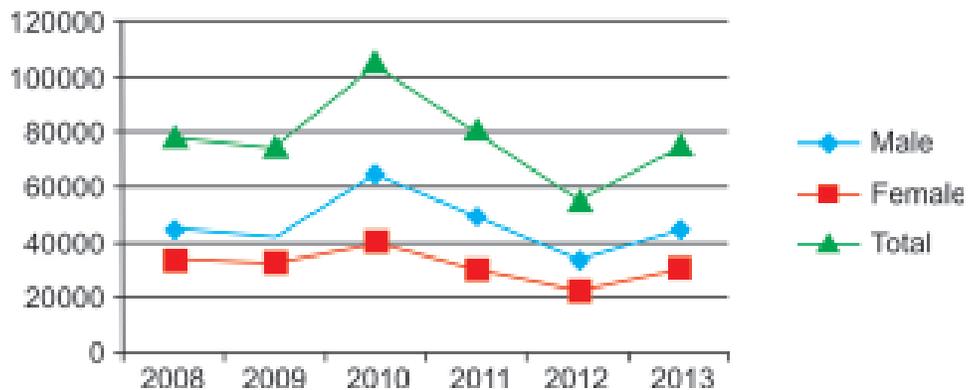


Fig.- 1: Students at SSC program in distance education in last 5 years¹¹

The above graph shows that admission to SSC program in open education is not satisfactory. Average learner's admission in SSC program has decreased. Even though, the study center is also decreasing. In 2013 total Study Center (SC) of this program was 580, but in 2014 this number has reduced to 532¹².

Existing Admission process of SSC program in Distance education in Bangladesh

In Bangladesh, we look at the admission process there is tremendous flexibility in admission of SSC program in distance education. There is no age-bar. Learners can take admission at any age if she/he has only the certificate of

⁹ Government of Bangladesh, BOU Act 1992

¹⁰ Rahman, Md. Mizanoor, Expansion of Open and Distance Learning at the Bangladesh Open University, Journal of Teacher Education, Vol. 3, 2005, P. 94.

¹¹ Ibd

¹² Students Support Services (SSS) of BOU

class eight, JSC or equivalent class. 532 SCs are located all over the country and Learners can take admission at their nearest centers even. If they have a long break in their study, there is no problem for admission in this system. Learners engaged in any service or business can also take admission. This makes a large number of learners interested in taking admission in the SSC program of distance education.

The admission process followed is as below:

01. *Open Circular:* The admission notice is circulated in at least two popular Newspapers, atleast two times within two months. This notice is also available in the BOU website. Banners are also hung by the RRCs in this connection so, that people come to know about admission to the programme.
02. *RRC and SC based publicity:* Publicity for admission is also done by putting up banners, notice board and using mikes for announcements bank.
03. *Learner's responsibilities:* Learner has to go SC buying admission and registration form. Then that fill up the form with photo and signature, chose the subjects. Finally the learner pays the course and other fees and submits the forms with required papers.
04. *SC's responsibilities:* SC bears almost all responsibilities regarding admission. They provide required information, distribute and receive forms. Finally they complete the admission or registration process after checking and provide ID card to the Learners.
05. *SRC's responsibilities:* Sub-Regional Center (SRC) verifies the registration form, fees-payment etc. and issues Student's ID card. They coordinate between SCs and RRC in this connection.

Admission process of SSC program in Distance education

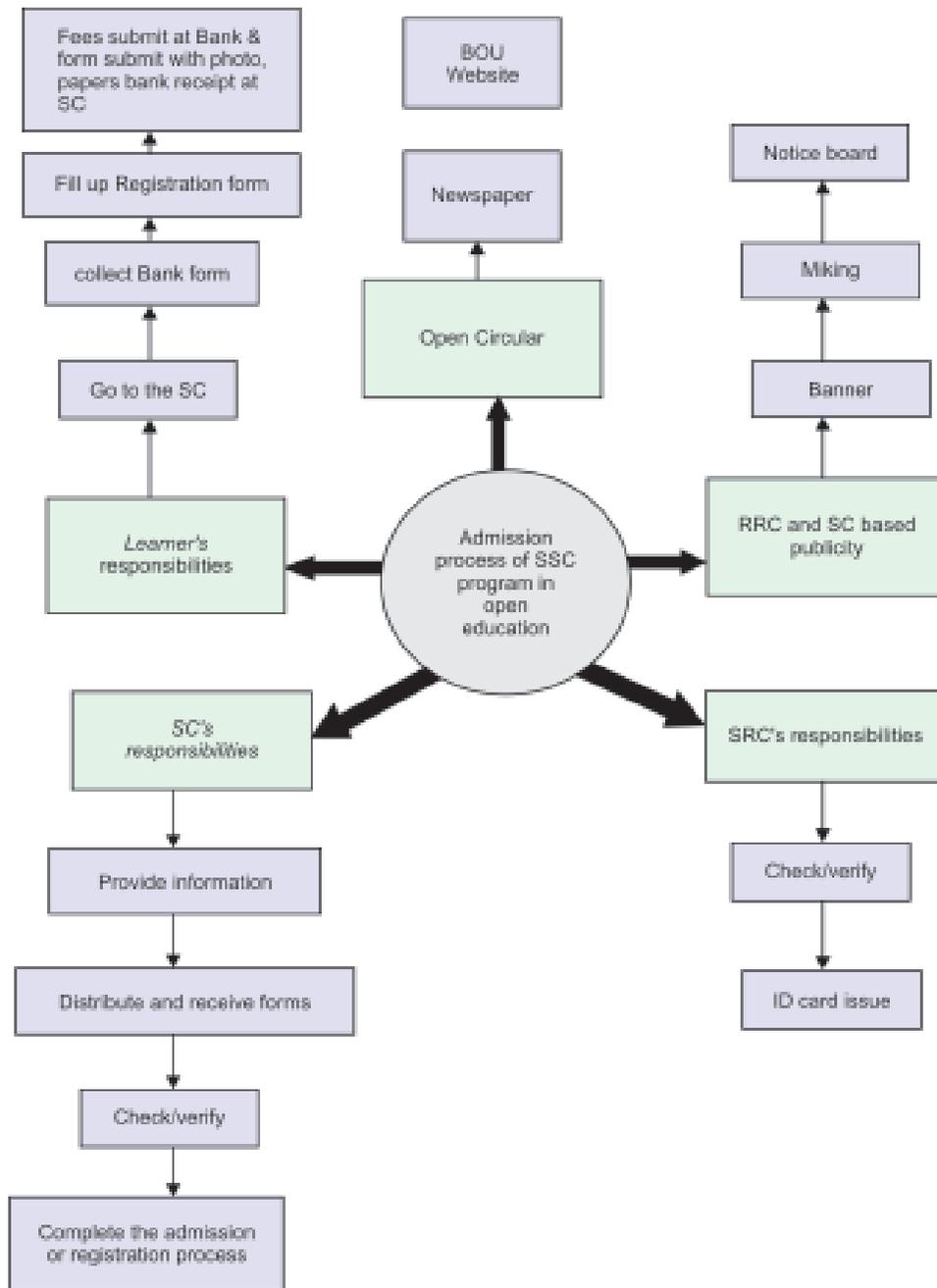


Fig. 2: Admission process of SSC program in Open Education

Limitations of Admission Process of SSC program in Distance education

Now 105,210 learners are studying in SSC distance education in Bangladesh¹³. Most of them have interruption in education. 11.81% learner's family is very poor and 24.41% is poor. So total of 36.22% learner came from poor family¹⁴. 26.77% learner's family has no institutionally educated member. Maximum class five or PSC to eight or JSC passed member has in 37.8% family¹⁵. In this background, many learners are not aware about necessary rules, paper work etc. So, they face many obstacles to take admission at the program. Now we are discussing the challenges in admission of SSC program in distance education.

- i. *Lack of proper information:* Interested learners don't get proper information regarding admission. BOU circulars a notice regarding admission on news paper once or twice. The admission notice is not properly up-loaded on BOU website it all time. There is no front desk at RRCs or in BOU main campus. There is not enough necessary information in news paper circular. Some times last date of admission is extended. But this is not well advertized. Many people have no access to the news paper or internet. So, they are completely dependent on the verbal communication. There is no fixed time of admission of this program. That is why interested persons one not mentally prepared.
- ii. *Shortage of cooperation from the admission officer:* Due to the weak background, learners of SSC program in open education one completely dependent on the admission officer for their admission process. 26.67% respondent commented that the level of cooperation of admission officer was not good or not bad during their admission. Some they were not so dependent regarding the process also. 22.22% learner got good and 15.55% learner got very good cooperation from the relevant admission officer. So, we can say, a total of 64.44% learners had no complain regarding the cooperation during admission. But rest 35.56% didn't get expected cooperation and were not satisfied.
- iii. *Problem facing during admission:* How many learners face problem and what type of problem. We also tried to know during the study. 76% learners faced problem during admission at SSC program in open education. About 56% learner face financial problems during their admission. We have already found that, most of the learners of SSC

¹³ Student Support Services, BOU, May- 2014

¹⁴ Suffering of BOU learners: Causes and Remedies, Dr. Iqbal Husain & Md. Shahidur Rahman, 2014, Table- 3.11

¹⁵ Ibid. Table- 3.12

program in open education came from poor, marginalized and vulnerable families. So, financial problem is the reality of these learners. While 20.59% learner did not get proper information during their admission. 17.65% learner did not get family support in this connection. We asked the learners which issue was the most hazardous or complicated during admission. Highest 57.47% learners said, that filling up was most complicated to them. 34.35% said, Bank-office communication (up-down) was hazardous to them. Many of them think Photo & paper attestation attested, attachment and submission is also hazardous and complicated.

- iv. *Financial Issues:* Now any learner has to pay at least Tk. 2200/- (two thousand two hundred) for admission in first part only. Same amount is applicable for second year admission. Learners have to pay additional fees for marks sheet, testimonial, provisional or original certificate etc. If any mistake occur or learner has to appear for re-examination then they have to pay fixed fees for every issue on an average a learner officially pays at least Tk. 5000/- (Five thousand) to complete SSC program in open education. 40% learners think that the present fees are reasonable. But 46.67% learner feel, this is too much for them and feel the pressure on them. Only 13.33% learner said, that according to the present living cost this fees is not much. We asked the learners if they pay extra money except Bank receipt or not. 28.44% learner informed us, that they pay extra money except Bank receipt during their admission. 62.28% of them pay BDT 201 to 400.
- v. *Admission at Study center:* Learners chose the study center considering their distance, communication arrangement, friends or known person's availability at the study center etc. But in some case they don't get admission at the study center they like. Sometimes admission officer demands undue favor or money from the learners. Sometimes he threats to send remote or learner's disfavorable area. But in our study highest 87.89% learners got their favorite study center. Only 12.11% learners said, they didn't get their favorite center due to the seat capacity as the highest number of learner's admission (400) to that centre in full for that session.

Challenges of Admission Process of SSC program in Distance education

There are some challenges in admission of SSC program in ODL system. Because of these challenges, trend of learner's admission is reducing at SSC level. Even the number of study center has also reduced in the last two years. In 2013 total 580 SC was functional. But in 2014 this number has been

lessen at 532. Here we are presenting the challenges of SSC program in ODL.

- ◆ **JSC/JDC system:** Junior School Certificate (JSC) or Junior Dakhil Certificate is a public examination system for class Eight. since 2011. Since this is a public examination so no one can provide or collect the certificate as they wish. But before JSC system most of the dropped out students collected a certificate from any high school. This was very easy for everybody. But now there is no scope to collect certificate from any school. If any student doesn't attend the examination or fails then they can to be admissions in the SSC programme.
- ◆ **Fewer dropouts in secondary level:** Dropout rate has been decreasing in secondary level day by day. Average 39.8% students dropped out from primary education in 2010. But in 2008 the net dropout rate was 49.3%¹⁶ Low cost in education, free books, high passing rate, consciousness of people, stipend for girls student etc. can play a vital role to reduce dropout rate. So the scope of SSC program in ODL will be narrower in future.
- ◆ **Expenditure at ODL:** SSC program in open education charges at least Tk. 2200 at a time. If it is two times then they need at least BDT 5000. For any poor, vulnerable and marginalized family, it is not easy to bear this cost. On the other hand, there is no incentive or motivational initiatives (Stipend, free books, free tuition fees etc.) in distance education. There are many complains that students pay extra money for every service. So, as a whole SSC in open education is a high cost program for the poor. One the other hand, in regular SSC program, learners get many support like books, stipend, no tuition fee etc.
- ◆ **SLM not disburse in time:** In distance education Self Learning Material (SLM/Books) is not disbursed in time. Authority receives money from students during their registration. But they disburse some books just before exam time.
- ◆ **Low success (Passing) rate:** In the 80s and 90s on an average less than 40 per cent students passed in SSC examination. Now this rate is above 80. But in distance education system average passing rate is around 55 per cent in last 5 years. Sometimes it is a lacking of ensuring effective support to the learners considering their background, merit, nature etc. Most of the learners are not regular. But the SLM, tutorial system and other supports can't prepare for examination. They make preparation with their own responsibility.

