BRAOU - JOURNAL of Open Distance Learning

FOREWORD

This is the second issue of the Research Journal 'BRAOU - Journal of Open Distance Learning', a peer-refereed academic Journal in the field of Open and Distance Learningbeing launched by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University. The journal, whichprovides a platform for the academic and research community, could not be published earlier due to Covid-19 and other issues. Post - Covid, the ODL systems have evolved and incorporated new changes due to the new outlook towards educational delivery. The NEP - 2020, has suggested online learning as a viable alternative and ODL institutionsas being complementary to formal universities.

New challenges will be faced by formal educational institutions in these changing times, but it is a boon for ODL institutions which are already technology- supported and digitally- oriented. Further, the UGC guidelines with regard to several aspects like Teaching- Learning, Evaluation and Research and Development in HEIs has both set targets as well as shown ways to overcome the hurdles that ODL institutions are facing in the modern competitive field of education.

At this juncture, publishing the second volume of the Journal of Distance Learning is both a priority and a pious duty.

It gives me immense pleasure to bringout the second issue of JODL. The Advisory Board and Editorial Board have comeout with this issue and I thank them for their cooperation. I hope GRCR&D would get the journal published regularly as a half-yearly journal, as was originally visualised, and all these efforts would make Dr. BRAOUstand tall amongst the giants of ODL.

Prof. K. Seetharama Rao
Vice-Chancellor,
Dr.BRAOU
Hyderabad.

FROM EDITORS

We are happy to bring out the second issue of the BRAOU Journal of Open Distance Learning (BRAOU-JODL). This Journal, the first volume which came out in 2016, could not be published till now due to certain unavoidable hurdles including the Covid-19 pandemic and the problems that have cropped up after the disruptions caused by Covid-19.

BRAOU-JODL, a peer-reviewed, half yearly journal, is global in its outlook and international in scope as it focuses on emerging issues and challenges faced hy ODL institutions with the emergence of modern technology. New initiatives, vistas and insights are developing in ODL. NEP-2020 has also brought transformations in the perspectives on educational provision and more particularly, ODL.

The Journal intends to promote theoretical debate and inspire and stimulate articles on ODL as a viable mode of educational provision, and become a forum for discussion on ODL policies and practices. It proposes to define the new trends and seeks to encourage quantiative and qualitative analysis of various aspects/practices in ODL.

This journal covers 12 full length papers and 2 book reviews and the 'message' from the Vice-Chancellor of host University. All the paper writers are practitioners in ODL and play a significant role in managing open university systems at different levels and thus offer insights on the workings of the ODL systems.

In the paper **'Education and Employment - Challenges in 21st century'**, Prof. Asha Kanwar focuses on increasing the gross enrolment ratio (GER) in higher education and increasing the employability in the coming years. She shares that educational change in imminent and innovation is the need of the hour.

Prof. V.S. Prasad in his paper, **'Four Decades of India's First Open University Through the Past into the Future'** talks about the trajectory followed by Dr. BRAOU in its evolution as an ODL institution and how it progressed through the decades and the mile-stones in its success. Being associated with Dr. BRAOU since the inception of the University, along with its founder Prof. G. Ram Reddy, Prof. V.S. Prasad has been a witness to the various phases of development and the contributions of Dr. BRAOU to ODL system through its innovative practices and its efforts to reach out to the marginalised sections of society.

Dr. Pankaj Mittal in her paper 'Roadmap to Sustainable Higher Education' analyses in detail the policy reforms envisaged in NEP - 2020 which resulted in new regulatory structures and the restructuring that is required in ODL Systems and their academic programmes and the initiatives that are to be taken up by ODL Universities.

In the paper '**India's First Open University in Transition : Need for reimagining the future together**' by Prof. V.S. Prasad talks about the need for transition for ODL institutions in the context of Covid-19 and how ODL institutions have to survive in post - Covid scenario through intelligent action and viable strategies.

Prof. Rajan M. Welukar's paper '**Imparting Quality Skill Education through Open Universities : Issues and Challenges'** applies the 'business model' to education and describes how ODL systems can be made resilient in the changing times by reorienting themselves and providing education to the clientele as per the modern day requirements. He emphasises the need to skill, re-skill and upskill the learners. It is only with understanding the requirements of society and making provisions for new types of training programmes and courses that the universities can survive, he says.

In the paper **"Quality Assurance Measurers in Distance Education system in India",** Prof. Satish Rastogi looks at capacity building initiatives required in ODL for quality assurance. He discusses Commonwealth of Learning's initiatives in this regard and the differences between conventional and distance education systems. He analyses the different components of distance education system and suggests an action plan which embraces different quality measures, which can yield better results in ODL systems.

In the article '**R&D in Dr.BRAOU- Role of GRCR&D'**. Prof. E. Sudha Rani discusses on the evolution of research in the first Open University in India i.e., Dr. BRAOU and analyses the directions the R&D cell of Dr.BRAOU is taking in the context of new regulations prescribed by U.G.C. with regard to research in 2021. Research has become a bench-mark for assessing the quality of ODL institutions and efforts are being made to introduce changes in accordance with the new requirements, says the author.

Prof. Pandu Ranga Narasimha Rao's paper on **"The need for Regional Development of ODL system and NEP"**, considers the different aspects of regional development of ODL in the context of NEP and policy interventions required. He emphasises the need to integrate ODL with other developments in tertiary education, for enhancing regional level development of ODL.

In the paper '**Feedback Survey on curriculum transaction in Dr. BRAOU from different stakeholders for quality enhnacement**' the authors, Dr. V.V. Kanaka Durga and Prof. P. Madhusudhana Reddy make a qualitative study from the perspectives of stakeholders on curricular transaction. The survey helps to assess the relevance and quality of curricular transaction and helps in quality enhancement practices for the University and satisfaction to stakeholders. The recommendations from the study help the ODL institutions to take corrective measures.

In her paper **'OER & ODL'**, Dr. G. Lakshmi focuses on the concept and significance of OER and how they need to be integrated in ODL system for enhancing quality of teaching - learning.

In the paper, **'Feedback survey on practical training in Mathematics at U.G. Level in Dr. BRAOU'** Dr. Sridevi makes an attempt to understand how practical training in mathematics helped the learners gain more conceptual understanding of the subject, Mathematics. This endeavour from the University is as per government directives and has helped in strengthening learning and provided a much needed impetus to the learners.

Dr. V.V. Kanaka Durga in her paper '**Outcome - based education and ODL Systems'** analyses how Outcome - based Education (OBE) is a strength for ODL systems and elaborates on the necessity to incorporate Outcome Based Education in ODL systems.

The book review on **'Reimaginning Indian Universities'** by Prof. E. Sudha Rani critically examines the various edited articles with regard to the functioning of Universities and need for strenghtening them in the present day context. The second book review by Dr. V.V. Kanakadurga on **'National Education Policy 2020 : issues, Challenges and Reflections** ' enlightens the readers on various aspects of NEP - 2020.

The issue has message from Prof. K. Seetharama Rao, Vice-Chancellor of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University, We take this opportunity to thank the Vice-Chancellor, Prof. K. Seetharama Rao and the Registrar of the University, Dr. A.V.N. Reddy and other academic and administrative heads of Dr. B/R. Ambedkar Open University for supporting the Journal. We also take this opportunity to thank all the writers and reviewers for contributing their mite to the journal.

We hope the 'BRAOU -JODL' will continue to provide a 'value edition' and an arena for fruitful debate in ODL while adding to the existing literature in the field.

It is felt, that by publication of this journal, Dr. BRAOU can meet to some extent 'the dearth of research publications' of journals in ODL and that the need for research journals in ODL for the practitioners is fulfilled to some extent by our effort.

We welcome comments and suggestions from the readers.

On behalf of Editorial Board
Prof. K. Murali Manohar
Editor-in-chief
and
Prof. E. Sudha Rani
Executive Editor

BRAOU - JOURNAL of Open Distance Learning

CONTENTS

EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT – CHALLENGES IN 21ST CENTURY

Prof. Asha Kanwar *

Covid–19 caused the biggest disruption of education in human history where over 96% students world-wide were impacted. The closure of campuses affected more than 220 million higher education students world-wide (UNESCO, 2021). Most institutions had to pivot to emergency remote teaching. Many did not have adequate technology infrastructure. But the 33 open universities in the Commonwealth, including the 17 in India, were able to remain open, catering to over 5 million students annually.

In 2021, a Man Power Group survey found that 69% of employers had trouble finding qualified graduates to hire. A higher education system that responds to market needs and future requirements, must integrate employability pathways by re-imagining policies and practices. There seems to be a disconnect between what we teach and what is required by the job market. And with advances in technology, the future becomes even more uncertain.

According to a McKinsey report, the future of work will require foundational skills along four dimensions ; cognitive, interpersonal, self leadership and digital. People with employable skills, will be individuals (i) who can add value beyond what can be done by automated systems. (ii) who work efficiently in a digital environment, and (iii) who can demonstrate resilience to adapt to new ways of working and new occupations.

Since the future is difficult to predict, let us ensure that our graduates have three literacies. First, human literacy, which prepares students to perform jobs that only human beings can do. Human literacy will help them to make ethical choices, equip them for social engagement through effective communication. Second, data literacy is essential in a world driven by data. Learners must be able to find meaning in the flood of information around them. Third, technological literacy is essential if we are to understand machines and their uses. Learners must be able to deploy software and hardware in order to maximize their powers to achieve and create. If we can equip our learners with these literacies, we will be preparing them for the jobs that do not yet exist.

Governments are looking for ways in which young people can be skilled for

* *CEO Commonwealth of Learning, New Delhi.*

employment and entrepreneurship. In order to reach large numbers, policy makers around the developing world have realized that traditional brick and mortar solutions are not enough. One of the silver linings of the pandemic has been the global acceptance of distance and technology-enabled learning.

Can distance education contribute to increasing the number of employable graduates? Globally we have seen a steady rise in Gross Enrolment Ratios (GER) in tertiary education to 40%. Convinced that higher education leads to higher earnings and social mobility, policy makers have invested in this sector. Both developed and developing countries such as Australia, Chile and UK have very high GER. Higher levels of education usually translate into better employment opportunities and higher earnings. among tertiary – educated adults.

The relative earnings advantage increases with the level of tertiary education. On average across OECD countries, those with a master's, doctoral or equivalent degree earn twice as much as those with lower qualifications (OECD, 2021).

In addition to individual benefits higher education contributes to higher social returns on investment. A world Bank report shows that the private rate of return on higher education ranges from 12-26%, while social returns on investment ranges from 9-13% amongst low, middle-and high-income countries (Psacharopoulos & Patrinos, 2018).

The GER in india is about 27%, where 12% of all enrolments in higher education are in distance learning programmes with a large participation of women (MHRD, 2020). As the National Educational Policy, 2020, states increased access, equity, and inclusion in higher education will be achieved through online education and Open and Distance Learning with a national target of 50% GER by 2035 (MHRD, 2020). This target can only be achieved through the active participation of the open distance and online learning ecosystem in the country. It is for this reason, that the government plans to initiate a digital university next year.

Youth unemployment has risen during the pandemic, and the employability of graduates will be a key factor in national development. How can open universities produce employable graduates who contribute to sustainable development? Opportunities for livelihoods do not come from employment alone. Instead of simply being job seekers, can we become job creators? For this, our educational system must breed and nurture entrepreneurs. We live in a world that values and rewards innovators. Do we need to be born innovators or is this a skill that can be acquired? After studying thousands of innovators, Dyer et al (2013) in their book. 'The innovator's DNA' have distilled the skills

that all innovators share. These are simple skills; questioning, observing, networking and experimenting. What does this mean ?

Innovators ask questions all the time. Asking simple questions can often lead to profound discoveries. Steve jobs wanted to know why computers needed a fan in the first place and the rest is history. Observing closely is a skill that all innovators share – they try to carefully understand how people, technologies and systems work and arrive at insights and lessons that can be helpful in their own situation. In addition, innovators are great networkers – and here we don't just refer to social networking but meeting with people from different backgrounds and disciplines to explore ideas, which can further trigger new ideas. And finally, innovators are always trying out new experiences and solutions. Innovation is a skill that can be mastered and we need to practice the skills of questioning, observing, networking and experimenting systematically until they become a part of our DNA.

Let me share three things :

First, the 21st century is very different from the past century in which people from our generation graduated. Research shows, that one has to change at least two to four jobs in one's career which means one has to continue learning for earning throughout one's life. Second, many times life is not a simple equation, and hard work does not always lead to success. We must also be prepared for failure. As Edison said 'I have n't failed. I've just found 10,000 ways that do not work'. Let's stay positive and persevere until we succeed. In fact, there is no substitute for perseverance. Third, our altitude will depend on our attitude. As we all know, intelligence is very important but emotional intelligence is even more valued in today's world. We must develop the skill of empathizing with people and understanding their perspective. A positive frame of mind and a 'can do' approach is what the world of work needs today.

Innovators are also lifelong learners. So learning does not end today. We will still need to continue to learn, unlearn and re-learn many different things during the course of our lives. Learning how to learn would be to our biggest advantage and will always stand in good stead.

We are expected to contribute to our family, community and country. In addition, we are also global citizens who must contribute to the sustainability and well-being of our planet. Access to decent livelihoods and a life of dignity is fundamental to our future.

The world awaits and the future beckons. Each one of us can make a difference. And as Mahatma Gandhi said, 'In a gentle way, you can shake the world'.

(Transcript of the twenty fourth convocation address delivered at BRAOU campus on 6/8/2022)

FOUR DECADES OF INDIA'S FIRST OPEN UNIVERSITY THROUGH THE PAST INTO THE FUTURE

- Prof. V.S. Prasad*

"Yesterday is but today's memory and tomorrow is today's dream"

-Khalil Gibran

Look Back to Look Forward

We look back to past to understand the present and plan for the future. The study of institutional history helps us, if properly appreciated, in today's institutional decisions of what to do and what not to do. John Dewey, perceptively observes that education is **"a process of living through a continuous reconstruction of experiences"**. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University (here in after referred to as BRAOU or the University) has the rich tradition of action studies on its experiences and on ODL, first under the aegis of **'Centre for Evaluation'** and later from 2001 under **Prof. G. Ram Reddy Research Academy in Distance Education (GRADE)**. The University has the distinction of having a dedicated unit for evaluation studies on distance education. The University also has another distinction of being the most explored research site on ODL. More than 20 scholars have undertaken research on different aspects of functioning of the University leading to M.Phil. and Ph.D. degrees. More than a hundred research studies were conducted and a large number of articles on the working of the University were published in journals and presented in workshops and seminars. These studies provide a rich **knowledge resource** to draw meaningful lessons from past practices, useful for future actions.

This University to my knowledge is the only Open University in India to undertake a research project on impact study of institutional experiences. The study was sponsored by the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) on the occasion of Di-Decennial celebration of the University in 2002. Myself and Prof. V. Venkaiah, the then Director, GRADE were the researchers of the project and the study was published by the University in 2005 under the title: **"India's First Open University: Experience of Two Decades"**. The Important parameters considered in the study include; access and equity, flexibility, innovation, quality and relevance. It is worth examining thefeasibility of extending this study to four decades of experience and impact. The Commonwealth of Learning may be approached for support to the study, as extension of time-series study of institutional impact.

* *Former Director, NAAC and former Vice Chancellor, Dr. B.R.Ambedkar Open University, Hyderabad, Telangana*

During the Silver Jubilee Celebrations of University in 2007, the '**Centre for Social Empowerment**' led by Prof. Ghanta Chakrapani, (present Director, Academic) has brought out success stories of BRAOU learners under the title '**Memu Saitam**'. It is a good work of inspiring stories ofstruggles and extraordinary achievements of learners inspite of many social disadvantages. The University may continue the publication of '**Success Stories Series**' to authenticate its legitimate claims as a '**University with a difference**'.

