

Modes of Teaching in Indian Higher Education

Reflective Conversation with the Situation

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Introduction

Diversity is one of the defining elements of Indian higher education. This diversity is increasingly becoming complex with increasing social complexity in changing times. The increasing social complexity from nomadic era to present digital era is being reflected in all fields, including education. The categorisation is one of the ways of understanding the diversity. In India, higher education institutions, engaged in education at post higher secondary level, are categorised broadly as Universities and Colleges. Broadly the institutions with degree awarding powers are called as Universities and Colleges are mainly engaged in provision of higher education. From the nature of ownership, the institutions are categorised as public and private. Further institutions are categorised as general, technical and professional based on the nature of knowledge domains. The institutions are also categorised based on modes of delivery of education as conventional and distance education institutions. In this way the institutions are categorised in multiple ways, new categories being added over a period of time. The variety being captured as a category is a complex process of perceptions. This is more true of categorisation based on modes of education. Here an attempt is made to understand the complex and changing nature of categorisation of higher education institutions, based on modes of education in Indian context. It is a reflective conversation with the situation.

Modes of Teaching-Learning

Traditionally, universities are classified as conventional with classroom based delivery systems and distance education institutions with technology - print and non-print based delivery systems. The institutions which are offering only classroom mode are called as single mode institutions and which are offering classroom and distance education are called as dual mode institutions. The establishment of open universities since 80's added a dedicated distance education mode institutional form. During the last four decades from

80's of 20th century to first two decades of 21st century many new modes are added and new concepts are emerging in higher education. Distance education, a form of learning where teacher is separated from learner and distance is being mediated by technology, has transformed itself as open and distance learning with a broader conceptual frame. The online learning – learning which is supported and delivered through internet emerged as a new age learning form. Blended learning or hybrid learning as a mixed mode of classroom and technology based delivery system is emerging as the most popular mode of education, particularly in developed countries. At one time all technology mediated forms are clubbed under umbrella term of distance education. But now finer distinctions are made based on the type and mix of technology. For example distinction is made between e-learning – learning supported and delivered through ICT, and Online learning – learning supported and delivered through internet. Distinction is also made between open and distance learning (ODL) - learning based on use of multi modes of print and non-print for learning, and online learning which uses only internet for learning. There is a need for clarity and shared understanding on nature of multiple modes of teaching-learning. Having worked for more than two decades in Open University system in various capacities and now observing the system as a critical outsider for the last two decades, I am in some difficulty in understanding the popular usage of these modes. My informal discussions with people in ODL world in India, I get an impression that I am not alone in confusion. May be changes are taking place so fast in the systems that our cognitive coping abilities are not able to capture these changes.

National Education Policy 2020

National Education Policy 2020 (NEP-2020) has recognised three modes of learning in higher education viz., **In-class**, **ODL** and **Online**. The University Grants Commission (UGC) has identified three modes of learning and defined them as:

- i. Conventional Mode**, means a mode of providing learning opportunities through face to face interaction between teacher and learner in regular classroom environment but does not exclude supplementary instructions if any for the learner through the use of online.

- ii. **Open and distance learning Mode**, means a mode of providing flexible learning opportunities by overcoming separation of teacher and learner using a variety of media including print, electronic, online and occasional interactive face-to-face meetings with the learner or learner support services to deliver teaching – learning experiences, including practical or work experiences.
- iii. **Online Mode**, means a mode of providing flexible learning opportunities by overcoming separation of teacher and learner using internet, e-learning materials and full pledged programme delivery through the internet using technology assisted mechanism and resources.
(University Grants Commission (Open and distance learning programmes and online programmes) (Regulations, 2020).

The NEP 2020 advocates for use of all three modes of education by universities and colleges to provide more access to higher education and also to enrich learning by use of technology. After full implementation of NEP 2020, there will be three types of institutional scenarios from the perspective of the use of diverse modes. These are:

- A. Single Mode Universities:** Institutions offering only conventional mode programmes or only ODL programmes or only online programmes. The Conventional Universities offering only classroom based programme, the Open Universities offering only ODL programmes or the Virtual Universities offering only online programmes come under this category of single mode universities. So a single mode university may be a Conventional University or an Open University or a Virtual University.
- B. Dual Mode Universities:** Universities offering two modes of education programmes in different combinations i.e., Conventional + ODL or ODL + Online or Conventional + Online may be called as dual mode universities. So there may be conventional dual mode universities and dual mode open universities.

C. Triple Mode Universities: There may be some universities offering educational programmes through all the three modes of education i.e., conventional, ODL and Online. Some Conventional Universities like University of Hyderabad are offering conventional, ODL and Online programmes and IGNOU, a dedicated National Open University is offering research programmes through conventional mode along with ODL and Online programmes. These are a few examples of triple mode Universities.

Mix of Modes of Learning

The modes of learning are not always dichotomous and singular. In operations there is always a mix of modes. The Conventional Universities also use technology mediated forms of learning. The ODL institutions also use face-to-face component for learning. Online programmes also have some component of other modes. The question is about the professionally agreed norms of mix of modes. Broadly, there is a professional consensus on understanding of conventional system as a system based on 70 percent classroom based learning and not more than 30 percent through other modes. The same may be true of ODL, with 70 percent print and non-print technologies and 30 percent may be of conventional system. About online education it is generally agreed that at least 80 percent should be internet based learning. (1. Elaine Allen and Jef Seaman, Changing Course, Ten years of Thinking Online Education in the United States).

The creativity lies in proper mix of modes, realising the significance of independent and interactive learning. The use of new age technologies like Artificial Intelligence (AI), Internet of Things (IOT), Machine Learning are making the boundaries of modes very fluid and synergy of modes is emerging as the new age form of education. Here the discussion is not about the appropriateness or the effectiveness of different modes of education. It is only an attempt for self-clarification on the use of modes of education terminology in Indian higher education. ” **Know thyself” is the motto of this piece”**.