¹⁶

BANBEIS 2012

- ◆ **Harassments of Student:** Harassments of student is one of the vital challenges of SSC program in open education. Almost all students receive a bitter experience during their studentship at BOU. Many of them and extra money (bribe) during admission or later. To collect testimonial, mark sheet, certificate etc. they have to wait and tramp about day after day. For any mistake in name spelling or something like that or of result has been withheld then students face a lot of suffering. In many cases, it is do any wrong. But they harass inhumanly due to mistake of Study Center coordinator, invigilators, coordinating office, RRC, computer or exam division of BOU for which they are harassed.
- ◆ **Negligence to the students:** Almost everywhere SSC level students of open and distance education have been neglected. Including coordinator of SC, tutors and officers of BOU nobody cares or honours them. Due to their break in etudes of study, socio-economic background or lack of consciousness. Hence they are always scared of being show absent in exam-signature sheet, result withheld, cancelation of studentship etc. They feel afraid of raising their voice strongly and jointly. So everywhere they are ignored.
- ◆ **Image Crisis:** The certificate of Boards and BOU is equivalent. But SSC program of BOU has image crisis. Many people think there is no teaching at all at a tutorial centre. Students know nothing. They pass through unfair means. That is why they don't get importance to the certificate. There is no specific (printed) option or space for BOU at any admission forms of boards or National University (NU) in HSC and Degree level. BOU's registration digit is also not these with board or NU's forms. Result don't verify in internet also. So, there are many resulting in image crisis.
- ◆ **Lack of example of Success story:** BOU was established in 1992 and SSC programme has been going on since 1995. But there are very few number of success stories. Success story means any student taking admission in medical college or Engineering University, achieving higher degree like Honours and Masters with first class or success in BCS examination. Millions of students have passed SSC from BOU. But truly speaking there is no example of success story except 1 or 2 case.
- ◆ **Compare with regular education (SSC):** To compare with regular education, SSC program in open system is in a backward position. Table 4.6 is showing this message clearly.

Table- 1 : Comparison of SSC Program between regular and open education system (2007 to 2013)

Sl#	Comparison area	Boards	BOU
01	Average Passing rate	76.02%	55.692%
02	Achieving GPA- 5	405713	17
03	Session Jam	Almost no session jam	Around 2 years
04	Price of Books	Free	Reasonable price
05	Cost at a time	1000 to 2500*	2200**
06	Stipend opportunity	Better opportunity	No opportunity

* During form fill up for SSC exam. Amount differs school to school. Board fee, practical charge, coaching charge etc. has been imposed.

** During taking admission, Books, registration, exam and tuition fee has been charged.

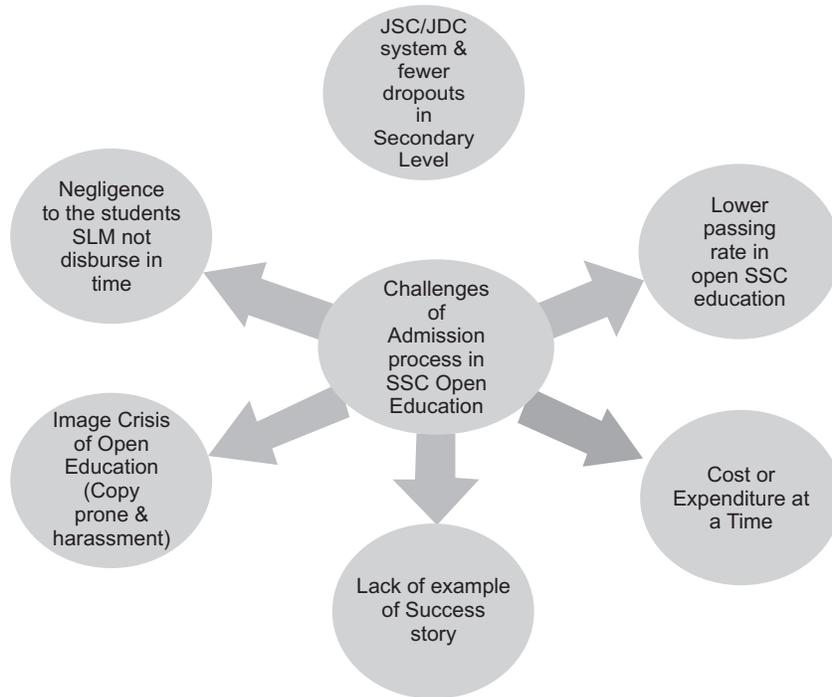


Fig. 3: Challenges of Admission process in SSC open education

Way out of Remedies

To overcome these challenges some recommendations are made which . We have found out are based on consultation these recommends through consulting with the relevant persons, observation and perception during the study. Teachers and learners of the SSC program in open education have given vital opinion in this connection. If we can address these recommendations, we hope the challenges would be reduced and we will be able to create a comfortable zone for the learners in admission to the SSC program of open education.

- ◆ **Information should be disseminated properly:** Now it is the age of free information. There are many ways of releasing information to the relevant people. Which can be pro-people and service oriented. Most the learners of SSC program in open education are not so much aware as they came from poor, illiterate, vulnerable and marginalized families. So, they don't know the exact official procedure. Lack of proper information pushes them into ignorance. That is why the authority should take proper initiative to disseminate information. The following initiatives may be considered:
 - a. *Website must be updated*
 - b. *Admission notice should be published in at least two popular newspaper at least twice*
 - c. *Update the notice board with latest information*
 - d. *Disseminate the last version of the student guide with correct information*
 - e. *Introduce local campaigning i.e. TV scroll, News on advertisement on local newspaper, Set-up banner, advertising on the Mikes distributing reflects etc.*

- ◆ **Learner's suffering must be reduced:** It must be as Study Center, SRC, RRC and other relevant divisions should be more student-friendly showing positive attitude, helping mentality and giving up harassment tendency. This must be contained by all responsible persons. Everyone should remember, all students are entitled for receiving particular service against their payment. To reduce suffering some initiatives may be considered:
 - a. *Set up Help/Information Desk*
 - b. *Set up a complaint box and make it effective*
 - c. *Set up a call center*
 - d. *Set up a booth of the particular Bank at the RRC.*

- e. *Check and verify relevant data of learner's registration form.*
- ◆ **Create low cost opportunity:** We should create some low cost opportunity specially for poor and girls student. There is no tuition fee in the conventional system. Most of the girl students get stipend. But there is no such opportunity in open education system. Though most of the students are poor, marginalized or drop-outs. To create this opportunity the authority can considers the below points:
 - a. *Provide free books*
 - b. *Half or full free tuition fee*
 - c. *Create a stipend opportunity for the girls, brilliants and poor.*
- ◆ **Improve quality of education:** There is no alternative but improving quality education. If quality education becomes improved, passing rate will be high. To improve quality education:
 - a. *The authority must strengthen its monitoring system during tutorial class.*
 - b. *Books and other Self Learning Material (SLM) must be distributed in time (before starting tutorial class).*
 - c. *Media program should be more updated, standard and sufficient.*
- ◆ **More use of ICT:** After admission, we can use different device of ICT for better learning of the students. Such as:
 - a. *All important message i.e. starting date of tutorial class, Holiday, examination date, Fees with last date, exam result etc. should be sent through mobile phone.*
 - b. *E-learning, M-learning should be more efficient and strengthened.*
 - c. *We must upload our SLM on our website .*
 - d. *We can provide a memory chip with all relevant material for using on mobile phone.*
- ◆ **Create Vocational education opportunity:** To consider the background and future livelihood of the students of open education, the vocational education opportunity should be created. With NCTB curriculum, students will take a vocational trade as their additional (four) subject. There are some trade (apparels and Manufacturing-Garments, Beautification, Sewing, Dairy & Poultry etc.) which will be available according to the capacity and national needs. Students choose any one for one year. When they achieve SSC certificate they also gain skill on any trade. If they want they will be able to engage in a relevant work as skill person.

- ◆ **Provide Incentive:** If any student obtains GPA-5 they should be well-received by the authority. At the same time the authority can raise a fund for meritorious, poor, physically challenged or any other such students. Stipend, full or half free or provide any vocational incentive like sewing machine will also help. Interested students should apply and the authority will evaluate all applications. If need be collect information about the applicant through RRC or SRC and Finally select 10 persons in every year. This initiative will create positive message and acceptable image of open education in Bangladesh.

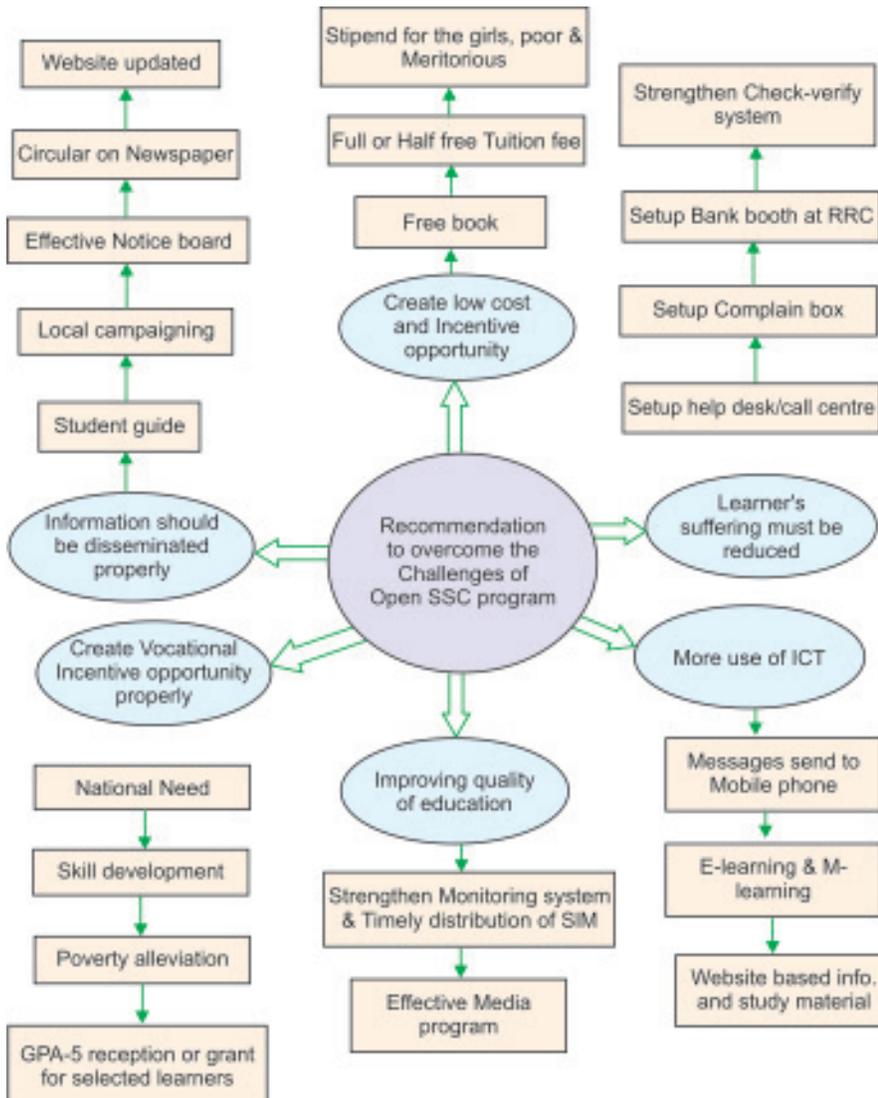


Fig. 4: Recommendation to overcome the Challenges of SSC program

Conclusion

SSC program of open education is really passing a transition period. Student strength is decreasing gradually every year which is becoming very alarming. Authorized showed sit up and take notice. If they can find out the problems and challenges properly and realize its impact then the remedies will be easier. We have. Our recommendations may reduce the risk of challenges. While the problem may be overcome. The authority can form a team to investigate the issue intensively as otherwise this popular and effective program may fail in its purpose.