The Focus of the Lecture

When we reflect on four decades of India's first Open University's journey through the past into the future, and the trajectory of experiences, many significant contributions and events and lessons come to mind. In this long journey of four decades, certainly individuals have made a very significant contribution and deserve all appreciation and gratitude. But in the exercise of learning from experiences, it is more appropriate to reflect on collective wisdom, collective contributions and may be also on collective limitations. We are what we are today because of these collective strengths and limitations. Recognition of this '**collective spirit**' is the right way to move forward. Here a qualifier is necessary. These are my subjectivereflections. It is quite possible to draw different conclusions from past experience with different perspectives. I have reflected on the institutional experience from the perspective of realisation of basic premises and values of the Open University system. The foundational goal of the University is '**to provide inclusive quality higher education and lifelong learning to large numbers at affordable costs, overcoming the limitations of time and space'.** We should try to draw meaning of our experiences from this broad perspective of foundational goal of the University.

The Trajectory

The four decades of trajectory may be broadly divided into two phases if The Early Years or the First Phase (from 1982 to 1993) and The Campus Years or the Second Phase (from 1994 to Present). The first phase of early years is a period of excitement, experimentation and uncertainty. During this period, the University functioned from a rented accommodation in Somajiguda and surrounding areas in Hyderabad. The Campus Years of the Second Phase begins in 1994, with the shifting of the University to its own campus in Jubilee Hills, Hyderabad. The Second Phase is the phase of growth, consolidation and development. Below is a brief overview of important developments in these two phases.

The Early Years (1982-93): The Tipping Points

Let me raise the question of why the first Open University was established in Andhra Pradesh, not in any other state or at the national level. Malcolm Gladwell's 'The Tipping Point' idea, i.e., the moment of threshold or a boiling

point resulting in significant social event, may provide a partial answer to this question.

At the national level, the idea of starting an Open University has been under consideration since December, 1970. It was in that year that the Ministry of Education has organized a Seminar under the Chairmanship of Prof. D.S. Kothari. Later in 1970s, a project report was prepared by a committee under the chairmanship of Mr. G. Pardhasarathy. But nothing happend at the National Leveltill 1985. At the State level in 1978, the then Education Minister Mr. Bhavanam Venkataram, based on discussion with Prof. G. Ram Reddy, the then Vice Chancellor of Osmania University, evinced a keen interest in the concept of Open University. There was a change in the Ministry at the State level in February 1982 and the then Education Minister, Mr. Bhavanam Venkataram became the Chief Minister. This was the tipping point for the establishment of Open University in Andhra Pradesh. He was in position of Chief Ministership only for a short period between February to September 1982. During that short period, he has taken all steps for the establishment of Open University with the active academic support of Prof. G. Ram Reddy. The University was inaugurated by the then President of India, Mr. Gyani Jail Singh on 26th August at Nagarjunasagar. Though there was a political necessity to find ways for meeting the increasing social demand for higher education, desire to make higher education cost-effective and the example of British Open University which used of technology for education were the major driving forces for the establishment of first Open University, The tipping point or the threshold moment was the Chief Ministership of Mr. Bhavanam Venkataram. At that time, the Chief Minister also has decided to locate its headquarters at Nagarjunasagar and got it inaugurated at that place.

Therewas a change in the Ministry in September 1982 and Mr. K. Vijaya Bhaskara Reddy, became the Chief Minister and Prof. G. Ram Reddy was appointed as Vice-Chancellor in November, 1982.

G. Ram Reddy could persuade the new Chief Minister on the desirability of making Hyderabad as the University Headquarters in view of better connectivity and the availability of wide range of educational and technological resources. The Government being convinced of these reasons, made Hyderabad the headquarters of the University. The wise decision of the then Government made a significant difference in the functioning of the University. In India, we have examples of many Open Universities facing locational disadvantages, because of political decisions on headquarters location. The tipping point for the change of headquarters of University from Nagarjunasagar to Hyderabad was the change of Chief Ministership. That is how the University come to the located in Hyderabad today. The wisdomof political masters and the coincidence of many contextual factors contributed to the establishment of first University in Andhra

Pradesh and its location in Hyderabad. It is the beginning of a new phase in higher education in India.

The University has started its operations in November, 1982 with the appointment of the first Vice Chancellor on 18th November, 1982. Its operations initially started, in a private rented building with two persons; Vice Chancellor and his PA who was brought in deputation from Osmania University. Later in 1983, the University was shifted to a Government building in Somajiguda and started its under-graduate academic programmes of B.A., B.Com and B.Sc in 1983-84. It is a record in the Open Universities' history that a University could start its academic operations within six months of its establishment. Launching Science degree programme through distance mode was a bold initiative at that point of time. The University in 1985, for the first timein ODL system has launched a professional programme in Library and Information Science in 1985, another bold initiative at that time. In 1993, another professional programme, Master of Business Administration was launched. Initially the University has started functioning with a few academic staff, mostly brought on deputation from other Universities and a small number of support staff appointed on contractbasis. The staff was initially engaged in multiple tasks, blurring thedistinction between academic and administrative tasks. In later years, regular academic and administrative staff were recruited. Most of the academic staff recruited in the early period had some experience in conventional system, which brought more credibility and experience to the operations of the Open University system.

During the early 11 years phase, the University mostly functioned from rented accommodation in Somajiguda and launched a number of programmes, developed a network of student support services and most importantly designed and developed quality self learning materials. Large number of distinguished academics and practitioners were engaged in the development of self learning materials and staff of conventional colleges were engaged in providing learner services. The University tried to reach to large numbers at minimum costs by extensively using the available educational resources of the conventional system. The internal staff and external resource persons' enthusiasm for participating in the new experiment for democratization of education helped the University to overcome many limitations of physical, financial and human resources. Another significant development in early years of the University is re-naming the University as Dr. B.R Ambedkar Open University in 1991, on the occasion of Dr. Ambedkar's birth centenary.

The Campus Years (1994 to Present): The Development Phase

The present campus location and subsequent developments have their own tipping points. Initially, Government allotted around 120 acres of land at Vanasthalipuram, the outskirts of eastern part of Hyderabad. Prof. C. Narayana

Reddy, the then Vice Chancellor and Prof. V. Nagaraja Naidu, the then Registrar, have used their contacts with the then Chief Minister Mr. N.T. Rama Rao and others who matter in Government, for allotment of 54 acres of Government land at Jubilee Hills to the University. Prof. C. Narayana Reddy, the poetin rhythmic style used to say that we have moved the University from **'Vanasthalipuram to Janasthalipuram'**. This is another tipping point in the evolution of the institution. The foundation stone for the new campus was laid by Mr. N.T. Rama Rao on 1st June 1986. It took nearly 8 years for construction of new buildings in the campus. Prof. S. Bashiruddin, the then Vice Chancellor (1992 - 95) ably assisted by.V. Raghavan, Consultant and technical advisor (retired Chief Engineer R&B, Govt. of AP) and the internal engineering team led by B. Lakshmi Prasad, gave a big push to the process of completion of construction of buildings and shifting to the new campus in 1994. The new campus was inaugurated on 31st August, 1994 by the then Prime Minister of India, Sri. P.V, Narasimha Rao, heralding a new chapter in the life of the University.

The period from 1994 to present is a period of growth and consolidation. In 1994-95, the first academic year started in the new campus with the total enrolment of 55,018, an impressive increase in 11 years from 6231 in 1983-84. Around 15 academic programmes were offered with around 400 regular and contract teaching and non- teaching staff. Over a period, the enrolment increased and crossed the mark of one lakh (1,28,391) in 2002-03 becoming a mega Open University (as categorized by Sir John Daniel). Now the COL is advocating mega Universities to become giga Universities. In 2002, as a mark of 20 years of successful functioning, the University has celebrated Di-Decennial celebration. During that period many initiatives were taken for consolidation, quality improvement and streamlining the operating system. In 2002, the University was offering around 30 programmes including post-graduation, professional and research programmes with around 500 academic and administrative staff, both regular and contractual. In 2002 – 03, the University has taken many steps to strengthen Student Support Services (SSS) including the creation of 23 Regional Coordination Centres (RCCs), one at every district headquarters. In most of the places the University has constructed its own buildings in Government College Campuses to house the RCCs. The earlier two tier structure of student support system became a three tier system with the middle tier RCC playing a very important role in coordination, monitoring and the guidance function of Study Centres under their jurisdiction. This cost-effective structural arrangement of SSS is an innovative arrangement for optimum use ofavailable resources. From the beginning, the University is focusing onhaving a well networked system of Learner Support Services, provided through a network of Study Centres, located in conventional colleges with tutorial and counseling services being provided by conventional college teachers as part-time Academic

Counsellors. At present, the University has a network of around 180 Study Centres with around 4500 Academic Counsellors providing tutorial services to BRAOU learners.

During the last two decades from 2002 to 2022, the University has launched many new programmes in new areas and entered into collaboration with many agencies to offer new educationalprogrammes to working population. The **Centre for Internal Quality Assurance (CIQA)** is in place since 2010 and is engaged in many quality related activities. Earlier GRADE, under its Quality Assurance Cell has prepared many booklets on quality which are being used by different operating units to improve their quality. In 2017, the University has introduced Choice Based Credit System (CBCS) and semester system in B.A, B.Com and B.Sc. programmes. The annual enrolment reachedthe highest number of 1,91,367 in 2010-11 academic year. In current academic year 2022-23, the total enrolment is around 1,15,000 in 41 programmes, being offered by 5 Faculties and 21 Departments. It may be noted that the academic and administrative staff, both permanent and contractual have come-down to around 200. The depletion of human resources is a matter of concern. The total receipts of the University in 2021-22 financial year here around 76 crores, of which around 84 percent was from student fee, making it a student financed institution. During the same period 40 percent of the expenditure was on salaries and pensions and around 60 percent of the expenditure was on learning resources, student services and administration.

In the last three decades after shifting to the new campus, there has been an impressive development in the physical infrastructure of the University. In 1994, the new campus had buildings, with a built-up area of two lakhs square feet. During the last 30 years, many new buildings were added and now it has built-up area of around four lakhs square feet. This good infrastructure and beautiful campus with natural boulders in a centrally located place in Hyderabad is a great opportunity for the University to become an educational and cultural hub. The good infrastructure itself can be a good stimulus for future growth of the University.

The Significant Contribution

There are many things, past and present, that make the University proud. These include:

An Inspiring Example

The University through its open mission practices, programmed learning resources, strong network of Learner Support Systems and reliable student evaluation systems became an inspiring examplein ODL. The University, through its credible operations has contributed significantly to change the negative image of ODL, a result of unhealthy practices in correspondence education, which is in

practice in India from 1962. Many Open Universities established after 1982, including Indira Gandhi National Open University (1985) have built their institutional systems and practices, noting from the experiences of the first Open University. The University has a visible and credible national and international presence. The COL's close association with this University during the last forty years is an indication of its international reputation. The people associated with this University in various capacities, are playing important role in national and international ODL institutions in various ways.

Innovative Practices

The University has the distinction of introducing many academic innovations during the last forty years. The University in 1983-84, has made multidisciplinary Foundation Courses in Social Sciences, Sciences and Languages, compulsory to all Undergraduate students. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is prominently advocating for multidisciplinary education. The University has allowed the students in 1983-84 itself to have flexible choice of subjects across the disciplines. The NEP 2020 has recommended only recently this system under the scheme of Academic Bank of Credits (ABC). The University has pioneered offering science and professional programmes through ODL mode, which were subsequently followed by many other Open Universities and dual mode ODL institutions. Initially there was formidable resistance from conventional system for offering science programmes in open and distance mode. Prof. S. Brahmaji Rao, distinguished professor of Chemistry with wide experience in conventional system and good academic reputation, led the team of science faculty in the University and designed and developed a credible system of science teaching through ODL. In subsequent years, the University has built multimedia science labs for development of lab kits and developed virtual labs for science practicals. The COVID-19 phase has legitamised the use of technology in education and NEP-2020 has recommended the use of ODL and online modes of education for providing all types of programmes, validating the initiatives of the University.

Recently (2022) the UGC has advised Universities to engage persons with rich experience in professional areas as **'Professor of Practice'** to make the professional programmes more practice oriented. The University has adapted this practice in 1980s itself and engaged reputed practitioners as consultants to design and develop professional programmes. In 1980s, the University has launched Library Science and Public Relations programmes under the guidance of reputed practitioners like Mr. B.P. Shenoy (the then chief librarian of Osmania University) Dr. C.V. Narasimha Reddy, (retired Director, Public Relations, Govt. of AP) and a few others as professors of practice, though not named as such. The NEP 2020, is strongly advocating for higher education including professional education in mother tongue. The University has started offering undergraduate programmes and a few professional programmes in both medium

regional language Telugu and English and a few programmes in Urdu medium from the beginning. The University is also offering a few post-graduate programmes in Telugu medium. The University has also departed from the traditional way of teaching Telugu language at undergraduate level and introduced innovative pedagogy for developing communication skills in Students.

The University has developed multimedia self-learning materials in both print and non-print form. The printed learning materials of the University were developed with great care by involving well reputed academics and practitioners. These learning materials are extensively used by conventional University students and teachers. The University has recently made them available to persons appearing for competitive examinations. In this way, the University has made a significant contribution to the knowledge resources of the community. The University is also extensively using Audio- Visual programmes in teaching-learning from the beginning. The University has the distinction of being the first University to havea dedicated Unit for audio-visual programmes. The All India Radio, Doordarshan, YouTube are being used for providing direct to homelearning services. Technology is being used in teaching-learning, student support services, student evaluation and system management. The admissions are made online and web based learner support services are provided. Digital On Screen Evaluation System (DOES) is used for evaluation of answer scripts. The University has put in place the OER policy and OER repository (braouvidyaghani).

The University is also engaged in development of MOOCs and e-learning portal. Recognizing the importance of online education, the University has established a dedicated unit **'Centre for Online Educational Learning'**, for design, development and delivery of online education. These initiatives indicate that the University is aware of the importance of new media and is responding to the changing times. The University has been focusing from beginning on including vocational courses in the curriculum of various programmes. The University has established in 2016, **Centre for Skill Development and Career Planning** to drive the development of more skill oriented Courses / Programmes with collaborations and partnerships and to provide guidance incareer planning.

Forty years the University, on the occasion of it's forty years celebrations has initiated many community engagements / outreach programmes under faculty forums. These include: Sarvathrika Samajika Vedika (Social Sciences); Vanijya Vahini (Commerce); Science Awareness and Extension (Sciences); Vignana Vedika (Education) and Language and Literary Forum (Arts).

Reaching the Unreached

During the last four decades, the University has the distinction of providing access to inclusive and quality, higher education to large numbers. The University is continuously striving to reach the unreached. The University adopted open admission policy for admissions to undergraduate programmes from the beginning, mainly influenced by British Open University example. During the last 38 years (1983 to 2020), under the open admission scheme, thousands of students were admitted, who were earlier not qualified for higher education. Those who successfully completed their graduation under this scheme are in important positions in public life, public services and some are pursuing higher studies. Many other Open Universities and other ODL institutions have followed the example of the first Open University. Unfortunately, this socially useful innovative practice was discontinued by ODL institutions in India on the directions of University Grants Commission (UGC). The UGC in this decision might have been guided by its desire to have parity in admission policy with the conventional systems. This requirement negates the Open Universities basic premise of openness to people.

The University has the distinction of providing higher education to larger number of socially disadvantaged groups. In 2021-22 academic year, out of total annual enrolment of 125463 students,86.7 percent belong to SC, ST and OBC groups, 62.9 percent are from rural areas and 45.6 percent are women. Broadly this represents the social group representation in student enrolment during the last five years. This is a commendable achievement. The University is also providing educational opportunities to specially targeted groups like prisoners, security forces, persons with disabilities and transgender learners.

A Few Steps into The Future

The four decades of University celebration is an opportunity not only to reflect on our experiences but also is an occasion to plan for our future. Deep thinking and planning is necessary to identify the pathways for forward journey. These may include:

Understanding the Changing Context

Understanding the changing context is empowerment. When we are looking to past experiences to understand the present, we should be equally aware of the **'emerging context**. We are living in a world of unprecedented transformations. We should be able to contextualize our experiences with national and international developments with an 'open mind', open-to new ways of looking at things. The University helps in institutional learning activity and the COL is rightly focusing on ODLs institutional role in learning for development, leading to economic growth, social inclusion and environmental conservation.