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Rethinking Alternative Assessment Practices in Open Schooling System

Rajendra Kumar Nayak

Academic Officer (Mathematics), National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS),
MHRD, Govt. of India, Sector-62, Noida-201309
Email: rajendranayak07@gmail.com

Abstract

Assessment in Open Schooling education is mainly associated with the growth of learning of the learners i.e. how much learning experience a learner has acquired at a particular point of time against the expected learning outcomes? But, with shifting of focus from teacher or subject-centered education to the learner and learning-centered education with the pursuance of constructivist approaches, the multifarious utility of assessment has come to force in recent educational literatures and practices. If educational system set its target for learners to be able to think critically, solve the problems individually, be creative, assessment practices must be continuous and comprehensive and largely integrated with classroom learning process. Most of the criticism has been directed at the wide spread use of achievement test in open educational institutions. Many of our assessment practices place too much emphasis on assessing content and give too little attention to the skills and application. Critique in this evaluation fails to assess learner's level of meta-cognition, creativity and other higher order skills, which are mostly the pre-requisite of real life situations, work employment, personal and professional growth. In open schooling system Self-Learning Materials (SLM), Personal Contact Programme (PCP) and assessment are supplementary to each other and assessment itself become a valuable learning experience. Learning and evaluation activities needs to be blended into a holistic act/task, which demands learning not to select but to design and create the task. In this changing scenario, alternative assessment practices need to be practiced in open schooling institutions for addressing meaningful learning rather certifying the learners.

This paper outlines the present assessment practices in open schooling institutions and major initiatives of National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) on assessment like On-Demand Examinations (ODEs), life-skill integration in evaluation, Tutor Mark Assignment. An attempt has also been made for alternative assessment practices in open schooling institutions.

Introduction:

If we wish to discover the truth about an educational system, we must look into its assessment procedures. What student qualities and achievements are actively valued and rewarded by the system? The answer to this question is to be found in what the system requires students to do in order to survive and prosper.”**D. Rowntree (1977)**

Open Schooling Institutions work on the ideology of individual differences and share the conviction that students learn best when they are intrinsically motivated and interested in the topic. This particular ideology shapes most of the Teaching-Learning experiences and Assessment practices in the school. The focus is on the child and efforts are made to bring out the best and his/her latent talents. The teaching-learning processes are geared towards his/her learning styles and learning speed and assessment processes are inbuilt within the paradigms of teaching-learning experiences. Learners in the open-Schooling system are primarily those who, for one reason or the other, could not either join or continue studies in the formal system. In the Open Schooling System, a learner is required to learn at his/her own pace. He/she is expected to be a self-learner. One can learn at one own speed and at one own convenience. For this, a learner is provided specially designed printed self-instructional material on the course(s) offered by him. Besides print material, support materials like audio/video cassettes and practical manuals are made available to the learner.

Perspectives on Open Schooling Assessment

We can look into the assessment of Open School Systems from the following perspectives:

- a) Process Assessment:** In this the educational programme is assessed by observing the programme in action. It describes and assesses the various components of the programme like teaching-learning activities, programme materials and activities, students' evaluation procedures etc. The appropriateness and desirability of each of these components is assessed by way of observations, feedback from teachers, students etc. The programme evaluator might observe teachers using the

programme and write a descriptive account of how students respond and then provide feedback to the teachers or the administrators. Examining implementation of the educational programme activities is an important form of process evaluation. Finding the gaps between 'what is' and 'what should be' with the intention of providing the necessary interventions.

- b) Outcome Assessment:** It finds the impact which the educational programme has been able to bring about in its learners. It basically tries to see whether the desired learning outcomes have been attained by the learners or not. For example, if in a programme on 'Teaching Skills', the evaluator would be interested in knowing whether the learners are able to demonstrate adequately the teaching skills in their teaching or not. This perspective of evaluation tries to see the 'total gain' by students on account of the teaching-learning interventions. The level of students is seen both at the time of entering the programme (entry-level behavior) and at the end of the programme (terminal behavior). The greater the difference in their entry-level and exit-level scores, the better it is as evidence of programme effectiveness. They are generally quantitative in nature.
- c) Impact assessment:** They are a combination of qualitative as well as quantitative analysis. Impact assessment tends to look beyond the immediate results of process and outcome assessment. They look beyond the immediate results of policies, instructions or services to identify longer term benefits or negative impact of an educational programme. They also tend to look at the unintended learning outcomes or hidden learning outcomes both positive as well as negative. They also look into whether the learning or the positive impacts of the programme are sustainable over a longer period of time or not.

Components of Open Schooling Assessment

The following are the main components of assessment of an Open School Programme (adapted from OECD Reviews of Evaluation and Assessment in Education, Australia, 2011):

- i) Learner Assessment:** Open Schools by their very nature relies on focusing on the strengths of each individual student. Open schools share the conviction that children and adolescents learn most effectively when they are interested in and motivated for a topic or a project (Sliwka, Anne, 2008). For this reason, evaluation in Open schools should focus on varied methods of evaluation; trying to look into all the personality

dimensions of a person. The assessment system has to be comprehensive in nature with focus on criterion-referenced evaluation rather than norm-referenced. Also there is an acute need to see Teaching, Learning and Assessment as a part of the same paradigm, rather than seeing them as water-tight compartments.

- ii) **Teacher Assessment:** Quality teaching is essential to improve student outcomes and reducing gaps in student achievement. Regular Teacher Performance Appraisal System provides teachers with meaningful appraisals that encourage professional learning and growth. The process for teacher appraisal should be designed to foster teacher development and identify opportunities for additional support where required. By helping teachers achieve their full potential, any educational systems and specially the open education systems can go a long way in realizing their vision and following their philosophies.
- iii) **Programme Assessment:** It involves evaluation of academic and support programmes with the intent of helping improve the programme and in particular, improve the students' performance. The results from an assessment process should provide information that can be used to determine whether or not intended outcomes are being achieved and how the programmes can be improved. An assessment process should also be designed to inform departmental faculty and other decision-makers about relevant issues that can impact the program and student learning (OAPA Handbook PROGRAM- Based Review and Assessment).

An effective Open School Programme Assessment should have the following features:

- ❖ **Systematic:** It has to be a systematic and scientific method of collecting and analyzing information over a period of time.
- ❖ **Focus on Vision and Philosophy:** The main focus has to be the mission statement and the overall philosophy of the Open school/ institution.
- ❖ **Formative and Summative:** The assessment processes should be ongoing throughout the session as well as at the end of financial/ academic year for overall effectiveness
- ❖ **Comprehensive:** The assessments processes need to keep in mind not only the academic excellence but also other institutional as well as administrative factors. It has to be a comprehensive exercise keeping in mind the qualitative as well as quantitative dimensions.

- ❖ **Pragmatic:** Practical considerations also need to be given due importance. The main objective is to improve the overall school environment. An assessment process which is extremely time consuming or overtly expensive may defeat the very purpose.
- ❖ **Suited to internal needs and requirements:** An assessment programme standardized by an outside agency may not serve the purpose. It is better that an assessment programme developed in-house by internal members of faculty and administrative heads be adopted to bring about overall efficiency.

-adapted from California State University, Chico, Assessment Plan (1998)

- iv) Curriculum Assessment:** Curriculum is best thought of as that set of planned activities which are designed to implement a particular aim – set of such aims – in terms of the content of what is to be taught and the knowledge, skills and attitudes which are to be deliberately fostered” together with statements of criteria for selection of content, and choices in methods, materials and evaluation.

Therefore, we can say that curriculum pertains to all the academic and non-academic aspects and interaction of students with instructional content, resources, media, materials, people and processes for the attainment of educational objectives. In contrast to what is construed by people, curriculum is far more comprehensive than syllabus, which is a list of contents to be studied in an academic tenure. Curriculum development process starts with determining the aims and objectives of an Open School programme keeping in mind the vision and philosophy of the school. After the objectives are finalized, other important components of curriculum like the Content, Teaching-Learning Experiences and Assessment procedures are finalized.

Issues of Assessment in Open Schooling Context

In the broader point of view assessment refers to how much scope for learning and the role of teacher is vital for creating conducive learning environment. Distance education programme, the main constraint is physically interaction with teacher. The role of teacher is no doubt integrated inside the Self Learning Materials (SLMs) to assess the learners. But in many cases, the contextual based assessment is quite difficulty in Open Schooling system due to the physical barriers between teacher and students. Therefore, from learning point of view the assessment is a challenging task in Open Schooling system. The assessment in Open Schooling system mainly to provide feedback to

learners starting from assignment to term-end examination, self-assessment through in text questions/items and terminal exercise in the SLMs, and to reach summative evaluation for the purpose of successful completion of the course. The assessment in Open schooling system is not to earn grade but also impact learners' improvement of learning and positive attitude for further learning. Assessment in the ODL system is a multitask activity unlike in the face-to-face system. Unique practices are managed to assess students' performance such as: self assessment (students assess themselves by evaluating their performance when they read SLM), peer assessment (mutual assessment can be practiced), academic tutors to assess assignment (formative evaluation), external examiner for project and practical assessment (part of summative evaluation) in term-end examination.

The main issues of students' assessment in Open Schooling context is credibility and reliability of assessment procedure. There are three types of assessment qualities, which are essential for effective assessment. They are validity, reliability and fairness (Makamane, 2011). For an assessment system to be valid, care should be taken to verify whether the purpose of assessment has been achieved or not. Reliability entails the extent to which assessment is free from errors of measurement. An error free assessment system is treated as a reliable system. Fairness in assessment speaks about the objectivity of assessment and making assessment free of subjective judgment (UNESCO, 2006).

Let us discuss some of the challenges of assessment in Open Schooling context which are debatable and indicating the concern of quality.

a) Array of Infrastructure and Personnel

In many examination centres lack of laboratory and technological supports are the major issues for conducting examination. The personnel involved such practical activities were least motivated towards the system due to less low remunerations. In many cases the mal-practices, cheating happened during term-end-examination of Open Schooling system. The root reasons are bad infrastructure as well as terrible personnel were involved in examination process.

b) Conducting Formative Assessment in Open Schooling:

Tutor Marked Assignment (TMA) is one of the ideal tools of formative assessment in Open Schooling system. TMA not only provides the scope of inquiry based learning but also give the scope of writing skill as well as learning by doing. It has been observed, tutors are assess the assignment with grades

and marks without any remarks. In this case, the purpose of formative evaluation remains unfulfilled, if we fail to link assessment with students learning development. It has also been observed that without going through the details of the assignment, tutors award a grade. Quite frequently, tutors assign the same grade to all/most students just to satisfy them. It has also been observed that the copies of assignments are evaluated not by the real appointed tutors but by a person who is not specialised in that field or is unauthorised to do that. All the above cases left room for the system to be blamed. A careful monitoring is needed to check such type of evaluation lacunas in ODL systems (Shidong, 2011).

c) Lack of Linking with Learning

Assessment of learning plays an important part in the measuring of the quality in education (Makamane, 2011). Students' performance assessment cannot be separated from learning. As we know, ODL institutions follow diversified approaches to assessing performance of the students. The components of assessment in ODL systems should never be separated from students' learning experiences. For example, strategies of student's self-evaluation, peer evaluation, instructors/tutors evaluation, and external evaluation may well be linked with the learning strategies of the students. The detailed assessment process in the ODL system should be informed to the students well in advance. As we know, most distance students initially come from the conventional system, having experienced certain types of face-to-face activities. They are used to the practice of learning style in the face-to-face system. But in the ODL system, assessment is conducted differently according to the learning strategies of ODL systems. Keeping these things in mind, a careful detailed know, ODL institutions follow diversified approaches to assessing performance of the students. Keeping such views, a proper induction programme should orient to learners about the habit of Self-regulatory learning, self-evaluation and check-up their own progress.

d) ICT as Assessment tools in Open Schooling (On-Demand Examination):

The beauty of Open Schooling system is its flexibility. Flexibility in terms of admission, choosing subjects and examination and it is possible due to the role of ICT. When learners feel prepared to sit examination at any time, the On-demand examinations of Open Schooling fulfil such demand of learners. But the question raised how far the question paper is Valid i.e. the degree of truthfulness to serve the purpose of assessment. The validity of question paper in On-demand examinations of Open Schooling system is one of the major issues.

e) Fail to integration of Comprehensive Evaluation

The aim of education is mainly concerned about all round development of learners, means change of behaviour in cognitive, affective and psychomotor domain. The assessment practices in Open Schooling system mainly associated with formative and summative in nature. In the continuous evaluation process the cognitive domain i.e. achievement in the curricular aspects the learners under Open Schooling system were assessed. There is little scope to assess affective and psychomotor domain in Open Schooling assessment procedure. Therefore, in Open Schooling system fail to integrate the comprehensive evaluation and which is one of main constraint of learning.