In the Post COVID-19 and Post NEP 2020, many changes have been taking place in the world of education in India. Technology use has become a more legitimate activity in education. It is a happy development for Open University system. But a word of caution is also necessary. Y.N. Herari, rightly warns that if we are not clear of purpose of technology use, we, may find ourselves more in serving the technology instead of technology serving us. He further, perceptively observes that, '**humans are always far better in inventing tools than in using them wisely'.** Experts are rightly warning about the commercial interests of technology firms directing the world of the education. The technology can provide right answers only if we understand the problems in education and the requirements correctly. The Open Universities (OUs) in future may have to compete with the online commercial education platforms and ventures in the provision of online education. Interestingly out of 18 OUs in India, 17 Open Universities are in public sector. In public universities, the education is a public good and technology is a tool for promotion of public good. The OUs may be caught in the two competing worlds of technology technology for public good and technology for profit. In addition, the Government is planning to establish 'Digital University'. I am not sure of its implications to the OUs. The world of education is moving from physical space to cyber space. Not everything is going to be good. We must be able to learn and adapt what is good in these developments and also develop skills and capabilities to survive and grow in the new context.

The NEP 2020, has suggested a new regulatory framework which is **'light but tight'** to ensure integrity, transparency and resource efficiencyof the educational system. A great ideal, but the ground experience of OUs is different. In many ways the regulatory systems are becoming more centralized and discriminatory to ODLsystems. We are in the framework of **'not to do anything unlesspermitted'** in contrast to a liberal frame of **'doing everything unless restricted'**. The OUs distinction is its flexibility and the regulatory parameters are to be tested for their appropriateness to ensure the flexibilityof the system. Now the regulatory systems focus more on ensuring uniformity and accountability. There is a need to ensure balance in multiple goals of regulations, keeping the interest of diverse institutional systems and their objectives. The universities have a dual function of adapting to changing conditions and working for change in circumstances. They are presently mostly struggling to adapt to changing circumstances and lost their will and capacity to initiate change in circumstances.

Access with Success and Relevance of Programmes

The University, as mentioned earlier, has an impressive record in ensuring access to higher education to a large number of socially disadvantaged groups and special categories of learners. The same cannot be said of successful completion of

programmes by them. Out of millions of students enrolled in last forty years, only 4,99,036 got degrees in last 24 convocations, the latest being held on 06.08.2022. The success rate is very low. Though the ODL is cost-effective from access perspective, it may be costly from the perspective of the cost of degrees. Increasing efforts should be made to increase the success rate of students enrolled in the University. The focus has to be shifted **from access to access with success now**. The student success is viewed as successful completion of programme leading to award of degrees, resulting in students acquiring knowledge, skills and competencies which are personally, professionally and socially useful. We are not sure whether all our programmes are resulting in student success from this perspective. Programme relevance is another concern. The University's popular programmes are undergraduate programmes in Arts, Commerce and Science, constituting 80 percent of learners enrolment in 2022-23. The University may have to diversify its programmes by adding new-age, demand-driven programmes for employability and livelihoods. The general education programmes may have to be redesigned to make them more employable and have life skills development programmes. The University may also offer more short duration and add-on-courses to upgrade the knowledge and skills of working population. The University, with its rich experience in undergraduate education, mayexaminethe feasibility of offering four year multi-disciplinary Bachelor's programme for the holistic multi-disciplinary education. The teaching-learning strategies need to be strengthened byintegrationof Pedagogy (teacher-centric) Andragogy (learner focused) and Heutagogy (independent learning) and synergy of multiple modes with more flexibility in practices. The learner support services needs further strengthening by using new technologies to improve the success rate of learners. More sustainable practices of quality assurance should be in place to make the system more resilient and socially relevant.

Capacity – Building of Institution and Staff

It is said that in conventional system the teacher teaches and in ODL the institution teaches. The institutional efficiency is the defining element of institutional success in ODL. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs 2015-2030, Goal 16) advocates the necessity of building **effective, accountable and inclusive** institutions to achieve the sustainable goals. There is a need to enhance the institutional capacities of OUs to realize their vision and mission. The administrative systems in Open Universities also are suffering from some of the common ailments of Indian administration. Some critics characterize the Indian administration model as **'Khumbakarna Governance Model'** - most for most of the time is sleeping over problems. What we require in ODL is **'Ram Governance Model'** - a model practiced by Prof. G. Ram Reddy and

Prof. Ram G. Takwale as Vice Chancellors of Open Universities. This is a tested model in Open University governance. The important features of the model include: leading by example, identifying, nurturing and encouraging talent, enabling and recognizing performance and networking for institutional development. The operating systems, in this model, are driven by **integrity**, **sense of purpose** and **pragmatic wisdom**.

The **'Ram Governance Model'**, empowers the staff to contribute their best for the realization of institutional goals. During the last forty years the University has had its quota of internal conflicts, maladjustment of roles, ego clashes and work shirking. These are common ailments of institutions, integral to group activities. The wisdom of leadership lies in converting the clashes over positions and powers to **'constructive conflicts'** over institutional development paths. Results-based management systems, continuous upgradation of skills and capacities of staff and putting in place systems of performance recognition and rewards, may result in staff engagement in constructive and institution-building activities. Experience shows that if the governance model is good, everything falls in place.

Concluding Observations

Institutional history is the study of change over time and freeing are self from the past burdens and embarking on a new path through the culture of innovations. The past experience should help us to build more resilient institutional systems and practices appropriate to **emerging context**. In Indian distance education, we have passed through stages of Correspondence Education (1962-1982), Open University / Open Distance Learning (1982 – to present) and are now entering into the phase of Digital University / Online Learning / Blended Learning. The distinct feature of our system is the co- existence of all forms of distance education in practice. The Open Universities are becoming multimodal and there is increasing convergence between distance and campus learning. In this fast changing context, we have to '**reimagine our experiences'** and engage in **'intelligent action'**. The University has an **'institutional dharma'** for realization of social-transformative vision of education. We have to continuously strive to reduce the gap between our **Dharma** (goals) and our **Karma** (actions). Let us resolve to move forward to realize our Dharma with **'Ram Governance Model'**. This is the best way to payour tributes to Prof. G. Ram Reddy and realize the educational vision of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar.

"Open Universities must refresh, rethink and redesign their policies and processes, to embark on a new path through a culture of innovation" - Prof. Asha Kanwar, President, CoL.

(BRAOU Foundation day Lecture-2022)

"ROADMAP TO SUSTAINABLE HIGHER EDUCATION"

(BRAOU Foundation day Lecture-2022)

*Dr. (Mrs.) Pankaj Mittal**

The University setup in 1982 as Andhra Pradesh Open University and renamed as Dr. B.R.Ambedkar Open University in 1991 has completed 40 glorious years of its existence. The motto of the University "EDUCATION FOR ALL" augurs well with its objectives. It is heartening to seethat the university has been catering to a variety of students like housewives, farmers, skilled and unskilled labour, Jawans, Policemen, prison inmates etc., who would otherwise not be able to acquire new skills and higher qualifications through a wide network of 179 study centres including 23 regional co-ordination centres and 14 centres exclusively for women students. The University has gained a prestigious and enviable position in society by providing access to large number of learners, designing courses innovatively, producing quality materials for interactive learning, setting up a wide network of support services, widening access to research, postgraduate and professional programmes and giving hands- on training for laboratory practice in science and technology Courses. The university is contributing immensely in improving the access to quality education as envisaged in the National Education Policy 2020.

For the growth of any nation, education is the most important attribute which enables it to achieve its full human potential, develop an equitable and just society, and promote national development. Therefore, the education system of any country must align itself with the changing employment landscape and global ecosystem. The Education pedagogy should inculcate critical thinking and problem-solving approach in students thereby making education more experiential and enjoyable. The Education sector across the world has recently observed transformations in the program structure and outcomes due to rapid scientific and technological advancements. The 'New Normal' being created in the whole world due to Corona Pandemic has forced us to use the technology in a big way to promote quality education.

The emphasis is now on sustainable higher education. We need to focus on universal access to quality education for maximizing our country's talent and resources. The road map to sustainable higher education is very well laid down in India's National Education Policy, 2020 which is a remarkable step in this direction since it is developed on the philosophy and thought of ancient Indian

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knowledge, wisdom and truth. It has been drafted considering the local and global needs of the country, and is a forward looking, innovative and a student-centric policy. The policy is most democratic, as for the first time in the country's history suggestions were obtained from more than 2 lakh people and experts starting from panchayat to the national and international experts.

The NEP of India emphasizes that our education system must be able to develop among students a deep sense of respect towards the fundamental duties and constitutional values, share bonding with one's country and have conscious awareness of one's role and responsibility in a changing world. The policy envisages quality education for all the students irrespective of their place of residence, origin and caste. The policy particularly focuses on betterment of historically marginalized, disadvantaged and under represented groups. The NEP endeavors to empower teachers at all levels of education and helps them to teach effectively while making use of technology. It emphasizes on recruiting and retaining the best teaching professionals which aids in shaping the citizens for next generation.

The major policy reforms envisaged in NEP to shape the futureof young students are as follows:

New Regulatory Structure of Higher Education

The NEP has considered several important reforms at the architectural level requiring changes in the regulatory structure. At present, India has several regulatory bodies which include major regulators i.e. UGC and AICTE and seventeen statutory professional councils like NCTE, MCI, BCI, ICAR, NCI, COA, DCI etc. To remove structural overlaps in terms of functioning of these regulatory bodies and to segregate the functions of regulation, funding and accreditation, the policy has recommended setting up of a Higher Education Commission for India (HECI) as an umbrella institution. The commission shall have following four independent organizations, each having its own well-defined roles and functions:

National Higher Education Regulatory Council (NHERC), Higher Education Grant Council (HEGC),

National Accreditation Council (NAC), General Education Council (GEC)

Restructuring of Universities

The policy has recommended that higher education institutions shall be transformed into large multidisciplinary universities, colleges, HEI clusters, each of which should have at least 3000 students. The aim will be to increase Gross Enrolment Ratio in the higher education from 26.3% to 50% by 2035.

The NEP suggests abolishing the affiliation system imposed on our country by the British legacy in the next 15 years. This will be achieved by giving graded autonomy to around 40,000 colleges and converting them into independent, autonomous degree awarding colleges.

Further, the NEP policy has classified Universities into following three categories:

Research Intensive Universities Teaching Intensive Universities Autonomous Degree Awarding Colleges

The Research-Intensive Universities will give equal emphasis to research and teaching. On the other hand, the Teaching Intensive Universities will also conduct both research and teaching but their main focus will be on teaching. The last category i.e. Autonomous Degree Awarding Colleges may also conduct minimal research activities but their primary focus will be on teaching of UG/PG courses. Thus, the NEP will result in re-alignment of the University structure. The policy suggests that all the Universities will be multi- disciplinary in nature i.e. there will be no programme specific or single faculty University like Law University, Medical University, Technology University, Agriculture University etc. All these universities over the time would be required to add disciplines and academic programmes over time to become multi-faculty. This will ensure holistic development of students with some basic knowledge of all the fields and gives them the freedom of choice, should they wish to study any other subject.

While giving impetus to online education, the highly accredited institutes will now be able to conduct both open and distance learning (ODL) and online learning programmes. This will help in improving the GER to 50% as envisaged in the policy and at the same time gives flexibility to the students in terms of pursuing education along with work or for pursuing two degrees at a time.

Restructuring Academic Programmes

In our ancient Vedic culture students were taught about 64 kalas which not only comprised of kalas like music, dance and art but also included kalas like humanities, languages, science, medicine, technology etc. The NEP considers our ancient Vedic system comprising of 'knowledge of many arts' as the base for formulation of Liberal education for 21st century students. Liberal system of education suggests that students should be given education about multiple disciplines so that they have basic knowledge of each domain. Under the domain of liberal education, the NEP has transformed three-year graduation programme into a four-year programme with multiple entry and multiple exit facility. The main advantage of this is that student can resume their education at any point of time in life and from any university in the country by getting re-entry into the system. The studies pursued earlier will not go waste and one can resume the

studies from the second or third year if he/she already possesses a certificate or diploma. Moreover, if one is not able to continue studies further, he/she becomes eligible for the job on the basis of the certificate and diploma qualifications. While advocating for holistic and multi disciplinary education, the policy also emphasises on education through projects in the areas ofcommunity engagement, environment education and value-based education. keeping in with the global requirements, the Policy recommended that education should create global citizens who are aware of global issues and work towards resolving them. They should create and promote more peaceful, tolerant, inclusive, secure and sustainable societies. Another significant reform in the NEP–2020 is regarding admission to PhD programme. Now, the Master's degree would no longer be the only criteria for admission to PhD. A Bachelor's degree holder with research would be eligible to directly get admission to the PhD program. Similarly, the duration of Master's degree shall be of 2 years if the Bachelor's degree is of the 3-year duration, but one can obtain a Master's degree in one year if she/he has completed a four-year Bachelor's programme with research. Therefore, a very flexible structure has been given in the NEP–2020 for the benefit of students. The policyalso focuses on experiential learning of students through internships. Therefore, it has been made compulsory for students of every program to undergo internship during semester or winter breaks in the industry, business houses, schools, studios, with craft persons, research institutions, etc. Institutions are now supposed to allow active engagement of the students with the practical side of their learning which would be helpful in improving their employability and entrepreneurship opportunities. The policy further suggests an integrated BEd programme of 4 years so that the students who wish to becometeachers can be effectivelygroomed in the aforesaidduration. The NEP–2020 also emphasizes on ensuring the quality of online degree which is to be at par with the degree obtained via regular mode. The policy focuses on continuous assessment and evaluation of students throughout the semester rather than on a three-hour examination at the end of semester. The continuous assessment of students can be done through various techniques like projects, activities, face-to-face interaction, group discussions etc. This has to be adopted by the universities in letter and spirit to produce successful and employable graduates.

Academic Bank of Credit

The most revolutionaryrecommendation of NEP is the Academic Bank of Credit (ABC) which will prove to be a game changer byproviding wings to the students for a free flight of knowledge. ABC is conceptualized as a digital/virtual/ online entity to function like a Commercial Bank with students as account holders to whomthe bank shall provide a variety of services including credit accumulation, credit verification and credit transfer. ABC shall provide credit deposit accounts

to all the students who are studying in any recognized Higher Education Institute (HEI) or even to those who are not students at present but wish to pursue education as a freelancer. The academic credits earned bya student frommultiple institutions, both in online or regular mode, shall be credited to his account. After accumulation of credits up to a given threshold level, a student can redeem the credits for an academic degree at any convenient time. The ABC shall facilitate student mobility across the system including movement between campus-based education and ODL, movement between skill-based programs and formal Degree programs and movement between Indian and foreign Universities. It will also allow the students to learn over a long span of time, thus promoting lifelong learning. ABC shall prove tobe a panacea for students for pursuing lifelong quality education while exercising freedom of subject, freedom of time, freedom of university, freedom of country and freedom of speed.

Internationalization of Higher Education

The policy emphasizes on promoting India as a global study destination providing premium education at affordable cost to restore its status as **'Vishwa Guru'**. The policy has laid path for opening of campuses of high performing Indian universities abroad in order to promote our cultural heritage, ancient knowledge system, Indian system of Medicine like Ayurveda, Naturopathy, Yoga etc. Apart from this, top 100 universities of the world will be allowed to open their campuses in India. To promote research collaboration and student exchanges between Indian and foreign universities, the credits acquired in foreign universities may be considered for the award of a degree by the Indian universities. This is going to be a revolutionary step in view of the fact that around 1 million students from India go abroad for their higher education and only about forty-eight thousand students come to India to pursue their higher education with highest number being from Nepal, Bangladesh and Afghanistan. The primary focus of the policy is to increase the number of inbound students from other countries to India and to take measures to reduce the number of outbound students from India. So, in future, if students from neighbouring countries wish to study in top 100 universities of the world, they can come to India and thus save a lot of funds and at the same time be in close proximity with their family.