Rethinking Alternative Assessment Practices

Assessment is an integral part of any system of education. It is closely linked with learning experience of students (Black et al. 2003). Assessment in the ODL system is a complex process. It is a challenge to assess and manage quality in a widely spread system of education. To sustain quality, in ever expanding quantity can be possible if the system functions in order. ODL systems should ensure that students earn marks/grades according to their competency. The existing system in ODL cannot be called a failure; rather there is the need for renovation in the existing practices. Assessment mechanisms in ODL require a more cautious and vigilant approach to discharge their duties. To ensure quality assessment in Open Schooling system, we need to renovate the present practices of assessment procedure and to think over the alternative assessment procedures that could be helping to learn and fulfill the alternative aims of education. Let us discuss some of the important points to renovate in assessment practices in Open Schooling system:

- ◆ The weightage of formative assessment i.e. the marks obtained in Tutor Marked Assignment (TMA) should be reflected on the certificate separately for making more solemn among the learners.
- ◆ Justified bifurcation in assessment is needed in Open Schooling system, i.e. weightage to formative and summative assessment to final certification process.
- ◆ In the assessment of assignment should be two way traffic between the tutor and learner means the assignment should not only contains mark secured by the learner. It should contain mark as well as feedback and feedback should be open discussion.

- ◆ A careful mechanism should be developed to validate the question paper designed for On-Demand-Examination (ODE) otherwise the purpose of examination in Open Schooling system will be worthless.
- ◆ No distance education institution should neglect regularity of the students in various assessment activities. There should be the provision of a grade and credit to students' attendance rate in the personal contact programme and practical sessions contributing to final certification.
- ◆ For students from overseas countries, online assessment facilities should be practiced. There should be a special assessment cell in each Open institution for this purpose.
- ◆ Suitable question banks of each course and programme for the term-end examination may also be developed to reduce examination tension of the students. A limited percentage of questions for term-end examination could be drawn randomly from question banks.
- ◆ Academic counselors and tutors should be trained not only to tackle the academic matters but also to link in-house and external examination with the learning experiences of the learners.
- ◆ For making more transparency in Open Schooling examination system , each officials duties and responsibilities should be categorized and single window system should be monitor each one's duties.
- ◆ The mechanism of centre fixation and spot evaluation in Open Schooling system should be in a transparency manner to avoid malpractices in Open Schooling system.

Conclusion:

Student assessment in ODL is a crucial aspect of quality assurance because it drives student learning. It is one of the most important measures to show the achievement of learning outcomes. The result of assessment is also the basis in awarding qualifications. Hence, methods of student assessment have to be clear, consistent, effective, valid, reliable and in line with current practices and must clearly support the achievement of learning outcomes. A valid system of assessment, which can ensure fulfillment of the course objectives, needs to be practiced. Information communication technology based assessment tools, like the portfolio and e-portfolio should be used in a large scale for establishing a student friendly and innovative practice of assessment in ODL system. To accomplish reliability of the total system of assessment, it should be managed with lesser error and objectivity in scoring. To develop confidence

in the distance learners, the Open Schooling assessment system should be transparent as far as possible. In order to make quality school education through distance mode, the assessment should reflect learning rather than merely measuring the marks obtained. Therefore, it is the time to rethink and redesign the assessment practices in Open Schooling System.

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Need of Open Learners for Counselling

Esther. J.E. Shonwang

Research Scholar, Department of Adult and Continuing Education,
North Eastern Hills University

Abstract

A significant characteristics of open learning system is that a learner learns from self instructional materials (SLMs), as the principal medium of instruction, independently, at his or her own pace, time and convenience. In their learning process, learners were assisted with various student support services whose basic objective is to help learners at various stages along the path of their journey through NIOS. Planned human support is provided to the learners by means of the personal contact programme (PCP) provided at their study centres. PCPs facilitate the process of learning by solving the problems of the learners faced in their self-study through its inbuilt components of problem-solving sessions, interactive tutorials and inbuilt counselling. Counselling is of critical importance in the open and distance learning system. as these learners get very limited opportunity for face-to-face interaction with their tutors and peers in classroom situation. However, there is limited time available for counselling during PCP period and hence the learners get very limited opportunity for face-to-face interaction with their tutors and peers in classroom situation. Therefore knowledge of what learners need is very crucial given the limitation of time as need-based counselling can be given to them. This would also make PCP classes purposeful, highly productive and a rich learning experience for learners and helped contributing to their performance. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to find out the need of open learners for counselling. This paper describes the results of a study conducted on NIOS learners enrolled for the secondary level course in the East Khasi Hills district, Meghalaya. It attempted to find out the areas where open learners needed Counselling During Their Learning Period.

Introduction

Counselling is the help, advice and support given to learners and is one of the student support services. Counselling serve multiple purpose in the Open schooling system and help learners to tackle their varied academic, personal and emotional problems and also in monitoring learners progress in learning. In the open and distance learning (ODL) systems, Counselling is 'critically important' as learners are isolated from tutors and from other learners for most of their study time. Counselling is also given to learners to enable them to make decisions and choices to cope with and resolve their problems. Since learners in open and distance learning system are self learners, learning from a package of materials, counselling is needed also in using the package effectively. In NIOS, counselling is given to learners in face to face mode during PCPs sessions. Emphasis is laid upon motivating learners, building confidence, guiding learners to do self study, improve their study skills, time management and how to do well in examinations as well as in career guidance. In addition, advice and counselling is also given on how to select subjects and for combinations of subjects according to their goals and plans for higher studies. These contact-cum-counselling sessions gave distance learners the opportunities to discuss their problems academic and personal with their teachers as well as their peer group. Therefore, it is important to find out the areas where learners needed counselling. In NIOS face to face counselling given during PCP sessions is very short with only one hour per subject in thirty days and thirty five days for subjects having practicals. Hence, it is important to find out the areas where learners needed counselling. Similarly, identifying the needs of learners is important so that need-based counselling can be given to them, within the specified and short PCP period. This would also help to identify the key areas which could be improved for the benefits of learners. This paper thus, aims to identify the need of open learners of NIOS for counselling.

Review of literature

The term counselling was originally used by the UK Open University to refer to all non-tutorial support, which was later replaced by the term Student Support. The two categories of student support being the non-academic or counselling support which deals mainly with the affective and organizational aspects of their studies. The other is the academic or tutorial support which deals with the cognitive, intellectual and knowledge issues of specific courses Simpson (2002). Maroba (2004) pointed out that the aim of guidance and counselling is to take a holistic view of learner support by assisting learners

with academic support and also attend to their personal and social concerns. According to Nanda (2003), counselling is the 'heart and soul' of distance education. Wickramaratne (2001) in his study focussed on the relevance of counselling services in relation to the nature of the needs of the students. The study concluded that due to the characteristics of the institution as a distance learning body, the learners and the learning process, there is a need for counselling intervention to be emphasized to meet both personal and study related needs of the learner. Ojo, (2010) in his study pointed out that distance learners need a range of various counselling services that will help them to be successful and further highlighted that technically approached counselling will not only eliminate socio-psychological encumbrances but they will also foster personal development and accomplishment of learning goals. USUN (2010) pointed out that provision of learner support services to the distance learning population is an important part of creating the feeling of belonging.

With regards to the need of counselling by open and distance learners, Koul and Bhatt (1989) stated that most of the students who are entering fresh in to the system, will require general counselling to a large extent along with a small component of tutoring. Phillips (1994) stressed on the mandatory nature of counselling in open and distant learning and stated that both students and parents "must know" what to expect from open schooling. Further, he pointed out that as it is different from conventional school, they will have to bear more responsibility in undertaking learning activities than is required in conventional school. Hence, the importance of adequate orientation sessions to be provided is stressed in his study.

Manjulika, Reddy and Fulzele (1996) recommended that Induction programmes are to be made compulsory so that learners becomes familiarize with the modus operandi of the distance education system. Srivastava and Reddy (2002) in their study found that academic counselling is a need and necessity as stressed upon by all counsellors. The reasons indicated were that the learners coming from the conventional system would learn about distance education system, helps completing the programme on time, lessen drop-out rates, provide opportunity for peer interaction, clarification of doubts and resolution of learning problems and also offers motivating experience to learners. The study further recommended that identification of the right academic counsellors would have a positive impact on the system. Gupte (2009) pointed out that new learners must be initiated into distance learning methods preferably through a face-to-face Induction meet. It was also concluded from the study that the effective induction meetings help the learners

to understand their role and responsibility as a distance learner better. Trivedi and Gupte (2010) termed the first Induction meeting as a counselling session as an 'icebreaker' as the learner is made familiar with the study centre set up, library, multimedia facilities, staff and academic counsellors, helps clarification of doubts and queries boosting confidence. Tips are also offered how to study as an independent learner in the distance learning mode.

Some studies conducted abroad also highlighted on the needs of open and distance learners for counselling, Shappcott (1987) in her study identified a particular need for informed pre-enrolment advice that is the provision of information, advice and guidance for prospective students at the local level. Similarly, Siaciwena (1987) highlighted counselling needs of students, especially at the start about course regulations and other course requirements as in most cases subject combinations do not match their interests and course choice made in areas with no strong academic background. The study also pointed out that pre-examination counselling is also needed as many of them had left the formal system as casualties of the examination system. It was further highlighted that students also need preparation, encouragement, support and guidance to cope with academic demands since their role as students is one amongst other occupational and social responsibilities.

Peters (1992) conducted an appraisal study of drop-out rate in distance education and suggested that isolation should be overcome and students be acquainted with techniques of independent learning and distance studying within the framework of counselling before enrolment. He also suggested that this is to be continued in the first academic year and beyond. Pack (1995) stated that distance learners require different kinds of contact at different times in their academic career. The study further recommended that for pre-enrolment and personal counselling, non-departmental employees are suggested for unbiased help while academic guidance is to be provided by tutors or by those who have course related knowledge.

Ngumi and Mwaniki (2009) in their study revealed that there is a need to create awareness among aspiring students and to provide better information dissemination avenues on the part of the universities. Further, the study suggested that a comprehensive pre-programme orientation exercise is to be included through which students can learn what to expect in their course of their study.

Akinwale et. al (2010) recommended that Institutional administrators should organize orientation programmes for learners so that the influence of the selected factors, namely age, gender, disability, marital and employment

status on their academic performance could be disseminated. Otukile (2012) studied the challenges faced by Learners in the transition from traditional classroom education to ODL at Botswana College of Distance and Open learning (BODOCOL). The study recommended the need for orientation for the new learners to make them aware of what ODL entails and the challenges to be expected particularly those enrolled for the school equivalency programmes.

Tapfumaneyi (2013) in his article pointed out that of the students who received counselling and advisement services, 25% needed assistance on social problems, 60% on financial issues and 15% on academic and administrative issues. Ojo (2010) distance learners need various counselling services that will help them to be successful and further commented that technically approached counselling will not only eliminate socio-psychological encumbrances, but also foster personal development and the accomplishment of learning goals.

Research Design

Research Method Used

Descriptive method was used in the study.

Method of Data Collection

Survey method was adopted for the purpose of data collection

Tools Used for the Study

An Interview Schedule was developed by the investigator for collection of data from the learners

Population

The population of the study comprised of all the open learners of NIOS enrolled in secondary level courses during the year 2012 in all seven study centres located in the East Khasi Hills district, Meghalaya.

Sample

A sample of 233 learners was selected from only four study centres who had conducted Personal contact programmes, for conducting the survey and collection of data. Random sampling method was used for drawing the sample of study. The sample was drawn from the latest roll register of the study centre maintained for learners who attended PCP. 50% learners were selected from the roll register maintained at these study centres respectively.

Collection of Data

The primary data was collected from the field by using the interview schedule for the learners. After getting due permission from concerned authorities, the investigator visited the study centres to meet the learners. First, mutual introduction was done and rapport was established with the learners, to make them feel comfortable and build up an informal and friendly atmosphere. The purpose of the visit, objective and relevance of the study was explained to them in clear and simple terms as well as confidentiality of their responses was assured. Their full cooperation was also sought. After all their doubts and apprehensions were cleared by the investigator, the learners were fully motivated and ready to face the interview. Finally, the data was collected from the learners by administration of the interview schedule.

Analysis and Interpretation of Data

The raw data collected through the interview schedule were presented in tabular form. The data was analysed by using frequency and percentages to explain the data. After thorough analysis, an interpretation into findings was made.

The item- wise responses of learners was given below.