Re-energizing Faculty

The NEP while acknowledging the importance of faculty in achieving the growth of higher education, has proposed that the faculty be given the freedom to design their own curricula and pedagogical approaches within the approved frame work. It seeks to encourage and incentivize the faculty for doing innovative research, outstanding and creative work and adopting new teaching pedagogies

using technology. The policy also recognizes the need for reducing the student teacher ratio and excessive work load of the teachers to ensure that teaching remains a pleasant activity with adequate time for interaction with students and for conducting research. The faculty has been given complete freedom to decide what to teach, how to teach and how to assess and evaluate the students based on continuous evaluation of their students throughout the semester rather than depending upon a three-hour examination at the end of the semester. The policy focuses on acknowledging excellent faculty members through rewards or incentives while focussing on-tenure track and fast-track promotion of faculties basedon their performance. To produce good academicleaders and administrators, the emphasis is on identifying good faculty having leadership qualities and administrative acumen and preparing them for leadership roles by training and grooming them for the future roles.

Promoting Research

The policy while stressing on the importance of research has mentioned that the research and innovation investment in India is only 0.69% of GDP as compared to 2.8% in USA, 4.3% in Israel and 4.2% in Korea. The policy while stressing on increasing the total funding on higher education to 6% of GDP, has also strongly emphasized on increasing the research funding. The policy has recommended establishment of National Research Foundation which will completely oversee and monitor funding of research grants to universities. The National research foundation will avoid overlapping of research grants from different sources and provides linkages of universities with various funding sources.

Empowering Students

The NEP is a forward-looking and student centric policy, in which complete freedom is given to students in terms of selection of subjects, selection of courses, selection of multiple universities with in a program and freedom of speed for completion of programme. The students can now take a break from their studies and resume their education at any point of time. The transfer of credits from online mode to regular mode, from foreign university to Indian University and from one program to another will give a lot of flexibility to the students to choose their learning path. The policy focuses on use of open education resources and platforms like Swayam for online teaching and learning. The NEP focuses on blended learning i.e. combination of online and offline learning.

Integrating Vocational Education

The policy while stressing on the employability of students, focuses on integration of vocational education with higher education. It also underlines on the need for giving due prestige, dignity and honour to skill-based education.

It is recommended that the Vocational Education Institutions and HEIs of repute should work on upgrading their infrastructure to world class level in a phased manner for increasing capacity andreaching the target of having 50% of students vocationally trained by 2025.

While concluding, I would like to say that the National Education Policy, a very innovative and ambitious policy, well-grounded in the roots of a Ancient Indian Knowledge system, has provided the roadmap to sustainable higher education. The NEP focuses on holistic development of students and has the potential of making India a *Vishwa Guru* once again. The essence lies in its implementation in letter and spirit in a time bound manner. For this all stakeholders i.e., the central government, state governments, statutory professional councils, state councils of higher education, universities, colleges along with the Educational Leaders, Faculty and students are working hard to ensure that the vision set in the policy actually sees the light of the day.

The mantra to succeed in this rapidly changing world is skilling, upskilling and reskilling while ensuring that no one is left behind in the process of change. An inclusive development helps holistic development of all. Together we all can succeed. Remember Ubuntu, the traditional African concept – "I am because you are" – which embodies harmony and spirit of sharing – a quality that includes essential human virtues; compassion and humanity.

INDIA'S FIRST OPEN UNIVERSITY IN TRANSITION : NEED FOR REIMAGINING THE FUTURE TOGETHER

Prof. V.S. Prasad*

TheFocus

The focus here is 'to reflect and identify the action points for sustainable future of the University'. I look at this as an opportunity to share my experiences and hopes on University's contribution to society. My observations on 'action points' are only suggestive and not prescriptive and they should be taken as a part of a learning organization activity. Socrates sad that "The beginning of wisdom is the definition of terms. " Let us start with **Transition** – change from one stage of condition to another. The first open University in the university Dr.BRAOU is in transition from ODL (Open Distance Learning) to ODEL (Open Distance Electronic Learning). **Reimagination** refers to imgine again / a new. Management experts talk about six steps in reimagination i.e., Reflect, Connect, Explore, Choose, Repack and Act, Albert Einstein rightly said ; 'Imagination is more important than knowledge'. **Future** refers to events that will or likely to happen in time to come. Futurist Wendell Bell has identified three types of futures i.e., possible future; probable future ; and preferable future. We should learn to search more fully for possible futures, to forecast probable futures more accurately and to make judgement of preferable futures more accurately. **Togethe**r focuses on actions in unison / collective work with the belief that 'none of us is as smart as all of us'.

To put it simply let us understand the University's transition and the need for reimagining its future and building it together

The frame of Transition

The frame of transition includes the idea of transition and the process of transition.

The Ideal of Transition

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's social vision of education and Prof. G. Ram Reddy's institution building legacy should be the ideal parameters for reimagination of the future of the University.

Dr. Ambedkar has way back in 1930s, advocated inclusive quality education for all to ensure social justice. Greatly, influenced by John Dewey's educational

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philosophy, Ambedkar relentlessly worked for democratization of education, The ideal of Open University, is similar to UNSDG goal 4 : "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all". This is a continuation of Dr. Ambedkar's transformative vision of education. National Education Policy, 2020, recognizes education as fundamental for developing an equitable and just society.

Prof. G. Ram Reddy as the founder Vice Chancellor of the University, laid strong foundations to build an effective, inclusive and accountable institution to open the ivory towers of education. Identification, nursing and recognition of talent, networking for institutional development, optimum utilization of available educational resources and designing flexible result oriented academic and administrative structures and practices are some of his legacies which have continuous relevance in reimagination of the University for future. Sincerity of purpose and passion to make a difference tempered by pragmatic wisdom are the guiding values of Prof. Ram Reddy's institutional legacy, which we all should cherish and practice.

The process of Transition

In the process of transition, we have to examine the continuity and change and the practicability of change. The fundamental premises of the University should always be kept in mind in the transition process. The fundamental premises are :

Democratisation of higher education : (includes access with equity ; access with quality and access with success)

Technology mediated form of education : (includes four As of technology – Accessibility, Acceptability ; Appropriateness and Affordability ; digital equity and ethical concerns).

Self – directed learning facilitated by institution : (includes learner-centric system, appropriate support systems and flexibility).

Lifelong learning for all (includes continuous education, knowledge and skill upgradation, education for well being).

These are dynamic foundation values and need continuous reimagination. Any change takes place in a context. In case of the University's transition to a new age Open University, the contextual factors to be taken note are :

Post – COVID / Post – Pandemic world

Digital age / information age

National Education Policy - 2020

Hands off approach of Government

Management expert, John Kotter has suggested eight steps for organizational transformation. These are : 1. Create sense of urgency. 2 Form a powerful guiding coalition.3. Create a vision and strategy for change 4. Communicate the vision 5. Empower action, 6. Create short term wins, 7. Build on change and 8. Anchor the change (John Kotter, Leading Change, 1996).

With all our good intentions, we must be aware of difficulties in bringing changes in a public organization. Here, the pragmatic approach is more useful in realizing the ideal. Perseverance is the mantra. If we cannot achieve these targets, don't change the targets, but change the methods of doing things.

Focus Areas for Reimagination

I have identified five focus areas for reimagination. These are :

Admissions

Programmes

Teaching Learning and Evaluation Strategies

Learners Support System

System Management

Technology applications and quality assurance constitute the two running themes of all areas. In each area three action points that are critical for transition are identified, which are explained here briefly.

Admissions

Firstly, the importance of enrolling more students to make Dr.BRAOU a University at Scale. The University started with 6.231 students in 1983-84, reached highest of 1,91,367 in 2010-11 and is settling down to around one lakh and above in recent years. More enrolment of students is not only a fulfillment of its vision of democratization of access but also a necessity for its sustainability and survival. **Secondly**, the University has to design new strategies to enroll students from new categories of learners, may be with more focus on working population in informal/non-informal sectors who are looking for opportunities to upgrade their skills and qualifications. More flexible system of admissions and study may be designed for ensuring more enrolment. The NEP 2020, new initiatives like Academic Bank of Credit (ABC), Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), Micro-Credentials with Course-wise registrations may help in opening the doors of the Open University to large numbers. **Thirdly**, the University should also focus on designing appropriate systems for student retention and success. In Open Distance Learning (ODL)

the cost of education is low, but because of low success rate, the cost of graduation is very high. The University's credible steps in increasing the success rate will also enhance its credibility and contribute for more enrolment.

Programmes

Firstly, the University should design, develop and deliver programmes resulting in development of life skills and employability, fulfilling two objectives of education i.e., education for living and education for life. The programmes should result in learners acquiring competencies which are personally, professionally and socially useful. The University may relook at the present programmes from this perspective and identify new multi-disciplinary programmes to meet the changing requirements. More than the domain knowledge, learning abilities are becoming more critical in this VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity) world. **Secondly**, the University may offer more short duration and add-on courses to meet the changing work needs of working population. Based on social and market needs, the University may identify short duration-add on courses. **Thirdly**, the University should network with more public, private and community organizations to pool the resources for offering programmes.

3. Teaching - Learning and Evaluation Strategies

Firstly, the University should learn from the experiences of other ODL institutions - national and international, the new approaches in development and adoption of learning resources. More extensive use of Open Educational Resources (OER) and Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) is desirable. The Commonwealth of Learning (COL) knowledge resources are very useful to understand world-wide developments in this area. **Secondly**, urgent reforms are necessary in ways of formative and summative evaluation of ODL learners. Here also, the COL resources and University Grants Commission recommendations are very useful. The University should explore and put in place the technology enabled evaluation systems appropriate to its capacities and context. **Thirdly**, as part of its mission of continuing life-long education, the University should be more proactive in developing learning resources for lifelong learning and making its learning resources as open learning resources. In the present context of large recruitment to public services in Telangana, the University may make available as OER some of its learning resources relevant to persons appearing for competitive examinations.

4. Learner – Support System

Firstly, effective learner support services system is one of the defining elements of Open University system. The makes the Open University system different

from the Conventional System and distinguishes one ODL institution from another ODL institution. **Secondly**, in the Post-COVID and digital society, technology –enabled learner support services are becoming more relevant and acceptable. The shift is from group services to individual services. The University should explore and put in place more Web Based learner services, with face-to-face and hands-on-experiences where necessary. Every programme design should include appropriate, technology based, multi-mode learner support services. The faculty should take the responsibility for design of appropriate learner support system, **Thirdly**, there is a need for structural reforms in management of learner support system. The distinct feature of BRAOU learner support management system is the creation of a separate cadre of academics for managing learner support system. Initially, till 2002, the University has followed two tier learner support systems with a Student Services Directorate at Headquarters and Study Centers, one in each of the 23 districts of integrated Andhra Pradesh, Later from 2002, the University, like IGNOU and other OUs, has put in place three tier structure of study centres, Regional Coordination Centers and Headquarters, Presently only a new Regional Coordination Centers (RCCs) which are managed by full – time academic and full-time support staff and others are mostly managed by part-time coordinators and part time support staff. The present system needs a relook in view of shortage of staff, change in the ways of providing learner support services, for optimum utilization of available resources and for having uniform staffing system. To ensure uniform staffing pattern, the present academic and support staff working at few RCCs/SCs may be shifted and posted at Headquarters with redesignation of their functions. The University may develop an appropriate system of integrating the separate academic cadre of Student Services with faculty, their roles being appropriately redefined. The RCCs and study centers may be managed by part time staff with effective coordination and monitoring from headquarters with the use of technology tools. The transformation has to be worked out carefully without adversely affecting the learners' interests and in consultation with all stakeholders

5. System Management

Firstly, the institutional and staff capabilities here to be enhanced. The CSTD and GRADE, the training and research units of the University have an important role in capacity building of staff and institution. **Secondly**, more flexible technology-enabled management systems are necessary to ensure a function-centric and results-based governance model. Project mode may be used to execute the schemes. Y.N. Harari, reflecting on the changing institutional context rightly observed "Education in a traditional way is-building a structure with strong foundation. Now, it is building a tent-easily foldable and

changeable'. Flexibility is the mantra of modern system management. **Thirdly**, to strategize for future, an Institutional Development Plan (IDP) should be prepared as suggested by NEP-2020. The IDP may include short term, mid –term and long term plans. The IDP should be based on hard facts and realistic action proposals with timelines for change.

A few Questions

How can the University sustain and increase the enrolment?

How to design and develop relevant programmes and appropriate teaching – learning and evaluation strategies resulting in learners acquiring attributes - personally, professionally and socially useful?

How can the University design and put in place effective learner support services?

How can the governance system of the University be made more effective, accountable and inclusive?

How can the University develop strategies for sustainable development in the VUCA world?

The University may constitute Five Task Forces to address these questions and come out with solutions and action plans with time frame for implementation.

To sum Up

A Few suggestions for the consideration of the University Community, to build up a future would be :

Desining integrated role for faculty by including Teaching – Learning, learners-support services; student evaluation; research and extension functions.

Strengthening of Faculties with more staff and technological -resources.

Redeployment of permanent academic staff located in RCCs/SCs.

Technology-enabled, individualized, interactive, direct-to-home learner support services.

More flexible and responsible administration arrangements.

To Conclude

Let me conclude with a quote from Bertrand Rusell "With every increase in knowledge and skills, wisdom becomes necessary, because every such increase augments our capacities for evil, if our purpose is unwise".

(Transcript of the lecture delivered at BRAOU campus on 12/4/2022)

IMPARTING QUALITY SKILL EDUCATION THROUGH OPEN UNIVERSITIES : ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

- Prof. Rajan M. Welukar*

Can we separate skill-based education from general education? We take up education to learn something and use that learning in our day to day life, for whatever purpose, either for earning or doing something for somebody, or for some organization, and whenever we are doing some job. Whatever education we are getting relates to education in that particular subject and it is that knowledge we are using to perform a job. To perform a job we need skills. Without skills we will not be able to do it. Therefore, what is most important in this competitive world is, not only skill or education, but the third most important thing which we are missing is 'competency' Now, only having education and skills is not going to help but rather we should develop the competencies which would bring 'quality' to education. In a competitive world, quality is very important and therefore, should be looked at from a very different perspective.

Since the last five to seven years, the emphasis is on competency based education rather than skill education, Competency is important and we need it to move on in life – of course, we need to follow the credit system like our apex body says. We need a structure to innovate, and renovate. We should innovate within the ODL system and think of possible ways to go beyond the structure of innovation. Into this kind of innovation, if we can bring in skill education or incorporate competency education into all the programmes that we are offering, we can be said to be innovating. We must incorporate those skills into whatever we are teaching. So integrating skills and competencies into what ever we are teaching is what we need today.

Therefore, don't look at skill education as separate from whatever we are teaching or whatever programmes we are offering to our students. We need to go beyond the structure of innovation for our very survival. Because change is mandatory, survival is optional. Tommorrow, if everything is technology – related, then we need to learn that technology. All the jobs will be created in that sector. So if most of the jobs are going to be created in that sector, then we need to cater to the needs of change.

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We are into different creative spaces like design, schools of design, schools of skills etc. today ; there is a lot of demand for that, so many people are needed in that sector. Therefore, we need to innovate, we need to find new ways to teach our students. For instance, what we teach them should be solution – driven. When we expect our learners to be solution-driven, why can't we also be solution – driven? Therefore, we have to be resilient and to be resilient, we have to come out with 'out of the box' ideas.

'The Open University' – the Open University in the world, was established in 1969 at Milton Keynes in the United Kingdom. During the initial 3 years, they suffered a lot. Student enrolment had gone down and there was an agitation because of which the Vice-Chancellor was removed. Although the Open University was ranked number one in some aspects in Genetics Research,why did they suffer? Because they did not think 'out of the box'.to offer programmes which are needed for the future. Hence, unless and until we have a futuristic approach, unless and until we change your path, unless and until we are the first to do something before anybody else – we are not going to survive.

The whole century will belong to the people who have skills and competenancies. Skilling, re-skilling and up skilling are the buzzwords these days. Those who are getting re-skilled, those who are getting up-skilled, they are ones who are going to survive and if they are going to survive we need to prepare them from a very different perspective. Therefore, skills and competencies are worthy words. We have no alternative other than this. But how do we integrate them into each and every programme? That is what we need to understand. We need to understand the change, we need to capture the change and we need to strategise to teach people how to survive while making that particular change and then only will we survive.

I quote here from a book that I recently read. The title of the book is **"It is not the big that eats the small, but it is the fast that eats the slow"**. So, what do we need? We need to take faster decisions and we need to come out with 'out of the box' ideas and we need to come out of the structure, which we think that people will not allow.

Nowadays, even the governments are having partnerships, aren't they? The governments are having partnerships with the private players, say, electricity, in Maharashtra. Today we get such partnerships from Adani or TATA, so, why can't the universities do it? I used to commute by a train not belonging to the Indian Railways, when I was Vice-Chancellor of AURO University. From Surat to Mumbai, I used to travel by train and that train doesn't belong to Indian Railways. It is a private company which is running the train. So, the Government is having a tie-up with private players. It is a

wonderful train, the kind of service we got in that train was very good. I travelled several times on that train for almost two years. Their services were wonderful.

Further, when we talk about what we individually can't achieve, but have to work in a team to do so, we are talking about acquiring the team skills we need, is n't it. We also need to create a team. If we can't afford it, but have the licence, we need to find a partner or partners to form a team. This is the case of Hotel Marriott. We all know about the chain of Marriott hotels across the world. They do not all belong to Marriott but are franchised by "Marriott' which is a brand and they are selling the brand at 15%. In YCMOU, we did the same thing. We sold the brand of YCMOU to 3500 colleges and took their infrastructure. Similarly, now for the 'skill education', the University can go out and make some fast decisions. Suppose UGC tells us that we can't have a programme unless we have permission. UGC can't stop us from offering a 7-day programme. Open Universities are doing this. We need to understand our clientele which can be categorized as four quadrants. One quadrant of our clientele are the students who want to pursue their degree or postgraduate degree programme to aquire knowledge. Second, are the people who want to get re-skilled in various aspects, irrespective of age. If we take the data of all the college board teachers, only 0.00001% of them may be working in Meta Works. We might offer a MOOC on SWAYAM and other such things that are not dynamic. It should be quite all right.

Today, when people would want to create a SWAYAM course, we might have a training programme for them. No one can stop us from doing it. We know better than the traditional university teachers, because our approach is very different. You can teach them those skills. I teach some of the teachers in my university, keeing three laptops, and teaching online, going here sometimes, going there, simultaneously, working on this and then interacting with the students in a very different kind of environment. An online environment will be needed. Therefore, nobody can stop us from doing this. No apex body can stop us from doing this and there are so many teachers outside the university system whom we can hire and fire. We too can have a hire and fire policy. If we hire anyone for an overseas programme on a pay, he might take a percentage for which we should be accountable but shold be able to deliver for the value. That is what I am trying to do.

This is what the Open University has also started doing. Now there is a programme which is called a Modular Apprenticeship. The syllabus is not pre-designed but customized learning out of purely academic courses. It is total customization as per the learner, as per the industry. If we can bring that culture into our university, we will be very different. In an IT city one is in an

advantageous position and doing innovative work in this space. If we have the brand of the University. we should encash that brand, of course, while following the quality norms. We should follow the Marriott business plan. How do they do it? We cannot become a Marriott without quality of education as it effects the kind of services we get. That is because Marriott doesn't allow anybody to go beyond their quality norms. Our university can do it. We should not compromise with the quality norms and you know several people will come to you and then, that way you are serving the nation by driving the quality. Look at it from this perspective. When everybody is doing things very differently, then we too should think very differently.

A business model is research-driven. When they come out with a product they do research on its market and create a market. We need a paradigm shift towards new business strategies or models. For example, when the GST was imposed in the country, from the very next day one should have launched a 3 days' certificate programme in GST. However, we have to follow the government regulations for offering the programme. IIT Hyderabad offers a one-credit programme for 15 hours. Out of the 15 hours, they are teaching 30% of the time. That is $1/3^{rd}$ of the time allotted or amost 4-5 hours and one professor courses from outside on Saturday and teaches for 3-4 hours face to face. The remaining teaching is through projects, and assignments for that one credit programme. Can we not have a one day programme, seven days' programme, one-month programme, three-months'programme? That's it. But look at the skills and competencies required by the people i.e., the second quadrant. These are the people whom we must tap.

Now, the third quadrant 'clientele' is the people who want to re-educate themselves. The fourth quadrant is the schools. Suppose you have a tie-up with the SSC Broad and HSC Board and say that we will teach one course to their students on Artificial Intelligence. So many students would want to learn that course and they will get a credit in the marks - sheet saying that they are taking six subjects and they have the option of taking one additional course, as in Maharashtra. However, then, we need governmental intervention. That is what a partnership is. For instance, 14 laths students are appearing in the 10th standard SSC, out of which even if we have 1% as clientele, that is 14,0000 in one go, and teach them skills for the future, such as, a course on website creation, for example, for which we may not need UGC recognition, we can generate huge revenue for the university. There is a way and this is what the future is.

To be resilient, we have to do research on what kind of skills and competencies the students are going to require. 10th standard students go to 12th standard, and when they go for graduation, they will need some basic

skills. It is those basic skills which we can teach them at this point of time and if we can convice the State Board, they will be happy. So, we tell the Board that we will be getting these outcomes and our teachers who are going to do the coordination work, will get some incentive out of this. We get teachers' support and we get the support of the Board. And we will be able to give the target to the government. So, they will get votes from it in the elections. It is a strategy, through which we can do business. Let us say, we give a target to the Chief Minister that, 'no child will remain uneducated in this aspect of "future tech skills". He will be happy, he will support it or get it promoted. Of course, there is no compromising with quality while looking for innovations and quantity.

I will explain this with some of the data. Whatever happens in developed countries, for example in the US, can also happen in our country. It may take 2-3 years or 4 years. If we understand their scheme, we will understand what we need to do for our own young people.

Now this is the data from 1970 to 2009 and it has further enhanced. Just as there is a changing demand for skills in the United States, there is demands for skills in our country. There is an increase in non-routine interpersonal skills. We now need to teach non-rountine analytical skills. For that, one does not have to do a long-term diploma programme. FINTECH started it for six months. It is an example to emulate. Technology will not reduce jobs, in fact, it is going to increase them three-fold. Some jobs will be outdated but some new jobs will be created, which will be three-fold. Then there is the difficulty of filling vacancies in Asia and the Pacific because we have really not taken the decision fast enough and therefore our students are skilled in some fields but are not skilled in all the fields which are going to be created. The future is the idea of a hybrid work place, that sitting at home or sitting in a restaurant one can work on different things on computer at the same time. I upload the data and do something when I go to the office – that is hybridsation.

Now, there are 3 key skills that are required for post COVID employment. One is data literacy, the second is digital and coding skills, and the third is technology up-graduation, the fourth is digital distancing and the fifth is paradigm shift and adoption of the franchise model – cum – partnership approach. So your relationship is not only with your own college but your relationship with the entire world. The book "Corporate Chanakya", was written in Surat, when I launched an online course of 3-months' duration on Finance and Social Intelligence. I offered it to the industry people, those who are looking after the finance in an industry and it was a hit. My fee was Rs. 8,000/- There were only 30 students, so 30 multiplied by Rs. 8,000 was the amount generated. I spent 60% of the amount on those resource persons. So, we need to come out

with some different ideas like these.

When GST came in, on the very second day we should have announced a short course for 15 days, and we could have brought the Sales Tax Commissioner or GST commissioner as resource persons for classes. We would have got no less than 10,000 admissions with Rs. 2,000/- as fees. If we calculate Rs. 2000 into 10000, how much money could we have got? In the same way, if something new comes up, we should look at the numbers. When the government comes out with a scheme for many people, we just launch a programme on it. Even if the government comes out with a farmers' scheme, we must say ' in one rupee we will teach you'. With that one rupee the scheme will teach the farmers how to fill the form, how to do this, how to do that. That kind of course may not fetch us money but it may fetch us a brand, goodwill and also good grades in that, because we are doing something social and of course the new paradigm also brings in significant changes in talent management.

All the private universities and educational institutions want their teachers to be trained, but they are not ready to share the money with us. We can come out with a scheme, that we will give training to the entire new faculty who can be trained. If we come out with a Government regulation, that any new teacher who is appointed in any college or a university shall do a particular course and only then they can pursue a career – that will fetch us money and it will help create quality teachers in the education system of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh. So, if we create a plan, or create a scheme, we have to go to the government. Like in Maharashtra, the MKCL (Maharashtra knowledge Corporation Limited), came up with a scheme. The government came out and said that anybody who wants to get a government job must do a compulsory computer literacy course of three months. We offered the course and gradually, the enrolment went up to 2 million and then 3 million. Similarly, in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh when the government appoints teachers, if we create a course on teaching – learning processes, and offer that course, it will be a grand success. Through it they will also learn meta skills, such as how to inspect their school management. So, we could create a business model. This should become the strategy for the entire university.

Of course, everybody knows about industry 4.0 but how we are moving towards industry 5.0. We are talking about Robots, Artificial Intelligence, IT, IIT and all those things, also digitization, automation and several other things.

Then this is what we should employ in a range of cases. If we establish linkages with organizations and can declare that job aspirants will be employed only if they know the latest technology – whatever the field, whether it is construction or anything one needs to understand, we have to create a strategy

for the university. We have to sit together for a while and think, but we have to be a bit fast. Some might independently invent, design and operate. For the partnership, we need to move towards either – franchise model or partnership model. And it doesn't matter-we can have collaboration with anybody, as the government is doing, nobody can stop us, we need to come out of that mind – set and we should have a tie-up.

The second most important point in that I would like to tell you is, I SB, Hyderabad, says proudly that they are not affiliated to anybody, And their fee goes to Rs. 25 lakhs and it is difficult to get admission there. They do not have AICTE approval, but their programmes are such that, for one week someone comes from Harvard, for and another week someone comes from Stanford, and the week after someone comes from Oxford, or someone comes for one week from Ashoka University. Like that, teachers come from prestigious institutions to teach and all the students get their jobs without a placement officer. People come to know that the curriculum delivery is happening from 9' O' clock in the morning till 9' O clock in the night and that all the 60 students are with a particular teacher, all of them are learning together (and there are no written examination) . Only in the marks sheet it is written, that they have successfully completed the diploma. That is where education is moving. Can we move towards that? If we integrate skills and competencies into each of our programmes then, we are going to achieve whatever I am saying.

Once a person from Mumbai met me. He had a 11 month- programme called digital marketing. We trained the students in such a way that every student got a job, with a minimum package of Rs. 6 lakhs per annum to a maximum of Rs. 10 lakhs per annum. This has been happening for the last 6 years. He launched 11 months' programme only because the Maharashtra Government doesn't allow anybody to launch a one – year programme, For programmes of one year or more duration one should have permission or affiliation to an University. So, he launched the 11 – month programme. For this 11 month – programme, the fee was Rs. 6 lakh and for 60 seats he received almost double or triple the number of applications. But the delivery system was very different. Because of the delivery, everything has changed today. Tomorrow, the students who complete the programme will bring in the kind of dynamic system which they have learnt and drafted. For that kind of dynamic system if one can bring in an partnership, there will be further innovation. We can't have a Board of Studies, Academic Council, and Management Council. Therefore, we need partnership and we need to move towards a very different model.

According to the new skills model, we need to know that an Indian

youth spends 6 hours on an average, browsing the Internet every day. But during the COVID. they started spending 12 hours on it. We need to understand that, all those age groups who are into technology are called the 'digital natives'. If one looks at the data price before 2016 in India, it was 250 rupees per month for 1 GB data. Today, we get 1GB per day. We need to capture this surge we need to recognize the change, and we need to seek out the skills from this factor.

Then, if we compare the number of internet users, in 2016 it was 349 billion, and in 2022, it is 840 billion, India is the world's cheapest country in terms of internet data. So, we have to understand this exciting fact and capture it. One can get a cheap Smartphone for Rs. 1250 today. And, all the technology can be incorporated into a smart phone. The COVID-19 situation had forced the transformation of business; similarly, we, who are in the education business should understand and adapt to the changed contexts.

Now India is Digital India. Most people including us can't sleep without reading on a Smartphone. This is an opportunity for a student irrespective of age and also of the student potential and therefore has potential for an Open University. Now, we need to capture this. We survived during COVID because of the apps! So this is the survival, with Fin Tech, Travel, Fashion, Entertainment, Banking, Food and Be verages everything. My entire banking is on my mobile. I didn't have a laptop during the entire two years of COVID. I was on my mobile and every day I was busy for almost six hours on my mobile, either addressing someone, conducting a meeting or attending some conference or something, all the time. The mobile device, we need to understand, has changed the whole world. Right or wrong, this is what we have to help us survive. Business is digital in India. How do educational institutions move towards this reality? It is the skill we all need and all the programmes / courses which we need to offer should be digital. Our own teachers also need it. We can also give them training in the new technology use.

Like Amazon, which changed the entire world of business and earned well too. Uber and Ola, are all innovations. The same thing is going to happen here, in education either in accounts or marketing. We need to learn a lesson from the market. Now, what are the digital skills? First, there is coding and there are the coding languages, which people will have to learn. We can teach coding languages online. Those who are from Computer department can start them or we can hire a person from industry. Then there are career opportunities for developers, back end developers, and front – end developers and there are courses in specialized languages. Then, the second is design for user-interface and user-experience in every course or a programme. We need to instruct

learners in design and prepare them for related careers like desiging, visual or product or creative designing. And then, the third is digital marketing. We must be teaching something similar in MBA – website development, social media marketing and all such things. Fourth - Virtual storytellers get a lot of money today. Data science specialists, business analysts and the like are other career opportunities.To summarise, these four are the most important pillars of digital businesses. Block chain Technology. Full – Stack development, Artificial Intelligence, Business Analysis, Digital Marketing, Sales, Scientific Computing and Video Production are the top skills needed. So, these are the digital skill competencies needed now.

We need to change our approach to education. This is just one part I have elucidated upon. Similarly, in other fields also we have to explore. "It is not the big that ate the small". It is in the past, in the history. Small businesses are earning more money by having only 10 people in their office, but their business is about Rs. 100 crore. We have so many people in all the universities and in spite of having so many people we are unable to make a big business. If out product is not good, consumers will turn away from us. We have so much opportunity, because we have a brand, If Dr. B.R.Ambedkar Open University, a pioner should become an education brand in Hyderabad - like **Marriott** – which is a brand. I am sure together we can do it. In YCMOU, I called it a parallel system and did it by bringing innovative people from outside. If Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University, Hyderabad, a pioneer in distance education should become an educational brand like Marriott in Hotel Industry, I am sure together, we can do it here too.

(Transcript of the Lecture delivered in Dr.BRAOU,

Hyderabad 4ᵗʰ July, 2022).

Quality Assurance Measures in Distance Education System in India

Prof. Satish Rastogi*

Abstract

Father of ODL system in India, Late Professor G. Ram Reddy was instrumental and a visionary person for development and growth of Open Universities in India.14 Open Universities and 12 Open Schools are presently imparting need based mass education in India. The word of mouth is word of hand for Open & Distance Learning system. Everything is to be communicated in writing. This is an Industry which produces Graduates and Learning material in Bulk. There is some confusion in society about the potential of Distance Education for producing competent graduates who are in no way inferior in quality to their counter parts in Conventional system. In fact, the quality is a matter of bridging the gap between the Perception and Expectation. The systemic analysis at Input, Process and Output stages would reveal the gap between the perceptions and their expectations. Bridging these gaps may bring quality at different stages.