Table 4.6.1 : Need of Counselling at the time of taking Admission

Yes	%	No	%	Can't say	%	Total no.	Total %
208	89.27	22	9.44	22	9.44	233	100

Table 4.6.2 : Areas that Learners needed Counselling before taking admission at the Study Centre

S.No.	Areas	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
1.	Generating awareness about open and distance learning	170	72.96
2.	Clarifying doubts relating to different courses of study	173	74.25
3.	Developing confidence to join the course	178	76.39
4.	In filling up application form for admission	159	68.24
5.	Helping in choosing subjects for the course	167	71.67
7.	None of the above	3	1.29

Table 4.6.3 : Need of Counselling during PCP Classes to Understand Basic Concepts in SLM

Yes	%	No	%	Can't say	%	Total no.	Total %
216	92.70	13	5.58	4	1.72	233	100

Table 4.6.4 : Need of Counselling for Understanding Basic Concepts in Writing Assignments

Yes	%	No	%	Can't say	%	Total no.	Total %
223	95.70	7	3.00	3	1.29	233	100

Table 4.6.4.1 below highlighted the reasons given by 3.00% learners who felt that counselling during PCP classes was not needed in an educational system like NIOS with limited number of contact classes.

Table 4.6.4.1: Reasons for not Needing Counselling during PCP Classes

S.No.	Reasons	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
1.	Counselling given is not relevant to the felt needs	4	57.14
2.	Counselling is not given due importance by tutors	3	42.86
3.	Tutors not adequately prepared for giving counselling	1	14.29
4.	Irregular attendance by tutors	2	28.57

Table 4.6.5 : Counselling is Needed during PCP Classes to Help Learners

S.No.	Areas	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
1.	Motivating to study despite difficulties faced as a self-learner	185	79.40
2.	Helps in changing of subjects	102	43.78
3.	Facilitating interaction with peers	153	65.67
4.	Facilitating verbal communication with tutors in class	136	58.37
5.	Increasing level of self-confidence to pass the secondary level examinations	150	64.38
6.	Helping to overcome negative thoughts due to past unsuccessful experiences in studies	122	52.36
7.	None of the above	2	0.86

Table 4.6.6 : Need of Interaction with Peers during Courses of Study

Yes	%	No	%	Can't say	%	Total no.	Total %
210	90.13	18	7.73	5	2.15	233	100

Further, table 4.6.6.1 below showed the effect of interaction with peers during the courses of study in facilitating group learning among peer groups.

Table 4.6.6.1: Interaction with Peers Helped in Group Learning

Yes	%	No	%	Can't say	%	Total no.	Total %
205	97.62	5	2.38	0	0	233	100

Table 4.6.7 : Areas where Interaction with Peers helped Learners

S.No.	Areas	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
1.	Enriches knowledge about the subject matter chosen for study	164	70.39
2.	Encourage participation in PCP classes at the study centre	164	70.39
3.	Promotes sense of co-operation	159	68.24
4.	Reduce feeling of loneliness due to limited period of contact	136	58.37
5.	Build up confidence to study till completion of the course	143	61.37
6.	Reduce stress due to conflict in demand of study and time available	138	59.23
7.	Encourage better performance in examination	156	66.95
8.	None of the above	5	2.15
9.	Do not know	3	1.29

Table 4.6.8 : Need of Counselling after Completion of the Courses

Yes	%	No	%	Can't say	%	Total no.	Total %
203	87.12	29	12.45	1	0.43	233	100

Table 4.6.8.1 below highlighted the areas where counselling is needed by the learners after completion of their courses.

Table 4.6.8.1 : Areas that Learners Need Counselling after Completion of Courses

S.No.	Areas	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
1.	To continue for further study	178	87.68
2.	To seek employment opportunities after studies	119	58.62
3.	To improve performance	140	68.97

Table 4.6.9 : Need of having Separate Counselling Classes besides PCP classes

Yes	%	No	%	Can't say	%	Total no.	Total %
216	92.70	13	5.58	4	1.72	233	100

Table 4.6.10 : Persons Most Suitable for giving Separate Counselling to Learners

S.N.	Responses	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
1.	Coordinators	18	8.33
2.	Tutors	111	51.39
3.	Professional counsellor	21	9.72
4.	Senior students	1	0.50
5.	Friends	10	4.63
6.	Tutors and Friends	3	1.39
7.	Tutors and Professional counsellor	2	1.00
8.	Coordinator and Professional counsellor	1	0.50
9.	Coordinators and Tutors	8	3.70
10.	Coordinators and Friends	1	0.50
11.	Coordinators, Tutors and Friends	2	1.00
12.	Cannot say	38	17.59
	Total	216	100

Table 4.6.11 : Absolute Need of Counselling for Open Learners of NIOS

Yes	%	No	%	Can't say	%	Total no.	Total %
220	94.42	6	2.58	7	3.00	233	100

Table 4.6.12 : Areas where Counselling is Needed for Improvement at the Study Centres

S.N.	Areas	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
1.	Enrolment rate of potential learners in NIOS through the study centres.	183	78.54
2.	Retention rates of NIOS learners at the study centre	162	69.53
3.	Performance rate of learners at the study centre	189	81.12
4.	Completion rate of NIOS learners through the study centres.	169	72.53
5.	Cannot say	1	0.43

Table 4.6.13 : NIOS gives Alternative Opportunity needed to achieve Educational Goals

Yes	%	No	%	Can't say	%	Total no.	Total %
228	97.85	5	2.15	0	0	233	100

Table 4.6.14 : Advantages gained by Learners studying in NIOS not available in Formal Schooling

S.N.	Advantages in Studying through NIOS	No. of Respondents	Percentages %
	Flexibility		
1.	Examinations can be given in any number of subjects prepared, when they are ready	51	21.89
2.	Examinations can be given only in failed subjects any number of times, and not in all the subjects	3	1.29
3.	Examinations can be given twice a year	3	1.29
4.	Flexibility in admission at entry level	3	1.29
5.	Attendance not compulsory	13	5.58
6.	Mathematics and Science not compulsory	4	1.72
7.	NIOS gives more freedom and flexibility than formal Schools	24	10.33

	Independence and Freedom		
8.	NIOS gave learners freedom and also a chance to study	1	0.43
9.	Freedom to choose subjects of interest for subject combination	114	48.92
10.	NIOS provides more free time to interact with friends	4	1.72
11.	Part-time classes only	5	2.15
12.	NIOS being a learner-centric system, is good for learners	2	0.86
	Employment Opportunities and Prospects		
13.	NIOS provides opportunity to study and work at the same time	18	7.73
14..	NIOS offers opportunity to do something in life	1	0.43
15.	NIOS courses prepares learners better for future job prospects	2	0.86
	Courses Offered		
16.	Course is easier compared to regular schools	3	1.29
17.	NIOS offers subjects not available in formal schools at secondary level, namely (Home science, Business studies, Economics	6	2.58
18.	English courses in NIOS help us to learn and speak English better	3	1.29
	Other Advantages		
19.	NIOS offers better opportunity to interact both with teachers and friends	2	0.86
20.	NIOS offers better teachers	1	0.43
21.	NIOS offers better textbooks	1	0.43
22.	There is more chances to pass in NIOS	3	1.29
23.	NIOS provides counselling during admission	2	0.86
24.	NIOS offers better education to learners	1	0.43
25.	Privilege of Transfer of Credit in NIOS	1	0.43
26.	NIOS offers learners a second chance to study	3	1.29
27.	There is more fun to learn in NIOS than formal schools	3	1.29
28.	Do not know	17	7.30

Major Findings of the Study

Need of Counselling at the time of taking Admission

The study found that 89.27% learners needed counselling at the time of taking admission at the study centre. The different areas identified by the study

where learners needed counselling at the time of taking admission are, to develop confidence to join the course in 76.39% learners, while in 74.25% learners to clarify doubts relating to different courses of study. 72.96% learners needed counselling for generating awareness about open and distance learning and in 72.96% learners for helping them to familiarise with the course respectively. Further, 71.67% learners needed counselling to help them in choosing subjects for the courses, while in 68.24% to fill up application form for admission.

Need of Counselling during PCP Classes

The study found that learners needed counselling during PCP classes. 92.70% learners responded may it helped them understand basic concepts of lessons given in the self-learning materials better while in 95.70% learners material need that is helped understand basic concepts of writing assignments. Besides, 79.40% learners felt that counselling during PCP classes is needed in motivating to prepare better for the course despite difficulties faced as a self-learner. The 65.67% learners, expressed there is facilitate interaction with peers during PCP classes which 64.38% learners, were of the increase the view these if their level of self-confidence to pass the secondary level examinations. Further, in 58.37% learners, counselling helped in facilitating verbal communication with tutors in class and in 52.36% learners, to overcome negative thoughts due to past unsuccessful experiences in studies.

With regards to interaction with peers or peer counselling, 90.13% learners felt that interaction with peers during their courses of study was needed during their courses of study. Out of these, 97.62% learners felt that interaction with peers during the courses of study facilitated group learning among peer groups. Peer interaction was found to have helped 70.39% learners to enrich their knowledge about the subject matter chosen for study, while in another 70.39%, to encourage participation in PCP classes at the study centre. In 68.24% learners, interaction with peers promoted sense of cooperation, in 66.95% learners to perform better in examinations and in 61.37% learners to build up confidence to study till completion of the course. In 59.23% learners in reducing stress due to conflict in demand of study and time available for studies while in 58.37% learners, peer interaction was found to have helped in removing feeling of loneliness due to limited period of contact.

Need of Counselling after Completion of the Course

The study found that 87.12% learners needed counselling after completion of the course. Out of these learners, 87.68% learners felt that the need for counselling was, on how to continue for further studies. 60.09% on how to

improve performance and in 58.62% about how to seek employment opportunities after passing secondary level examinations.

The study identified the need for separate counselling classes for the learners to help them with various problems affecting their studies. 51.39% learners felt that the person most suitable to give separate counselling to them were the tutors. It was further found by the study that as self learners, a majority of 94.42% learners felt that counselling was absolutely needed in NIOS as an additional support in their studies.

Need of Counselling for Improvement

81.12% learners felt that counselling is needed for improvement of performance rate of learners. 78.54% felt it is needed to improve enrolment rates of potential learners in NIOS through the study centres and 72.53% learners to improve completion rate of NIOS learners through the study centres. Further, 69.53% learners expressed its need felt counselling is needed to improve retention rate of NIOS learners at the study centre. The study also found out that 97.85% learners felt that NIOS had given them an alternative opportunity needed to achieve their educational goals.

The study also revealed that there were many advantages gained by learners in studying through NIOS, which were not available in the formal system of schooling. The advantage gained by the majority of 48.92% learners was the freedom to choose subjects of interest for subject combination. In. 10.33% learners mentioned that, the advantage was that NIOS gives more freedom and flexibility than formal Schools.

Conclusion

The findings of the study led to a conclusion that counselling is very important as a student support service for the open learners of NIOS. NIOS learners at the secondary level needed counselling absolutely as an additional support in their studies in different stages of their learning period. Counselling is needed from the time of admission, during PCP classes and after completion of the course. For most learners, NIOS system is a new system, offering them a different learning environment from the formal system which many learners are familiar with. Pre-enrolment counseling together with a systematic and need based counselling during PCP classes are identified by the study as crucial towards giving learners the support which they need and also deserved to get. Pre-enrolment counselling needs to stress on key areas namely to develop confidence in learners to join the course, clarifying doubts relating to different courses of study, generating awareness about open and

distance learning. The other areas include, to help learners choose subjects for the courses and to fill up application form for admission. Key areas identified for tutors while giving counseling during PCP classes helped learners to understand the basic concepts of lessons in the self-learning materials as well as in writing assignments.

Post-study counselling is also identified by the study as equally important for the learners of NIOS and its provision is strongly suggested by the study. Peer counselling is identified by the study as very important for open learners as it helps them immensely in their studies as well and would contribute towards better performance in studies. In addition to counselling given during PCP classes, the study identified a strong need to provide NIOS learners with additional and *separate counselling classes to further help them with various problems encountered in their studies as counselling given during PCP was inadequate*. Counselling was also identified by the study as a need for improvement of enrolment rates of potential learners, retention rate, performance rate and completion rate of learners at the study centres. Although performance of learners will depend much on the effort puts in by the learners themselves, provision of need-based counselling would help contribute significantly towards helping them complete the emeses successfully. Freedom to choose subjects of interest and flexibility in giving examinations are the advantages perceived by majority of the open learners, therefore provision of need-based counselling is also crucial in meeting their expectations and in giving them a satisfactory learning experience.