The need is to work for Capacity Building by ODL organisations in the Country. It may require orienting the Manpower for optimum use of necessary machines for creating a learning environment for the isolated distance learner who needs necessary academic support from the ODL system. The regular academics may like joining & successfully completing M.A.in Distance Education offered by IGNOU, New Delhi. The staff development programme for part time academics working at study centers may be launched through D/E mode enabling them to understand their new role and responsibilities in ODL system. The skilled manpower will demand necessary machines to perform their role. This may require money which may be managed from Ministry of HRD, Govt. of India through UGC New Delhi. The distance learners in the beginning may be oriented on "How to study" in isolated. Necessary literature is to be supplied to them with the Programme Guide and this literature will be discussed by the study center staff during student orientation. Programme Evaluation will be conducted by seeking past learners' opinion to various activities. From time to time, Conferences, Seminars, Symposiums, and, Workshops may be a regular feature to provide collective wisdom for generating innovative ideas. This work can be done easily through networking among

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ODL organisations as a joint effort, to manage necessary resources from University Grants Commission and Ministry of HRD, Government of India. Other Donors may be also contacted for this purpose.

The success of this system depends upon the efforts of a 'Man-Machine' combination in creating a learning environment with the isolated learner. The system of distance education is a ray of hope for mass education in India. It would attract a large number of students for different Programmes in future, and, may fulfill the country's requirement of competent manpower. This is possible only when the system imparts quality education which is not inferior to that which offered by Conventional system. Professor G.Ram Reddy had started Open and Distance Education system in India as a ray of hope for meeting a wide variety of educational needs of all people of India. This will be a tribute in real sense to Prof. G. Ram Reddy, if we implement this action plan to Indian Distance Education System for Quality Assurance.

Introduction

Professor G .Ram Reddy (1929- 1995), had been renowned architect of Distance Education and the father of open learning in India. In 1977, he took over as Vice Chancellor of Osmania University, Hyderabad. He was founder Vice Chancellor of Andhra Pradesh Open University (APOU) in 1982,(later on known as BRAOU),Hyderabad, and Indira Gandhi National Open University, (IGNOU) in 1985; He had been Vice President at Commonwealth of Learning, Canada, and Chairman of University Grants Commission, New Delhi. He was also, Chairman of Indian Council of Social Sciences Research (ICSSR), New Delhi. Presently, there are about **13** Open Universities offering programmes in regional languages, looking in to the success of these two Open Universities. As per UGC, New Delhi, record, there are 82 different Universities having dual mode of Instruction in India offering various academic programmes through Distance Education Mode as well as through Conventional Mode. The National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) New Delhi, earlier known as National Open School (NOS) has been offering Secondary and Higher Secondary level education in India. Eleven (**11**) States of India also have established Open Schools in the State with regional medium. NIOS have been providing professional and technical support to the states in establishing such State Open Schools, where necessary, for providing education in regional languages.

The credit to this big expansion goes to Professor G. Ram Reddy, who had always been instrumental in the expansion of Open and Distance Education system in India. He was honoured as Father of Distance Education in India by the entire distance education community in 1995 at International center for

Distance Education conference at Birmingham; England.He had received the ICDE Award of Excellence for his contribution to distance education. *Speaking on the floor of the Parliament while piloting the IGNOU bill, The then Central Minister HRD, Late Mr. K.C. Pant remarked, and I quote "Now we have for this university as Officer on Special Duty, who is doing all work relating to the establishment of this university, Dr. Ram Reddy, an eminent educationist who was responsible for the establishment of the Andhra Pradesh Open University. We have now brought him over for the National Open University. And if I may so, there is nobody else in the country having his experience in this particular field. Therefore, all of us, I think, should feel quite safe in entrusting the beginning of this university to him".* It is my assumption Professor K. Muralimanohar, the founder father of Indian Distance Education Association (IDEA), must have been guided by his teacher Prof. G. Ram Reddy for forming this Association.

The Word of Mouth is Word of Hand is best explanation for discrimination between the Conventional System and Distance Education System. We have to communicate everything in writing than speaking in classroom situation. Also, **Distance Education system is an Industry which produces in bulk.** The products of this Industry are mainly its students as well as Learning Material produced by these organisations. The society enquires on the quality of Distance Education products in comparison to the products of Conventional system in India. Some clouds of confusion have come to raise doubts about the Potential of the ODL system in comparison to the Conventional system in India. **The Quality is a matter of bridging the gap between Perception and Expectation.** It filters from top to bottom. It is essential to examine the perceptions and expectations at various stages of the ODL system, for deciding the gaps to be bridged.

International Incentives to Quality Assurance in Distance Education System

It may be fit and proper to examine global incentives before drafting a proposal for Indian scenario. "Towards a Culture of Quality" published by COL, Canada (2006), and edited by Prof. B. N. Kaul and Prof. A. S. Kanwar has Twelve stories from Botswana, Uganda, IGNOU(India), AVU(Africa),Nigeria, YCMOU(India),West Indies, Hong Kong, Canada, United Kingdom, SIASOTA (Japan), Southern Queensland (U.K.).In these concluding remarks the editors have derived some factors that contribute to Quality Assurance practices as— Course Materials and Instructional Design, teaching –learning transaction, Learner evaluation, Learner Support Services which need to be based on thorough understanding of learners' circumstances, their abilities and

requirements. The role of State, Role of Institutional Leadership ,Institutional Commitment, Innovative Management,

Quality of long as well as short term planning and its execution, the existence of quality assurance mechanisms, Introducing ICT in various activities in phases and acceptance of multiple responsibilities by the academic fraternity should be all the considered. During Asia- Pacific Quality Network Conference, Cambodia, Prof. Asha Kanwar, (2012), had explained Culture of Quality as Culture of Care. She had advocated same regulations for ODL and Face to Face regarding Quality Assurance Agency, as prevails in UK. It should assess both campus and distance universities. She advocated for changing the focus from input to outcomes and for appropriate regulations and recognition for trans-national and private provision. COL RIM and its explanation is cited below.
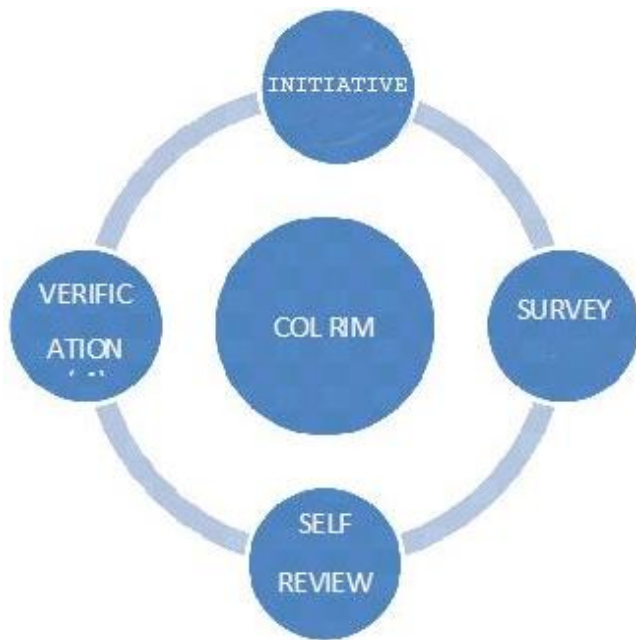
COL RIM

∗   A low –cost 'do-it-yourself' model.

*   Develops systemic thinking and organizational learning

∗   Focuses on Capacity Building

*   Emphasis on Continuous improvement.

The Commonwealth of Learning (COL) has published some guidelines for Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Massive Operated On-line Courses (MOOCs).Also, COL has the credit for publishing five case studies entitled " **Quality Assurance: Good Practices in ODL in Sub-Saharan Africa" .** This is a compilation by Prof. Romeela Mohee, covering five case studies from Eswatini, Lesotho, Zambia, Botswana, and, Namibia. In this report, she has stated stages of Quality Assurance as initiatives by COL which are listed below-

1)   **Programme design;**

2)   **Learner Support Systems;**

3)   **Materials Development;**

4)   **Student Assessment;**

5)   **Infrastructure and facilities;**

6)   **Staffing;**

Open & Distance Education Systems and Structures

Professor Alan Tait (1997) had compiled seven case studies regarding Quality Assurance in Distance Education and Commonwealth of Learning, Canada, and published the same as an article. These were – 1)German Institute for Research on Distance Education, Germany; 2) Norwegian Association for Distance Education(NADE); 3) The Open University of Israel;4) Y.C.M. Open University, (YCMOU), Nashik (India); 5) The UK Open University; 6) The Open learning Institute of Hong Kong(OLIHK);7) The University of Victoria in British Columbia, Canada. In this study, he states that the quality assurance system attempts to define, in consultation with the user, what services should be provided to the user. This involves the accurate analysis of what needs to be done, with information broken down in an exhaustive fashion. In quality assurance system, one finds ways of monitoring and evaluating that analysis, and builds in procedures with users and providers for continuously seeking to improve practice. Embedded in the practice of quality assurance is the notion that expertise is widely distributed in the organisation; that is, it is not only the higher levels of management that understand what needs to be done. In fact, those working closest to the "customer" also best understand his or her needs. He concluded this discussion by saying that **Quality assurance is no longer an option in modem open and distance learning.** Quality assurance represents at the same time a range of contested values about the nature of quality and the legitimate interests of stakeholders and management which need to be addressed and discussed. International case studies represent essential material for study in the context of globalised practice, but institutional solutions will be particular and individual, and, trends towards the convergence of methodologies in

education, breaking down the barriers between distance and conventional education, are evident in the quality assurance field, where practitioners from both sectors can valuably learn alongside each other.

Conventional System V/S Distance Education System – An Analysis

There is world-wide assumption that Distance education system is inferior to Conventional system and the products of this system (students) are less competent than Conventional system products. People prefer a classroom where a teacher delivers a long lecture every day and spreads content in the class, expecting that the learners have well received the same. In fact, neither the teacher nor the learning material goes inside learner's mind. Learning takes place when the teacher creates a learning environment in the classroom and works as a facilitator, so that information enters learners mind which he/she the main points known as knowledge and the learner uses this information in future as and when needed, with the help of his intelligence. This judicious use of retained information is known as wisdom. A teacher performs nine activities in a class during classroom communication. These are:

1) Presenting the materials.2)Identifying the Objectives 3) Motivating the Learner. 4) Exploiting learners' experiences. 5) Providing learning activities. 6) Facilitating Retention. 7) Promoting Transfer of Learning. 8) Providing Occasions for Feedback.9) Providing Guidance in various ways

These activities can also be managed successfully, by Distance Education system with the help of a Man – Machine (Media mix) combination at a time for a large number of students who are not in classroom, but, are at a distance from the system as well as from each other, too.The Man – machine combination should be potent enough to cover these activities. The Distance Education system is a complete system, which can impart any type of need-based mass education to society. It can cover staff development also, in any sector, if, necessary infrastructure is developed for the same. It can cover informal education sector successfully at a very low cost, if learners are many. **The Whole technological advancement of China occurred because of Distance Education.** The necessary infrastructure, needed by the Chinese Engineering students, was established well in advance for completing various activities. So, this Distance Education System is not inferior to Conventional System. What is needed in India is Capacity Building of Distance Education System and continuous monitoring of the system to examine quality of the Output and finally the Outcome of the whole operation, before sending the product to society.Our discussion in this paper would make a systemic analysis of various activities and then examine the perceptions and expectations for various activities.

Systemic analysis of Distance Education System

The basic purpose of this system is to create a learning environment among distant learners mind by using a **"Man –Machine"** (Mix Media) combination. We know that a quality input will make process as expected and finally produce a desired product who is competent to accept various roles as needed for various social activities.The three stages in every activity for its completion are as below.

INPUT ————- PROCESS ————— OUTPUT

We may go for a systemic Analysis of all these three stages and see how a gap between perception and expectation is bridged to bring in quality. According to Science of Management every Input covers 5 M, they being **Man, Machine, Money, Material and, Method.** The Man plays primary role and controls rest four factors.

INPUT
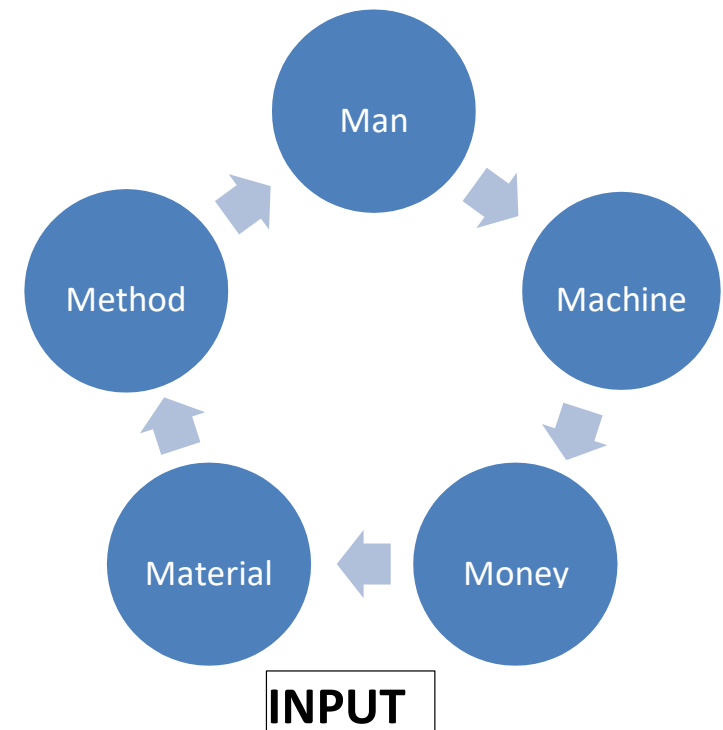
It is expected that in a distance education scenario, these 5 M should be in perfect coordination with each other for an expected process and finally a competent product capable to work successfully in society emerges. Man means a group of persons working full time as well as part time in ODL system. They are from different fields, being experts in Media, Technology, Material development, Making Multiple copies of learning material, Academic support, Student support, Learner Evaluation in different ways, Conducting research on various systemic problems, as well as providing Academic Counselling to distance learners during Contact programmes. Machine covers the learning material and various teaching aids (Electronic &Non- electronic).Money is needed everywhere. It may be in terms of Fixed Cost as well as Variable Cost too. Material is our students who come as raw material and go as product after Programme completion. These students may be considered as Customers of Education.Customer satisfaction is a mark of Quality measure. In this case continuous feedback from these customers is essential to meet their queries/ confusions/questions etc. The last but not least M is Method. It covers art of communication in a Distance Education scenario. **Use of different available Media for communication with students is an Expectation.** Feedback and Interactivity with students by using various media will make communication more effective. Interaction is another source of learning. Peer Group interaction among students for same stage of every Programme is an expectation for immediate feedback to meet the confusions/queries/questions among them. It will motivate them to involve in study and finally control dropout rate among them. Use of various media (like Email, WhatsApp, Phone etc.) for this feedback purpose will facilitate this process. Giving strength to all these 5 M is Capacity Building while strength to Manpower is known as Staff Development. Following chart explains Communication process during study.

COMMUNICATION CYCLE DURING STUDY
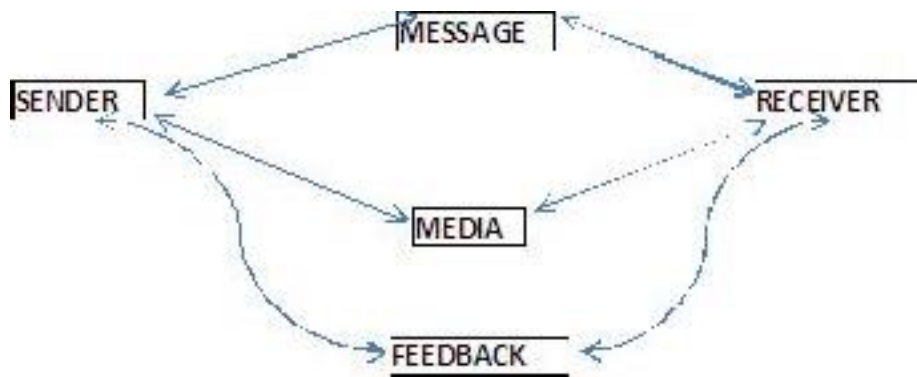
Following chart explains this communication cycle in both directions

Forward Direction	Component	Reverse Direction
ODL System	Sender	Students
Students	Receiver	
	Message	ODL System Queries/Confusions/Questions
Print & Electronic Media		after learning from Material
Answers to learners' Queries/Confusions/Questions	Media	Print & Electronic Media

Manpower Scenario in Open and Distance Learning (ODL) System

S.No.	Category/Type of Manpower	Remarks
A.	Full Time Academic Staff at Headquarters, and, Regional Centers	**Staff Development is expected**
B.	Full Time Non - Academic Staff at Headquarters, and, Regional Centers	Staff Development is not expected
C.	Part Time Academic Staff at Study Centre	**Staff Development is expected**
D.	Part Time Non-Academic Staff at Study Centre	Staff Development is not expected

Manpower role of Category 'A' in Distance Education.

Stages / Activities	Knowledge	Skills	Attitude /
Monitoring and Providing Guidance to Academic staff at the Study centers	1	2	3
Research on systemic Issues/ Problems.	4	5	6
Workshops/Seminars/Symposiums/ Conferences etc. within University and outside	7	8	9

We have to analyse Expectations as well as Perceptions in all these 9(Nine) stages and organise Orientation programmes to enrich the Manpower to bridge the gaps (if any).All full time as well as part time academics have to interact among themselves about their problems in meeting the learners' queries/ confusions/questions. Conducting Seminars/ Workshops/ Symposiums/

Conferences etc. by inviting these academics, may end in an amicable solution for the same.It may be better if every Category 'A' worker takes up M.A.in Distance Education Programme launched by Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), New Delhi. It covers the following courses in two years:

First Year Courses.	Second Year Courses.
1) Growth and Philosophy of D/E	1) Research in Distance Education.
2) Instructional System Design.	2) Curriculum Developmentin D/E
3) Learner Support Services.	3) Staff Development in D/E
4) Management of D/E	4) Economics of D/E
5) Educational Communication	5) Project work in D/E

Category 'B' and 'D' workers do not require any specific training, as their role is administrative in nature. But, Category 'C' workers' perceptions and expectations are different. They are Academic Counsellors in distance education having a different role. They are expected to collect learners' Difficulties/Questions/Queries etc. which might have had come at the time of learning in isolated situation, and, make a deliberation during counselling session by covering all these Difficulties/ Questions/Queries. In fact, most of the content is clear to students by when Self Instructional Material is used; These students may need some clarifications here or there in the course content. This is a perception that the academic counsellors are delivering a lecture on a topic of their own choice from the course content prescribed in the name of Counselling. But, these part time academic workers are not at fault. They are conditioned enough to deliver a lecture in conventional system

The Emergence of Distance Education.	The Distance Learners and our support.
Learner Evulation in Distance	AcademicConsellingand counselor's Functions.
Qualities and skills of an Academic Media for Counselling Counsellor	
How to Study - SQ3R TechnniqueDiagnosis and Remedy- A Challenge	
You and the Learners A Need of good Managing Counselling Sessions - A Human Relation.Challange	

class room situation and have very little knowledge about their different role with distance learners. . The organisation has to sort out academic needs of part time staff from time to time, and, accordingly organise Orientation programmes for them. Main purpose of all these is to tone and tune learner is mind for optimum learning in a Distance Education scenario. These part time workers may require, staff development activity using distance education mode by covering following topics.

After being oriented, they will understand the role of various **Machines** being complementary to their role and use appropriate media and stop delivering a lecture on a topic of their own choice in the name of Academic Counselling. Category 'A' and Category 'C' workers will demand and manage various machines that are used in their day to day work. It may be LCD Projector, SPSS Package, a Laptop, and, Internet, etc. etc.**Money** plays an important role in every activity. It is expected that necessary provision be made in annual budget by every ODL organisation for staff development, purchase of necessary machines. Also, some funds may be provided by the University Grants Commission, New Delhi, in consultation with the Ministry of HRD, New Delhi. Every ODL organisation is receiving handsome amount from students in the form of Annual fees. A portion of the same may be kept in annual budget for Capacity Building activity.

The students who join the ODL system are raw **Material.** They complete their Programme successfully and go out as the **Product** of the system. It is expected that the quality of this product should not be inferior to the product of conventional system. We may consider these students as the customers of education. Customer satisfaction is the responsibility of every industry. There should be an orientation of these students in groups before they start studying the course material. Programme Guide supplied to these students must cover literature on following issues and the students should be briefed by Study center Academics during Orientation session about the same.

- **The Emergence of Distance Education.**

- **Learner Evaluation in Distance Education.**

- **Academic Counselling and their role.**

- **Media for Counselling.**

- **How to Study – SQ3R Technique.**

The **learning material** used by these students should be easy to grasp by them. This requires Programme Evaluation by seeking course users' opinion about various activities.The trained Manpower at the Headquarters and at Study centers will devise their **Method** for meeting learners' academic needs by

keeping in mind the basic philosophy of Distance Education being **" Word of Mouth is Word of Hand".** Everything is to be communicated in writing using a variety of media as the need may be.

The **Process** stage in Distance Education system is different than that in conventional system. It is because the **Word of Mouth is Word of Hand**. The students may be advised to form their association covering all students at same stage of every programme. They should be motivated for peer group interaction either in person or through a variety of media like Email, WhatsApp, Phone etc. **The ODL system has to allot every student and every academic a unique Email id which may be used to communicate with each other as well as within the group at a time.** This email format may be for students: PRN@ ignou.ac.in and for academic staff : Employee Number @ignou.ac.in. The ODL Academics (part time & full time) and ODL students have to communicate with each other in writing. Hardly anyone is using this free available facility for academic communication. The students are given '**Assignments**' for writing answers. The involves learning through drill and practice. But, it has been observed that they copy from each other and submit for assessment. In fact, they receive same Question and so they copy with each other. They may not copy from each other, if they are given different Questions for the same Lesson/Unit. This is possible if the teachers are oriented about Bloom's Taxonomy of Cognitive Domain. It contains six stages known as Knowledge, Comprehension, Application, Analysis, Synthesis, and, Judgment. It gives a technique of converting One Question into Six Questions.

Also, Projects are allotted, but, chances for teacher guidance are little in comparison with that in conventional system. As a model / sample, some good project reports done by past students can be scanned and put on University Website for making available to these learners, so that they can understand the trends and styles for their own project. Similarly a model assignment may be prepared

and put on University website as a sample assignment. It will help them in understanding the points to be covered in writing the assignments. The students should exploit all possibilities of getting optimum teacher support to meet their questions/queries/confusions which may arise during learning alone by remaining at a distance. Learner Association at the same stage of every Programme is an expectation. It would help them to meet or learning for talk on phone or Email each other during free time. Interaction among learners may lot of confusions/queries/questions. Using Blooms' Taxonomy address for Question Bank development and then its computerisation is an expectation for preparing a comprehensive question paper for final Examination. Blooms' taxonomy will help for converting every long/short question into **06** questions

as well as one Multiple Choice item/question into **144** items/questions. This work will produce big Question Banks for every course of each Programme. This may help in controlling copying business during Final examination as well as during Assignment writing too.

A Programme Evaluation by a Third party and an opinion survey from the past students is desired. It would reveal short comings in the system. There are some psychological needs for every learner. These may be – Motivation, Sustaining Interest in study, There may be Inferiority complex among students as they have failed to join conventional system and are studying through an alternate system. An interaction, from time to time, with some past (high achiever) students (through distance mode) may be organised to meet these psychological needs. Programme Evaluation is needed by seeking past students opinions. The student is a customer of education and his opinion would be of much use for making necessary changes to make various activities as learner friendly. The learning material is also the product of ODL system, and so, an opinion survey about this product from the past students who were course users, is essential for making the course material more user friendly.

Action Plan

The quality filters from top to bottom. Therefore, a firm determination to implement various measures is essential by the authorities of ODL system. A monitoring committee is needed by the concerned University with someone as its Coordinator. The Following action plan may be implemented to bridge the gap between Perceptions and Expectations for various activities as well as for proper utilization of manpower.

1) Full-time and part-time Academics deployed for monitoring and for providing Human Support to students may be oriented about their role and responsibilities with Distance learners. A staff development Programme may be chalked out for academics using distance education mode. The University may like to organise Workshops/Symposiums/ Conferences /Seminars for these academics. A networking among sister organisations and help from retired ODL academics may help in selection of Resource Persons for these activities.

2) Student Orientation must cover their role and responsibilities in Distance education system. For this purpose a "Student Handbook" may be redrafted by adding some literature. These may be like- How to study in a Distance Education scenario; Skills for writing Assignments; Generating Motivation and Interest for study; Optimum use of various Media like Email, WhatsApp, Fax, Phone, Cell, etc. to contact Study Centre staff and Headquarters Staff, and fellow students for an early

solution of the academic and non-academic Queries/ Confusions/ Questions. Sample Assignments and some tips for learner-learner interactions etc. are to be added.

3) Course maintenance of the learning material may be done by seeking the help of experts working either in University or outside. It will make the learning material more enriched with latest information and with more explanation with addition of Pictures, Charts, examples etc.

4) Necessary financial requirements (Budget) may be prepared and submitted to Donors through University authorities for allocation.

5) The Programme Coordinators must take a monthly report from study centers to learn about their academic and administrative problems and bring it before University Academic Council for seeking an appropriate solution.

6) Question Banks must be developed and computerized for making parallel forms of question papers.

7) Students may be motivated to form 'Student Association' at different stages of every Programme. It would help for a peer group interaction as and when they feel so. Use of Email, Cell, and Phone etc. may be beneficial for them. Contacts with past students of the Programme and discussion with them on various academic and non-academic issues may also be initiated and such meetings may be organised at local level. The students then need not work towards Headquarters for each problem.

8) A strong networking is needed among sister organisations (offering Programmes through Distance Education mode) in India. It would help in their exchange of views and acceptance of best practices.

9) At first, Capacity Building in Open Universities may be undertaken on urgent basis. It can then be adopted by Dual mode Universities in second phase.

Outcome of this Scheme

The system of Distance Education has emerged for Mass Education. A large number of students can study at their own rate, pace, and, time. The success of this system depends upon the efforts of a 'Man-Machine' combination in creating a learning environment for the isolated learner. It may be essential to follow the above cited action plan to orient the manpower for optimum use of machines and fulfill the desired role and responsibilities. They may bridge a gap between Perceptions and Expectations at learners from manpower working as full time as well as part time. Students who have joined as raw material would become as competent product, when compared to Conventional learners.

The system of distance education is a ray of hope for mass education in India. It would attract a large number of students for different Programmes in future, and, may fulfill the country's requirement for competent manpower. This is possible only when the system imparts quality education which is not inferior to that is offered by Conventional system. This will be the a tribute in real sense to Prof. G. Ram Reddy if we were to implement this action plan for quality assurance in Indian Distance Education System.

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R & D IN Dr. BRAOU – ROLE OF GRCR&D

Prof. E. Sudha Rani*

Dr BRAOU is the first Open University in the country to establish an exclusive unit to carry out research and promote system based research in the field of distance education. Initially the unit was known as Centre for Evaluation Studies. The Centre for Evaluation was established in 1987 to conduct systemic evaluation and research studies in the areas of courseware both print and non-print, student support services, students' evaluation, student feedback on contact-cum-counseling classes, delivery of study material, programmes offered etc. The strategies and policies implemented by distance educators were examined to see if they meet the characteristics and needs of the distance learners to suggest appropriate academic and institutional measures and set quality parameters.

The Visiting Committee from Indira Gandhi National Open University in 1989 has observed that the Centre for Evaluation has undertaken significant research studies and felt that these studies are a value edition to distance education. They further suggested that the Centre for Evaluation should be consulted before starting any new programme in the university. Distance Education Council (DEC) provided grants to the Centre for Evaluation to undertake research studies

The efforts of the centre were mainly research attempts in bringing about the events in distance education systematically in relation to the learner and his learning environment. The evaluation studies carried out by the University were considered as first hand information on focal areas of distance education by the other Sister Open Universities in the Country

The Academy for research in distance education helped to formalize and collate all efforts, which greatly enhanced the quality of distance education. The added benefit was that of building a research environment conducive to professional development of teachers.

One important functions of the Academy was organizing periodic interactive workshops/seminars on Research Methodology in Distance Education and preparing Manuals on Research Methodology.

It also played a crucial role in inviting scholars with rich experience and eminent experts in distance education / open learning.

One of the important functions of the Academy included organizing periodic interactive workshops on Research Methodology in Distance Education and preparing manuals on Research Methodology and systematizing the process of enquiry in distance education systems and procedures. Specific attention was given to impact studies, longitudinal studies and action research projects. Creating an exhaustive database on distance education in the regions/countries and providing access to this data to researchers was another important function, which ensured enhancement of quality of learning material and excellence in scholarship. Collaborative Research Projects were undertaken by GRADE with other Distance Education Institutions in the world and GRADE organized periodic interactive workshops on various activities of distance education and preparation of manuals on best practices.

GRADE conducted research on systemic evaluation in the areas of student support services, student enrolment, learner issues, counseling services, performance of online services, self-learning study material (SLM), Audio and video lessons etc. and brought out its own publications in the areas mentioned.

GRADE has instituted two visiting fellowships per year for teachers/other academics working in Asian Open Universities under the AAOU Exchange Fellowship. Faculty members and other academic staff (such as faculty, coordinators/ tutors/ counselors)

In addition to encouraging research projects, GRADE also offered research programmes leading to the award of Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in Distance Education. 20students have been awarded Ph.D. degrees in distance education from Dr.BRAOU through GRADE. Due to shortage of eligible teachers the Ph.D. Programmes of GRADE were merged with the Faculties of the University.

It provided financial assistance to the teachers/other academics and functionaries working in Open and Distance Education Institutions, who were willing to undertake minor research projects. The selected individuals were awarded minor research projects with financial assistance as per University norms.

GRADE has established its own library comprising of books / journals of research reports, proceedings of seminars/conferences, monographs and other frequently referred publications in distance education so as to enable systematic research.

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G.Ram Reddy Centre for Research & Development (GRCR&D)

The journey of distance education in India has been is staggerd in terms of its outcome and application for development of the ODL system. The SCImago Institutions Rankings (2020) which ranks academic and research - related institutions based on research performance, innovation outputs and societal impact measured by their web visibility - reveals only 5 open universities in the portal consisting of 3898 HEIs and interestingly the none of Asian Open Universities featured in the list. ODL institutions have to make an extra endeavour to make their Research base strong (Majulika Srivastava et al, 2020). Only a dedicated research center with institutional policy on system based research and which adopts new technical advances and conducts research as per the requirements of the target groups can ensure quality in research. A clear research policy along with scaffolding research and mentoring research can enhance the research output from the Distance Education Universities (Santosh Panda, 2005).

In accordance with the new guidelines of UGC for establishment of Research and Development in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in 2022, and in order to play a pivotal role in catalyzing multi-disciplinary/trans-disciplinary and translational research culture mandated in NEP 2020, Dr. BRAOU has renamed the earlier established institute of GRADE as G. Ram Reddy Centre for Research & Development (GRCR&D) in August, 2022.

Dr. BRAOU is now streamlining the already established organizational structure, so as to provide a vibrant research ecosystem with an adequate Research Information System. Research guidance will be provided in due course of time in thrust areas as well as areas that are pertinent to Distance Education System. Identifying specific areas of interest for research faculty as well as areas that have relevance and significance to the modern-day world and helping as a facilitator for networking with other national and international organizations would be the priority of GRCR&D in the near future. Capacity building, collaboration, searching for funding authorities, Research monitoring with an eye on integrity and ethics would be the functions of GRCR&D. This would also help to bring together human resources, intellectual, capital, governance and financial resources on one platform and help strengthen the research activities of the University.

GRCR&D in its first Research advisory committee meeting conducted on 4th May, 2023 resolved to :

1) Adopt new UGC guidelines, March, 2022, with regard to vision, mission, functions and structure.

2) Finalise different committees for monitoring different aspects of Research and Development.