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BOOK REVIEW

Case Studies on OER-based eLearning Ed. by Som Naidu and Sanjaya Mishra

Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA), Delhi 2014
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'Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world' said Nelson Mandela. Knowledge is public good, so each one from the society should get the opportunity to learn. Existing traditional-conversational education system in contemporary time confines teaching –learning periphery in a small circle. Only wide acceptance of open educational practices (OEP) can enlighten the pave of knowledge proliferation in this new modern civilization and culture as well as can remove the restriction. Dynamism of OEP is evidently conversed in the book titled '**Case Studies on OER-based e-Learning**' edited by Som Naidu and Sanjaya Mishra published by Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA).

OEP comprises three facets of the idea of education for all (EFA). These are open learning, open access and open scholarship. Open learning consents to provide scope for education for everyone beyond their cast, creed, age, place, gender and background qualification. Open access confirms open opportunity of utilizing and exercising various required software and educational resources. Open educational resource (OER) carrying creative common license expands the extent of pedagogy edge where all the educational materials are allowed to reuse, revise, remix and redistribute (4r) freely. Taking into consideration of 4r, sharing of scholarly teaching-learning materials bestows the convincing establishment of idea of open scholarship.

Extensive use and acceptance of OER along with requisite infrastructural support and web power can contribute the success in implementation of OEP and EFA. The editors emphasis on '*Ubiquitous computing (Ubicomp)*, which refers to the widespread availability of portable computers which are enabling the use of the campus, community, work and industry environments as valid

locations for learning and teaching. Ubicomp is critical for cloud-based and mobile learning and teaching including virtual WIL (work-integrated learning) in addition to physical WIL placements. Together, these developments are crucial in prosecuting an agenda for education for all'. In this book four case studies have been discussed on the initiatives of OER in internet based teaching-learning process. There the references have been taken from Open University of Sri Lanka; Indira Gandhi National Open University, India; National Institute of Open Schooling, India and from Wawasan Open University, Malaysia.

In the first case study titled 'Open University of Sri Lanka – Integrating OER in a Teacher Education Course', Shironica P. Karunanyaka, the current Dean of the Faculty of Education, Open University of Sri Lanka (OUSL) has tried to focus on the process of identifying, evaluating, developing, adapting and integrating OER in teacher education course-'*Teacher Educator as an Educational Technologist'*. The scenario based learning (SBL), use of ICT and inclusions of OER have been able to uplift the professional efficiency and success of the course. But several challenges has to be overcome like meaningful creativity in SBL approach, promoting the active participation of learners, integration of learning outcome, activity and assessment, encouraging the knowledge of OER to be integrated in the course and many more.

On the other hand G. Mythili has expressed her views on 'Indira Gandhi National Open University – OER-based Post Graduate Diploma in e-Learning'. According to her, use of internet in both conventional and distance education system has become indispensable for achievement of education at common level. Based on OER curriculum the PGDEL programme offered by STRIDE, IGNOU is following ADDIE (analyze, design, development, implementation and evaluation) model aiming to develop human resources in planning, designing, developing, implementing and evaluating e-Learning programmes. The programme is framed in Moodle structure. The target group of the programme is teachers, trainers, instructional designers and course developers in colleges, universities and industry. The PGDEL programme utilizes a wide range of instructional strategies including, independent study, forum discussion, group work, lecture on Adobe Connect, collaborative learning, practical and project work. At the conclusion she mentioned, '*OER is only one aspect of the process, and can be effectively integrated in online learning programmes. This is certainly going to save time and resources'*. Mythili is Analyst in Staff Training and Research Institute of Distance Education (STRIDE), Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), India.

The third case study titled 'National Institute of Open Schooling – Open Educational Resource Initiative' is written by S.K. Prasad, System Analyst at National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS), India. NIOS adopted Open Educational Resources (OER) specifically for vocational programmes at Secondary (10th) and Senior Secondary (10+2) levels, including stand-alone programmes, in partnership with state level institutions and organizations. OER has been decided to use in ICT Applications, Rural Technology, Tourism and Hospitality. He has also emphasized the need of self instructional material (SIM) and scenario based learning in instructional strategy of the OER initiative at NIOS. At the time of discussion of the OER policy at NIOS, he has mentioned that NIOS OER aims to make free access to all the learners to improve the pedagogical quality supporting all the terms and conditions of creative commons licenses. The programme has to face a few challenges like the involved teachers' concern on the quality of Wiki resources, lack of their knowledge and expertise in OER, SIM and in new educational design and many more. He concludes with the remark, '*The OER initiative at NIOS is a small beginning to encourage creation of OER in many other areas of school education. It will further support NIOS's efforts to widen access to education and facilitate lifelong learning.*'

In the book the fourth case study on 'Wawasan Open University –Developing a Fully OER-based Course' written by Mohan B. Menon, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) of Wawasan Open University, Malaysia focuses a few relevant point in the voyage of OER initiatives aiming to make a change in the access of education to the last corner of the society. It helps the unreached to reach, deprived to privileged and have nots to have. WOU has paved the revolution of OER throughout the world. ICT in education, Masters in Education programme widen the use of OER through multimedia resources including texts, streamed video, podcasts, audio-visuals such as pictures, diagrams, etc. These self-instructional course materials are supported with face-to-face tutorials, and *WawasanLearn* (an on-line system to enhance students' learning from a distance). *WawasanLearn* has web components such as templates for content pages, discussion forums, quizzes and exercises to engage learners while they practice with the course material, acquire new material and engage with tutors and fellow students. The course team of OER has faced the challenges like confusion in searching authenticated resources from heterogeneous choices, perplexing on the proper use of various materials with different CC license, less confidence in the use of copyrighted resources openly available on the web and many more. Dr. Menon opined that the development of this course was a first attempt in Malaysia. It won't be untrue to say, that pioneering work has been able to open the door of OER in educational system.

The book has been able to reflect the image of new era initiation where the dream of 'education for all' can get its zenith. It has not only torches the initiatives of four major institutions in Asia in terms of OER based teaching learning process, but also has been able to pave the wide social acceptance of pedagogical design from institution to individual.

Anamika Ray
Assistant Professor
Department of Communication and Journalism,
Gauhati University, Guwahati-14

Workshops to Review the Guide to Integrating Gender Equity and Equality - A Report

The National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) in collaboration with Commonwealth of Learning (COL), Canada conducted three one-day workshops on 17th, 24th and 31st May 2014 to review the COL-developed *Guide to Integrating Gender Equity and Equality* for addressing the issue of gender equality in key aspects of open school planning, management and learner support services.

Prof. Sushma Jaireth, Former Professor, NCERT was the COL Consultant for the conduct of three workshops. Dr S.S. Jena (Chairman, NIOS) was the Chairperson, Dr Kuldeep Agarwal (Director, Academic, NIOS) was the Director and Dr Saumya Rajan (Academic Officer) was the Coordinator of the COL workshops.

The themes of the three workshops organised on 17th, 24th, and 24th May 2014 were to review the Guide's gender-responsive planning, management and learner support system respectively by addressing the issues of i) Access (ii) Opportunity (iii) Quality (iv) Outcomes and (v) gender sensitive curriculum.

Academic and Vocational faculty of NIOS, and Coordinators of NIOS Study Centres were the participants of the workshops.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the three workshops on gender responsive strategic planning, management and learner support services were to develop amongst participants an understanding to:-

- ◆ review the COL Gender guide on the gender-responsive strategic planning, management and learner support services
- ◆ provide feedback on the COL Gender guide for gender-responsive strategic planning, management and learner support services

- ◆ prepare recommendations on the components of gender-responsive strategic planning, management and learner support services for promoting the equality of (i) access, (ii) opportunities, (iii) quality, (iv) outcomes and (v) curriculum issues for both girls/women and boys/men.
- ◆ evolve action points on the recommendations with targets and time frame for 2014
- ◆ implement the revised gender guide prepared for NIOS in each activity and programme of the institution for gender-responsive strategic planning, management and learner support services

Recommendations

Gender Responsive Strategic Planning

Access and Opportunities:

- ❖ Study centre at every block level/ District level exclusively for girls
- ❖ A lesson on gender sensitization should be included in one of the compulsory subjects at Secondary and Senior Secondary
- ❖ Illustration in the SLMs should be gender sensitive
- ❖ Language used in SLMs should be neutral (like she/he)
- ❖ Training / workshop / orientation for the tutors of all the AIs for gender sensitization
- ❖ Inclusion of gender sensitization in teacher training
- ❖ Online Grievances Redressal Cell related to academic, admission, examination issues
- ❖ Documentary, success stories, motivational stories (women oriented) on NIOS website, and in newsletter and magazines
- ❖ One special issue of Open school magazine be published on gender issues
- ❖ Gender issues research should be included on priority for research activity
- ❖ Monitor language for subtle or overt biases that can have a powerful influence in creating or reinforcing prejudicial attitudes.
- ❖ There should be no Accreditation limit (A, B, C) for enrolment at exclusive

girls centres,

- ❖ Choice of nearest study centre
- ❖ Scholarship / separate Awards for girls
- ❖ No fees for BPL girls
- ❖ Proper infrastructure facilities esp. for differently-abled learners
- ❖ Monitoring mechanism to evaluate all programmes related to girls
- ❖ Block Education Officer should be made responsible for creating awareness about gender sensitivity in local community and among parents
- ❖ At all AIs, a female Counsellor should be appointed
- ❖ Single Window System for girls at all RCs for support services
- ❖ Facilities given to girls should be published widely in all Print & Audio/ Video Programmes of NIOS

Quality Issues:

- ❖ To empower women and bringing them under the umbrella of NIOS through effective advocacy by distributing booklets, organizing seminars, counselling sessions, personal contact and contacting their parents or guardians.
- ❖ ODL system should have a section for empowering women and should go for further research. Coordination among AIs and NGOs is very much essential for getting positive results.
- ❖ Self Learning Material should be gender sensitive and for which appropriate training must be given to writers
- ❖ Testimonial giving procedure should be decentralized.
- ❖ Counselling Cell for female students should be introduced in the RCs.
- ❖ Media of ODL SYSTEM can play a vital role in public awareness/advocacy campaign for women empowerment through distance education.
- ❖ The access of audio-visual facilities should be provided in RCs and in tutorial centres.
- ❖ Tuition fees could be reduced in case of female students
- ❖ Some financial incentives could be given to the female students
- ❖ There is a need for girls' education below secondary level. They can

be uplifted through distance education

Outcomes:

- ❖ Helping women and girls avoid HIV/AIDS.
- ❖ Improving maternal health through quality health education.
- ❖ Giving girls a good start in early childhood education
- ❖ It is very encouraging that women are becoming an asset of the family rather than a liability through distance education.
- ❖ Increase in enrolment of girls and women at all levels of education.
- ❖ Promotion of Delayed marriage and better parenting skills.
- ❖ Improved literacy and numeracy skills leading to greater economic opportunities for girls.
- ❖ Healthier, better educated society will be developed.
- ❖ Getting girls into quality school environments and helping them stay there.
- ❖ Imparting more skills and knowledge for enhancing women's self esteem and the well being of families.
- ❖ Better employment opportunities for girls and women.

Gender Responsive Strategic Management

1. Collaboration to be established in the state education department by signing MOU for establishing AIs/AVIs exclusively for girls at district/ block level in phased manner
 - ◆ Approval to be sought from competent authority
 - ◆ Communication may be sent to state government in first year
 - ◆ Meetings with various stakeholders in the selected states
 - ◆ Define roles in MOU , its drafting, legal vetting and signing of the MOU
 - ◆ Implementation of the same
2. Gender sensitization workshops for sample population of parents, co-

ordinators, stakeholders using casket model round the year

- ◆ Financial allocation for sensitization workshops
 - ◆ Training of master trainers at State level
 - ◆ Further master trainers will give training at district and block level.
 - ◆ Mobilization of participants (parents, community leaders/ coordinators of AIs/AVIs) for the workshop
3. Provision of female counsellor at all Study Centres
- ◆ Provision in the grant (for counsellor) given for PCPs to all study centres to be included
 - ◆ Approval of the grant to be approved by the competent body (FC,EB and GB)
 - ◆ Development of guidelines/ handbooks for the counsellor
4. Advocacy on different facilities for girls through all print/ non print materials of NIOS
- ◆ One page to be included regarding gender sensitization in all SLMs and on the website of NIOS
 - ◆ One chapter on gender sensitization in the language subject to be included after approval from the competent authority
5. Gender issues research should be included in priority area of research
- ◆ Separate budget allocation for gender based research
 - ◆ Research proposals to be made on various issues of gender sensitization from outsource agencies as well as from in house faculty
 - ◆ Approval of the research proposal from the Research Advisory Committee
 - ◆ Sanction and completion of research projects
 - ◆ Implementation of the same

Quality & Outcomes

- ◆ Access—Ensure every learner has an equal opportunity to participate

in all aspects of the educational processes, including learning facilities, resources, and extracurricular and curricular programs.

- ◆ Instruction—Use instructional practices that promote positive images of diverse groups and a strong commitment to an equitable approach to teaching and learning.
- ◆ Materials—Review textbooks, audiovisuals, and other materials to minimize bias in content, graphics, pictures, and language.
- ◆ Language—Monitor language for subtle or overt biases that can have a powerful influence in creating or reinforcing prejudicial attitudes.
- ◆ Interactions—Adjust interactions that may be shaped by biased attitudes and could result in relating to students differently depending on their race, sex, ability, ethnicity, or other factors.
- ◆ Attitudes—Examine attitudes for biases or prejudices that may be unintentional but could result in discriminatory behaviour that affects learner-performance.
- ◆ Assessment—Account for variances in student learning styles and cultural backgrounds, and align assessment with school curricula, instruction, and systemic improvement goals.

Step 1. Policy and Planning

1. Assessment and review of the existing vision, mission and organisational policy of NIOS in the context of gender sensitivity.

Action points

- (i) Budget to be allocated for conducting meeting and constitution of an internal committee to review the vision and mission interest of NIOS to be approved by Academic Council, Executive Body & General Body of NIOS
 - (ii) The committee will give feedback for gender sensitivity using COL document policy
2. Orientation and sensitisation of the policy among the staff of NIOS.

Action Points

- (i) Organize two meetings for the staff at NIOS Hq
- (ii) Incorporate the feedback to finalize the gender sensitivity guideline

Step 2.Specification of Standards – to maintain the specifications and standards

Acton Point

- ◆ Specified guidelines to define gender equality and equity standards with help of COL guidelines and to get it approved by the expert committee

Step 3.Identification of critical functions and operational processes – have to see whether adequate standards are met or not in identification of lesson writers and graphic artists, with inputs of Gender Budget allocation for writing lessons

- i) Language issues need to be taken
- ii) Vocational specific courses need to be integrated

Step4.Documentation

- (i) Clear documentation of gender equality and equity indicator
- (ii) Circulation of documents – Special steps will be taken to ensure whether study materials have reached girls in rural areas or not

Step 5.Systematic monitoring mechanism should be in place to check whether gender equality and equity standards are in place or not at each step

Step 6.Training

- ◆ Adequate training of Teachers, Tutors and counsellors for integrating gender equity indicators

Step7. Monitoring & Evaluation – Experts will be invited to monitor and evaluate the lessons and curriculum at each stage with regards to gender equity indicators

- ◆ Staff evaluation through regular feedback

Gender-Responsive Learner Support Services

Access and Opportunity

1. Administrative Support

- Strengthening of Regional Centres in terms of Human Resources & Infrastructure

- ◆ Increase staff positions at Regional Centres
- ◆ All the staff at Regional Centres should be trained/oriented on ODL and Gender Equality
- ◆ Student Support Services should be provided at AIs
- ◆ Vocational Cell Unit at every Regional Centre
- ◆ Collaboration/Coordination with District Education Officer at district level for increasing girls' enrolment
- ◆ Advertisement in buses and trains in local language,
- ◆ Self Learning Materials (SLMs) should reach the learners in time and should be uploaded on the NIOS website
- ◆ Information regarding dispatch of SLM should be sent as SMS
- ◆ Online Grievances Redressal and feedback also to be sent through SMS
- ◆ Learning Support *melas* (fairs) to be organized
- ◆ Induction programme for learners at study centres needs to be mandatory
- ◆ Monitoring Unit needs to be established at NIOS Hq & RCs
- ◆ Strengthening of monitoring activities with the use of ICT

2. Peer-to-Peer

- ◆ Learners-meet to be organised at Study Centres, Regional Centres and Headquarter
- ◆ Learner engagement meet may also be organized
- ◆ Encourage participation and interaction of learners at PCPs

Gender Sensitive Curriculum for both Girls/Women and Boys/Men

1. Tutorial Support

- ◆ Providing Gender sensitivity training to Tutors so that they are able to respond in a gender friendly way when carrying out the role of a resource person or facilitator.

- ◆ Ensuring gender balance among tutors as much as possible.
- ◆ Research projects/studies need to be undertaken to know the dropout rate and retention of the learners in the system and the reasons thereof.
- ◆ Implementing the findings of the research study to reach the still unreached learners.
- ◆ Orientation workshop for new enrolled students (two times in a year).
- ◆ Provision for Counselling should be arranged to solve the problem of both the sexes at study centre level.
- ◆ Developing Gender sensitive handbooks/support materials/ supplementary materials.

2. Resources and Technology

- ◆ Audio, Video, Multimedia Resources, *Mukta Vidya Vani*, *Gyan Vani*, and *Gyan Darshan* are too made accessible to majority of learners so as to have multi-channel access to education for all.

3. Academic Advice and Counselling

- ◆ Female and male academic advisors and counsellors need to be appointed at the regional centres and the study centres to provide counselling and to guide the learners, both females and males, particularly if they are first generation learners and need guidance at all the steps related to the course
- ◆ The academic advisors and the counsellors appointed at the centres also need to be sensitized from a gender perspective from time to time for their professional development and for them to be gender friendly and gender sensitive. Thus a regular orientation course/ training programme / gender sensitive workshop/ panel discussion should be planned and implemented.
- ◆ Separate counselling for female and male learners belonging to Scheduled Casts (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) may be put in place.

The workshops were coordinated by *Dr Saumya Rajan*, Academic Officer, NIOS

**Report Prepared by:
Dr. Saumya Rajan
Academic Officer, NIOS**

Report on 3 Day Capacity Building Workshop for Tutors of NIOS August 4-6, 2014

National Institute of Open Schooling conducted a 3-Day capacity building workshop for NIOS Tutors with an objective to sensitize and train the tutors who will further impart education by conducting Personal Contact Program (PCP) in their states. The workshop was organized on August 4-6, 2014 at Rama Krishana Mission Asharam, in collaboration with Regional Centre Ranchi under the UNFPA-MHRD supported Adolescence Education Programme (AEP), Academic Department.

Objectives of the Workshop

- ◆ To sensitize the tutors to the need of integrated PCPs using the Life Skills approach
- ◆ To train the tutors of Study Centres to effectively conduct integrated PCP sessions
- ◆ To build a learner friendly and supportive environment for 'Back to PCP' programme

Methodology used in the workshop

Different Interactive and participatory methodologies such as VIPP (Visualization in Participatory Process), **Group discussions**, **Guided group work**, **Presentations**, **Role plays**, **Games**, **Brainstorming and Quiz** were used.

Inaugural Session:

Day 1 began with the inaugural session. Mr. Ranjan Kishore, then Regional Director, Ranchi presented a bouquet to Chief Guest Swami Shashankanand from Rama Krishana Mission Asharam, Swami Vishuddhan Road, Morabadi, Ranchi. Chief Guest Swami Shashankanand, inaugurated the programme with the traditional lamp lighting ceremony. Mr. Ranjan kishore, Regional Director Ranchi welcomed the guests and provided a brief description of the salient features of the programme. Articulating the objectives of the

programme Ms. Asheema Singh introduced the programme as a whole. Speaking on the occasion Swami Shashankanand congratulated all the participants for joining NIOS in taking this very positive step of bringing the best educational methodologies to school dropouts, he felt that given the right opportunity each child carries within him an ability to excel. He spoke of bringing a just and equitable quality education through better implementation of NIOS programs. While talking about Life Skills; in the light of Vedas, Swamiji said that life skills were very important even during Vedic period in Indian culture. He mentioned that Life Skills are integral to get peace in life and to remove sorrows. Swamiji also appreciated efforts made by NIOS to integrate life skills into its Self Learning Materials. He said that NIOS is alive to the needs of out of school young people and is ever ready to offer the best programmes to them. Adolescence Education Programme is one such intervention.

The Vote of Thanks was delivered by Dr. Rajeev Prasad, Academic Officer (chemistry); NIOS (Noida). Dr. Prasad also presented a sapling of Lemon Tree to Rama Krishana Mission Asharam as a token of love and gratitude.

After the inaugural session and ice breaking session, the capacity building programme started with power point presentation by Ms. Asheema Singh on “Relevance of Life Skills Integration in School Education”. In her presentation she stressed upon importance of life skill’s teaching which will develop broader perspective among the learners.

These skills will not only develop creative and critical thinking but clear vision & prudence as well. She further added that the target of teaching life skills to the learners can be achieved by talking and discussing with them about gender discrimination, prevention of aids and pros & cons of increasing population. The teachers can give them simple task so that they can observe themselves, the existing and sensitive problems of the society and can begin thinking over them.

Ms. Singh gave the examples of a English lesson based on the time table of a little girl Meena, which depicts the routine work of her family members. The time table was redesigned to insure that each member ought to do household works irrespective of their gender. She stressed on how the effort has been done to include all the life skills into a comprehensive curriculum and to make sure that a proper evaluation can be done through evaluation tools. Tools such as as self-assessment exercise etc enable the learners to move away from complaining mode and to provide them an opportunity to discuss reasons behind many ills of the society such as drop out girls.

She gave some more examples of different lessons in various subjects which included the teachings of life skills. She talked about factors that may contribute towards effective life skills programme and barriers to effective life skill programme.

Day 1: Session 2

After the power point presentation, as per the schedule, the master trainer Mr. T.N. Singh divided the tutors into different group according to the subject they teach and handed out a copy of the pre-revised and revised lessons and told them to spot 5 differences in the approach, format and methodologies. There was enthusiastic participation by the tutors in doing the first activity of the session to the best of their ability. This was followed by group discussion and brain storming session on how to carry forward the process and was conducted by Ms. Asheema Singh. The tutors were so impressed by the newly written text that they want to use them in their formal schooling in their respective schools.

Day 1: Session 3

After lunch in session 2, there was a power point presentation on orientation to Life skills by Ms. Asheema Singh. In her presentation she elaborated on core life skills like self awareness, empathy, interpersonal relationship skills, effective communication skills, critical and creative thinking, problem solving, decision making, coping with stress and emotions. She elaborated on the skills by using participatory methodologies.

Day 1: Session 3

It was followed by Activity 2 i.e. screening of videono.5 though LCD projector in which Authors of the newly written self learning materials highlighted the new innovation and creativity in integration of content, methodology and life skills in the subjects. After this a brain storming session on how to take the process of integration to class rooms to benefit the learners was conducted.

Day 1: Session 4

After tea, screening of episode 1 of Learning Together Learning Better took place. It provided a live experience to the participants and see how life skills can be integrated in different subjects. It also established that change in teaching methodology can facilitate life skills empowerment of learners. In the context of this exposure of video, the participants were divided in to subject wise groups and with the tutors Hand book of participative Methodology and

selected lessons were given to them. The groups were asked to identify the learning junctions.

The participants were divided into five groups and each group was given subject specific materials and a pick of methodologies to discuss within themselves and present it for the benefit of the entire group. It was a two –fold learning opportunity where participants had to go through all the activities in the Self Learning Material and identify the activities based on the methodologies shown to them during screening session. Activity was participatory and collaborative group work where each member of the group was highly enthusiastic and motivated. Post presentation feedback was sought from other groups. The session was summed up by the Resource Persons, Ms. Singh and Ms. Umar. This post presentation session was again very interactive brain storming session where participants again got the opportunity to develop an insight on different teaching methodologies. At the end of the session, the session was debriefed by Ms. Singh in which the participants participated actively.

Day 2: Session 1

Day 2 began with prayer by the participants followed by the screening of episode 1 & 2 of the videos. The session introduced the participants to the concept of identifying the learning junctions within the self learning materials where participatory teaching learning methodologies focused on in episode 1 and 2, content area and the life skills thus empowered.

Day 2: Session 1

The participants were divided into five groups and each group was given subject specific materials and a pick of methodologies to discuss within themselves and present it for the benefit of the entire group. It was a two –fold learning opportunity where participants had to go through all the activities in the Self Learning Material and identify the activities based on the methodologies shown to them during screening session. Activity was participatory and collaborative group work where each member of the group was highly enthusiastic and motivated.

The next session was devoted to the methodologies viewed in episode 3 and 4. It consisted of screening of episode 3 & 4 followed by subject wise group work to identify learning junctions where participatory methodologies can be used and group discussion.

Day 2: Session 3

The next session was on Evaluating TMA. The session was conducted by Ms. Asheema Singh and Ms. Shakeba Umar. Giving a brief introduction to the topic Ms. Asheema Singh clarified the purpose of TMA as an educational tool. All the participants were distributed a copy of TMA to evaluate. Each group was supervised by Ms. Asheema Singh, Mr. T.N Singh, Ms Ankita Sharma and Ms. Shakeba Umar.

Day 2: Session 4

At the end of the session each group shared the comments they had given to the learners. All the participants gave their inputs for improving the quality of feedback to the learners. The quality of evaluation after the subject wise small group discussion improved diametrically.

Day 3 started with Plantation of sapling presented by NIOS officials to Rama Krishanan Mission during inaugural session. The plantation was done by Swami Shashankananda in the presence of officials from Rama Krishanan Mission and all the participants.

It was followed by activity "Sanjhe-Rang". After the successful completion of the activity Ms. Asheema Singh described the significance of the activity in the light of different stake holders of NIOS. She explained that as the activity could not be completed until all the participants make a team and try to achieve common goal ie. Making different goal of each as the common goal of the group and try to achieve the goal; similarly different stake holders had to work in close collaboration to achieve common goal of NIOS.

Day 3: Session 1

Explaining the difference between a text book of formal school and the self-learning materials of open and distance education, each participant was individually taken through the process of developing material. The importance of pre-pages and the access devices were explained in detail.

The participants were also taken through the curriculum document, Question Paper Design, Sample Question Paper and Marking Scheme. Every participant agreed that the information provided was a very valuable one and would go a long way in enabling them to help learners achieve self learning.

Day 3: Session 3

The participants were familiarized with various links and contents on the website. Important information regarding ICT support from admission to certification was given to each participant. The participants were also informed that the NIOS website meets the Guidelines for Indian Government Websites (GIGW) and adheres to Level AA of the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.0) of the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C).

Information regarding the provisions of Screen Reader, increasing text size, color contrast scheme etc. for visually challenged learners was also highlighted. A run through of AEP WebPages was also given. The participants were also taken through the procedure of uploading the PCP schedule. The importance of the schedule for the learners was focused upon.

The participants also listened to a live Mukta Vidya Vani online tutorial and were oriented to the benefits and limitations of online tutorials. The participants showed a keen interest and felt greatly empowered after the session.

This would help in empowering the tutors and learner to solve many of their problems. In this way this session helps in alleviating stress amongst the learners. Before closing, the entire workshop was summarized. Representative members gave their feedback about the workshop. There was a consensus response from the participants regarding a positive change in their own behavior and attitude. They felt that this would definitely be communicated during the transaction of lessons during PCP. They assured that they would focus on overall development of the learners including life skills enhancement. Mr. T.N Singh, Master Trainers from Ranchi region along with PC (AEP), 2 SEO (AEP) and Mr. Rajeev Prasad Regional Director Ranchi conducted the workshop. Mr. Narayan, SO Ranchi Regional Center and Former Regional Director Mr. Ranjan Kishore from Ranchi Regional Center were the main organizers of the workshop.

During the valedictory session Chief Guest Swami Shashankanand from Rama Krishana Mission Asharam, Swami Vishuddhan Road, Morabadi, Ranchi expressed his gratitude for organizing this kind of innovative workshop. He shared that he had observed the sessions from time to time and was very impressed at the kind of participation the sessions were able to elicit. He felt that if the tutors are able to follow this kind of participatory approach in the classroom better outcome from the learners can be ensured. He informed that the mission has shot a video film of the entire programme, which will become an important training tool at the Mission.

The Vote of Thanks was delivered by Dr. Rajeev Prasad Regional Director Ranchi.

Conclusion

All the expected outcomes of the workshop were achieved. The participants seemed to enjoy both the sessions and the learning approach used by the facilitators. They were very active in all sessions, showing great interest and enthusiasm. The participatory techniques highlighted the ease of interaction, enriching the entire experience. All participants commented that the workshop had been very helpful and that they were glad that NIOS was taking such initiatives.

The residential nature of the workshop not only took the participants away from the workplace but also helped in securing greater concentration from

them while working, and allowed them time for practice and internalization of the concepts. The main challenge was to motivate and train the tutors to conduct effective PCPs and to achieve this target, it is important to ensure that regular monitoring and efficient organization of Learner Engagement Activity takes place in the region.

***Ms. Asheema Singh**

****Ms. Shakeba Umar**

**UNFPA Consultant & Project Coordinator (Adolescence Education Programme), National Institute of Open Schooling, Govt. of India.*

***Senior Executive Officer (Adolescence Education Programme), National Institute of Open Schooling, Govt. of India.*

Report of the Seminar cum Workshop on 'Values for Universal Well Being and Happiness'.

National Institute of Open Schooling(NIOS) organized Seminar cum Workshop on '**Values for Universal Well Being and Happiness**' on the occasion to celebrate the Birth Anniversary of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad as National Education Day on 11th November, 2014. The Programme aimed to deliberate on the values needed for universal well being and happiness, to sensitize the faculty about embracing values in life and designing supplementary material in the form of stories, activities etc. to be incorporated in different subject domains.

In the inaugural function, Mr. C. Dharuman emphasized on the importance of the day and importance of values in ones life. He congratulated everyone and appreciated their presence in the programme. Dr. Kuldeep Agarwal, Director, Academic, thereafter took the dias and remembered Maulana Abul Kalam Azad who served as first the Education Minister of independent India and contributions made by him for the country. He paid tribute to Maulana Abul Kalam Azad on his Birth Anniversary and recognized his contributions in development and growth of education in the country. Throwing a light on values for universal well being, Dr. Agarwal said that education is the only tool through which values can be transmitted to the learners. All education has to be value education. The essence of values should permeate the whole atmosphere. Only then, we can make it true education. Dr. Agarwal then informed everyone about the objectives of the programme.

After these remarks by Dr. Kuldeep Agarwal, a panel discussion on the theme '**Values for Universal Well Being & Happiness**' took place. The session was chaired by Prof. M.K. Das. Sh. Atul Kothari, Sh. G. Vaz, Sh. N.S. Rawal and Ms.Anita Devraj were the panelists. Prof. Das first of all congratulated the Academic Department for organizing a seminar and workshop on values for universal well being.He said that all education should be value oriented irrespective of the subject domain. Each subject has the scope where value education can be integrated. He further said that we should think of integrating values in the curriculum in an inclusive manner that it should help learners imbibe automatically from the curriculum itself. Imposition of values from outside can never help in attaining the goal of universal harmony and peace.

After this discussion, Sh. Atul Kothari, Secretary, Shiksha Sanskriti Utthan Nyas, said that true education is one which liberates human being from all forms of bondages. There should be no difference between the aims of education and aims of life. He further discussed about three dimensions of understanding Indian values viz...philosophical base, societal awareness and personal character i.e. behavior. He further elaborated upon the recommendations given by Radhakrishnan Commission, Mudaliar Commission and Kothari Commission in the context of value education in Independent India. He further discussed on methods of assessment of value education. He ended his words by saying that if we want to change the country- we will have to change the education.

The next speaker was Sh. G. Vaz, Member, Pontifical Council for Laity of the Vatican, Mumbai. Sh. Vaz said that one has universal desire to be happy. Personal well being and one's state of happiness depends on presence of positive emotions and absence of negative emotions. The more the positive emotions a person has, the lesser will be the negative emotional arousal and the happier and satisfied a person will be. But what values derive happiness? This is the question which we all should think and reflect upon. He further extended the meaning of the term 'Value'. He said that value represent what is important for one. The concept of value is not new. History has recognized the need for universal values and principles for universal well being. He further said that there is a set of universal values in each of us which are innate. They need to be discovered and unleashed. The role of every parent and educator is to discover, unleash and nurture that very innate potential. He said that value education is not teaching. It is already within a person. Commitment to someone greater to oneself, self discipline, self acceptance, seeking truth, justice and peace, acting in accordance with ones conscience and taking responsibility of your own behavior are some values which are common to and found in all religions and cultures. He emphasized on recognizing the connectedness of all people despite disparities and serving others and being helpful to others. He also emphasized on having caring, compassionate and tolerance to others as the most needed values of the present times. He reflected upon Maulana Abul Kalam Azad's life and his dream of a society where youth is disciplined and economic order and prosperity is there. He also discussed about difference in 'Paap' and 'Punya'.

Thereafter, Sh. N.S. Rawal, Former Principal, Halwasia Vidya Mandir, Bhiwani, put a light on Swami Vivekanand Ji's life and his sayings as 'Manifestation of the divinity in the society is Dharma' and 'Manifestation of perfection in the child is Education'. In continuation with this, he said that curriculum should be

such as not to burden the child. Every subject should be value based. Environmental education should be essentially given to the learners and they must be sensitized towards the environment. He further added that cleanliness is needed in our behaviors and our actions. Sanctity should be reflected in our behavior. A child should be trained to move from failure to success rather than taking failures as an impediment to success.

He further said that in addition to making the curriculum child centered with lot of scope for their all round development, we need to provide adequate facilities to the learners. A teacher has to be a role model and a facilitator to bring the changes in terms of values in a child.

After this discussion, Ms. Anita Devraj, Former Principal, DAV Public School, Bahadurgarh, then deliberated upon values by taking examples from day to day life. She said that values are not taught but caught.

There is a need to lift and live values. Children imbibe values by the behavior of the parents, teachers, peer group and their daily interaction with the society. Ms. Devraj defined and explained the real meaning of values by reflecting upon various historical evidences. She said that, if we want our children to be value oriented and builders of peace, first we will have to change and try to see the broader meaning of values which should be reflected in our everyday life.

The chair of the panel discussion Prof. M.K. Das, then concluded the session by suggesting how values can be integrated in the self learning material in different subjects.

After this comprehensive panel discussion on values for universal well being, a Workshop on the same theme was conducted. All the faculty members and outside experts were divided into five Groups who had to work on different values.

The groups work was done on the following themes

1. Group-1- Values related to Environment
2. Group-2- Ethical behaviour towards the other Gender-)
3. Group-3- Behavioural Values
4. Group-4- Patriotism-)
5. Group-5- Values related to Harmony and Peace

Subsequently, the groups presented their reports. The group identified some methods through which ODL learners can be sensitized towards values which

were Activities, Do You Know, Dialogue Box Exercises related to the values, Mukta Vidya Vani (in a form of play) ,Gyan Darshan/Gyan Vani (visualization, issues recorded) and Multimedia. At the end, Dr. Agarwal thanked all the experts for their auspicious present on the occasion, all Academic Officers and other staff of Academic Department. He also thanked Administration Unit and Media Unit for their immense contribution in making the day a success.

The Programme Director was Dr. Kuldeep Agarwal, Director(Academic) and Ms. Madhur Bhatia, Academic Officer (Teacher Education) was the Programme Coordinator

**Report Prepared by
Ms. Madhur Bhatia,
Academic Officer (Teacher Education), NIOS**

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.

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1. Abstract, Keywords (in about 100-150 words in a separate page (A-4 size).
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5. Sub-items with headings relating to:
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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
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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)
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7. Study Tools
8. Methodology
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Editorial Correspondence

All communications related to publications should be addressed to:

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Editorial Correspondence

All communications related to publications should be addressed to:

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CONTENTS

EDITORIAL

PAPERS

Policy Initiatives in Strengthening Collaboration Between ODL Institutions and Stakeholders in Raising Quality of Secondary Education in Tanzania. A case of Dar es Salaam Region 123

Baraka Kionywaki and Mwajuma Mohamed

Learners' Attributes and Perceptions of Effectiveness of Gender-sensitive and responsive Texts and Tutorials of Open and School of Bangladesh Open University. 133

Sabina Yeasmin and C.R.K. Murthy

Professionalizing Teachers through Distance Learning: A Case of D.El.Ed. (ODL) Programme in Bihar (India) 141

Chandan Shrivastava

Admission process of SSC program in Distance education in Bangladesh : An Analysis 153

Iqbal Hussain

Rethinking Alternative Assessment Practices in Open Schooling System 168

Rajendra Kumar Nayak

Need of Open Learners for Counselling 178

Esther. J.E. Shonwang

BOOK REVIEW

Case Studies on OER eLearning Ed. By Som Naidu and Sanjaya Mishra 195

Anamika Ray

WORKSHOP REPORT

Workshops to Review the Guide to Integrating Gender Equity and Equality A Report 199

Report on 3 Day Capacity Building Workshop for Tutors of NIOS 208

Report of the Seminar cum Workshop on 'Values for Universal Well Being and Happiness' 215