3) Conduct workshops, various seminars of disciplinary and inter-disciplinary nature for Faculty and Research scholars which can promote general Research - Ecosystem and Culture and provide additional guidance to research scholars in academic writing skills, developing research project proposals and so on.

4) Serve as a liaison between different faculties and funding agencies for submission of Research proposals.

5) Sanction Minor Research Projects to different faculty members from funds provided by the University.

6) Initiate student / faculty exchange programmes.

7) Introduce the ideas-incubation centre in the University.

8) Identify inter - disciplinary projects.

9) Help in University - Community and University - Industry connect and identify inter - disciplinary projects.

9) Maintain and manage the data and information on Research Activities of the University in different discipline.

10) Provide incentives to faculty members and Research Scholars who get their Research papers published in reputed International Journals or contribute to quality research by completing innovative research projects.

NEP - 2020, calls for Research intensive universities (RUs) whose primary function is to engage in Research and contribute to Human knowledge and train future researches. The quality, relevance and utility of research also has a bearing on accreditation of Universities. As this has a bearing on institutional quality, ODL institutions can not stay away from research. It is increasingly mandated that ODL systems incorporate research which can help improve the system (system based research) as well as discipline based system

Thus GRCR&D has a clealy defined role to bring the necessary changes in the Research culture of the University.

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The Need for Regional Development of ODL System and NEP

Prof. B.PanduRanga Narasimharao *

Introduction

The European Commission, explaining the extraordinary potential of open distance education system, states that it has an extremely wide range of applications either on its own or in conjunction with conventional education and training system. The question is - Are we able to tap this extraordinary potential of the ODL system. In fields like electronics, the disruptive innovations yielded revolutionary changes. Such revolutionary changes are very limited in the case of education and there is wide array of potential in open distance learning (ODL) system for introducing disruptive innovations. Open distance learning and its system in general is following the footsteps of conventional classroom system except for mode of delivery. Thus it acts more like an extension of the normal system of classroom education to provide more access to higher education. The model crisis can be understood from what Boyer (1996) says about the present day need. He says

"… the academy must become a more vigorous partner in the search for answers to our most pressing social, civic, economic and moral problems, and must reaffirm its historic commitment to what I call the scholarship of engagement."

As advocated by National Education Policy (NEP), we need to follow bottom up approach and introduce innovations at regional level. Compared to the 19th and 20th century society, the present day era of knowledge society and knowledge economy places different demands on higher education. In the knowledge economy, the higher education should be able to improve products and processes, establish good communication and interactive mechanisms, involve other players in knowledge production, develop knowledge integration mechanisms etc., Most often, higher education in general including open distance learning focuses more on 'requirements' rather than on the core of higher education enterprise – Learning and acquiring skills. By requirements, we mean – enrollments, retention of students for a subsequent year, marks/grades, attendance/assignment completion, degree completion, etc. Thought these are essential, they are meaningless measures as students are merely 'checking out the requirements' of obtaining a degree. They need to acquire

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the skils and abilities required for making them better contributors to the society – as individuals, family members, community members and as workers. The paper discusses how following bottom up approach and the regional development of ODL system can strengthen ODL system.

Making ODL an essential System

Learning for Development is the vision and mission of the COL (Commonwealth of Learning). However, learning for development is often forgotten by many higher education institutions. Though many developing countries view ODL as a strategy for national development through human resource development, often in practice it (distance learning) is seen as a way to mitigate the problem of lack of financial resources. It is important to exploit the potential of ODL/open university system for moving into the realm of knowledge society/knowledge economy and its needs (capacity building, skill development and professional development of working population).

The background points for making ODL system an essential system includes

Its potential to serve to a large populace as shown in the exponential increase in numbers (students) over last two decades;

its ability to serve a wide array of target groups (youth and students, Housewives, Girls from certain communities, rural population, agriculture, Village level workers; industry personnel, employed and unemployed, unorganized sector workers, Indian armed forces, police personnel etc.,);

its potential to move from alternative or complementary system to an essential system (the system's potential is being focused often on providing access to education (*making the open distance learning as an alternative system of education*) rather than for meeting the needs and demands of knowledge society and knowledge economy (*making open distance learning an essential system of education*).

Issues and questions include

1. **What is our purpose and aim?**

Times of India report –

2. Are we adding **more numbers** in the job market?

3. **Poor cousins** of the conventional university?

4. We need to offer **traditional programmes** for keeping the status.

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23 lakhs in race for 368 peon posts in UP, 255 Ph.D.s, more than 2 lakh graduates (including BTech, MSc and Mcom)– Times of India Sep 16th 2015, Report

5. How to **balance** between quality and quantity and between traditional and relevant society based courses.

6. Whether ODL needs **new mould and new anotomy** ?

7. How do you address the **regional backwardness** in education? (question for MHRD document)

Policy Interventions needed by NEP may include

1) **Make ODL an essential system** by linking it with schemes such as skill development mission, vocational education, Rojgar Yonjana.

2) **Strengthening ODL at regional and rural level** - not for offering regular courses but offbeat courses and out of the box courses for target groups like unorganized sector, agriculture and other unconventional target groups.

3) **Traditional programmes** through ODL with provision for credit transfer.

4) **Quality assurance** of ODL programmes, and **accreditation** of courses.

5) **Regional regulatory body** which may assess quality on the basis of a standard framework and some flexibility for the regional imbalances.

One of the important strategies often neglected by distance education practitioners is **strengthening ODL at regional and rural level**. It is natural tendency of the practitioners not to think beyond offering courses. At regional level **audited and non-audited innovative and customized** programmes cater to target groups like unorganized sector, agriculture and other unconventional target groups. For regional development in ODL it is essential to tap the local level resources and create interest in the stakeholders. The ODL units at bottom level (regional centres and study centres) should be made to play a key role in this. They also will help in improving the brand image. These bottom level units should **compulsorily have tie-ups** with local players. Once the ODL development at regional level takes place in this direction the stakeholders will look at ODL for their solutions. One may get more financial resources as **industries, corporate, local civic bodies, NGOs etc not only will have natural inclination for close collaboration** but also will be willingly allocate funds from schemes like corporate social responsibility.

University outreach and Regional development of ODL

University outreach differs from other forms of collaboration (like triple helix, mode 2 model) in that it takes a broader, developmental focus with less emphasis on academic entrepreneurialism. Magrath (2006) gives a good idea

of outreach programmes. He says that ultimately, all that counts is what we do in effective working partnerships with businesses, civic organizations, government agencies, and, indeed, other colleges and universities. He adds that everything we do in future – which is here right now – must involve the fundamental responsibility of educating men and women of all ages and from our diverse populations (we can call this learning); discovering new knowledge and applying it (typically labeled research) and providing service to society. As Narasimharao (2018) states the focus on outreach and engagement is to leverage the strengths of each partner to achieve a common public good and common goal while maintaining a large degree of autonomy by all partners and getting mutually benefitted.

Background

1. **University outreach** – According to Boyer (1996), the complete university or a successful professorate must attend to four separate yet interrelated functions, namely, discovery, integration, application and teaching. Teaching not grounded in research and practice is hollow. Research not applied and transferred to real world problems (outreach) is without value. And outreach not informed by research and pedagogy is ineffective.

2. **Myths of ODL -** Some of the general myths in applying open learning are - equating it to conventional correspondence courses; presuming that open learning has to be done in isolation; treating open learning as knowledge dissemination in a more elaborative and exhaustive (information overload) way; seeing open learning as a complex one and not using it in simple and relevant way; equating open learning with the application of ICT and other modern communication technologies; presuming that open learning should be always successful (Narasimharao, 2009).

3. "There should be sufficient room for the use of local data and resources to make the knowledge covered in the syllabus come alive as experiences ". – **Committee on Renovation and Rejuvenation of Higher Education (2009).**

4. **Extending the outreach of Higher education** - "The need is to extend the outreach of Higher Education to rural populations and bring them into the mainstream."

5. **Need to reorient ODL as active partner** – ODL needs to reorient itself as active partner with parents, teachers, principals, community advocates, business leaders, community agencies, corporate world, village

development organizations, industry, professionals in various fields, and general citizenry.

Issues /Questions

1. Though **outreach concept and scholarship of engagement** is much more applicable to ODL institutes (including Open Universities), often these institutes are neglected in this aspect and given less focus. Similarly industries and other stakeholders did not see ODL as a potential system where they can be benefitted.

2. **Recognition** of ODL courses and ODL institutions becomes a big question mark. Recognition is linked to many factors. How to deal with these?

3. How do you address the **regional backwardness** in education?

4. What measures can be taken to give **special emphasis on tribal belts**, hilly area and NE?

5. **Sustaining long term collaborations. For instance though IGNOU had collaborations** with several organizations, they are not sustained for long, in many cases.

6. Efforts made to introduce need based **employable skill courses**? (From MHRD)

7. How to promote autonomy and institutional level **initiatives to support regional level development efforts**?

8. ODL has the potential to address the **needs of wide array of target groups**. The question is how ODL is used so far (by different ODL institutes) for these target groups?

9. **Content design and content delivery** has become outdated. The practical problem is revising the print material. Curriculum design and development need to be dynamic.

10. While pursuing their education**, how students can contribute to their community, village**?

11. **Promote cross border education**. (Geographically/ academically skill development has to be implemented. Through community college as TNOU is pioneer in providing skill education to rural people in Tamil Nadu.

Policy Interventions

1. Universities and their ODL /Online department should be allowed to create **audited and non-audited innovative and customized programmes** that cater to one or a group of corporate.

2. ODL need not be only for degrees/diplomas but for training also. **Concept of Modularization of courses** may help.

3. Besides traditional degree courses, ODL units of Universities should **compulsory have tie-ups with local players** for development of Panchayat level/ Block level. This helps in regional development of ODL system

4. The ODL units should have **close collaboration with industries, corporate** or mutual benefit.

5. Ensuring **multi-stakeholders in governing bodies** in ODL units at local level

6. **Interation / collaboration** with other institutions such as National Sector wise Skill Development Council, Leather Skill Development Council.

7. **Dissemination and follow up of industry / job oriented programmes** developed by open universities and their local units.

8. More interaction with other organizations where fund is made available for **Skill Development activities.** For Example : Tamil Nadu Govt. 2014 Skill Development programme for manufacturing sectors.

Integrating ODL with other developments in tertiary education

There are many important concepts and models evolving to make education closer to societal needs – University-industry collaboration, mode 1 & 2 models, triple helix, corporate universities and corporate education, entrepreneurial university, national innovation systems, regional innovation systems, higher education for sustainable development, consortium & cluster concept, public-private-panchayat (PPP) partnership, skill development mission, finishing schools, university outreach and engagement, open and distance learning, service learning, community learning, scholarship of engagement, centres of excellence and relevance, community colleges etc. It is necessary that various concepts and models of tertiary education system should not be seen in isolation and independent of other concepts and models. ODL with its potential of regional development can easily integrate the strengths of each system and launch a regional model (regional development of ODL system). The important issue is how local societal needs can be catered through

the use of these various concepts through use of regionally developed ODL system. (Narasimharao 2018)

Integrating various developments in tertiary education ODL system can take a high quality education to the doorsteps of the disadvantaged groups including the tribals, rural women, SHGs, panchayatiraj functionaries, differently abled and also the prison inmates.ODL system should not be restricted and imprisoned or bordered.. The policy **should focus not on ICT or any other concept/model** but on how to use these for a given objective or goal.

Using ODL network for developing regional capacity academically

Back ground

1. ODL institutions in general have a **network**. Is this network used for regional developemt? Or the centres other than head quarters are seen only as admission/administration centres (for instance regional centres of IGNOU) or just like affliated colleges (for instance study centres). How curriculum can be developed – centrally or regionally? With only academics or with involvement of other stakeholders regionally?

2. Reaching the social groups at their place using the local **expertise** is still a big challenge.

3. In ODL system there is core faculty located at head quarters. At field level ODL depends more on part time faculty working in other institutions. How this can be used for developing a regional system?

4. In most cases the Open Universities focus more on the quality standards of their study material and use of modern communication technologies. **A strong student support system with academic orientation** can help develop good quality assurance systems. As Prof. Ram Reddy suggested at regional level the Open university centers should act like mini universities.

5. **Research and Development at regional level** using the faculty at regional centres and part time teachers at study centres need to be focused.

Issues and questions

1. **How to promote autonomy** and institutional level initiatives to support regional level development efforts?

2. What are the ways of **integrating traditional education with market oriented** and industry integrated programmes?

3. What are the possible ways of **formalizing traditional works into** the higher education? Since most of the minorities are involved in traditional works.

4. **How Human resource base** is to be prepared in ODL for fulfilling the basic functions of a university.

5. How could **support system for research and academic** development at regional level be provided?

6. Should Central institutions be connected with community and schools close by to improve the quality of their life?

7. How to built Vibrant faculty ?

8. How to Prepare professionals in different areas including basic subjects in arts, science, humanities and social sciences who can engage with society?

9. How can cultural integration take place through language? (or through sciences, humanities and arts).

Policy interventions

1. Strong research and development activities at regional level should be made mandatory for ODL system.

2. Adjunct faculty from local level expertise (need not be regular academics but may be domain experts) should be made mandatory for local development for ODL institutes.. The NEP should spell out the framework for enlisting the support of such professionals and domain experts to add value.

3. There is a tendency of open universities to use highly talented academics at regional level to focus on enrolment drive and admissions.

4. Regional centre and study centre level researches would be given good inputs for developing programmes and improving the quality of learner support.

5. Research at local level is to be encouraged - It need not be big research. It should focus on regional issues and regional development – For this research culture to be developed at regional level, with academics given different academic activity tasks including collaborations with other organizations and exchange programmes. .

6. Regional centre academics should work towards integration of ODL with other concepts of higher education such as triple helix, university outreach and engagement, corporate education etc.

Regional development of ODL system will help in strengthening the bottom up approach by integrating various developments in tertiary education (**outreach and engagement, corporate education, triple helix system, regional innovation system and the like**). This approach of regional development to ODL system would help to take high quality and highly relevant education to the doorsteps of the disadvantaged groups including the tribals, rural women, self help groups, panchayatraj functionaries etc.,. Further this will also help for more effective and **strong research and development activities at regional level**. This in turn helps the national level and global level development of ODL. These developments will help in improving the interest in the use of ODL to **tap domain expertise and tacit knowledge available** locally. This also would help in taping the **academic power available at regional** college and university level. In the bottom up approach (which the Ministry of Human Resources Development, Government of India advocates), the regional centres of ODL system should be developed as vibrant centres with vibrant faculty to ensure developing new domain of knowledge regionally.

To make Public- Private- Partnership (PPP) model effective in education sector, **the academic capacity at regional level** should be developed in order to develop the capability of engaging the local players for regional transformation and for developing partnership to enhance or **improve collective goals** (mutual benefit) of all the players. Quality assurance of ODL system should be ensured through various bodies and mechanism like **accreditation of ODL courses**, recognition of ODL institutions, State Council for ODL, **Local Advisory body** and strong student support system with academic orientation at regional level. As Narasimharao (2018) states if all this points out for new mould and new direction in ODL system it is time to take it forward. In this context he quotes Max Plank (as quoted by Kuhn while discussing his theory of scientific revolution). He says- "a new scientific truth does not triumph by convincing its opponents and making them see the light, but rather because its opponents eventually dies, and a new generation grows up that is familiar with it."

Narasimharao (2018) further adds that for making a new mould, we need to develop a new anatomy. By anatomy, we mean all those directly involved and those who are direct beneficiaries of ODL system (students, teachers, administrators, NGOs, communities, colleges, universities, policy makers, civic bodies, corporate, industries etc.)

Feed back Survey on curricular transaction in Dr. BRAOU from different takeholders for quality enhancement.

Dr. V.V. Kanakadurga[1]
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INTRODUCTION

All Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) undertake self evaluative and reflective exercises for continuous quality improvement in the Educational delivery mechanisms and processes. U.G.C. has mandated to devise mechanisms for interaction with and obtain feedback from all stakeholders namely, learners, teachers, staff, parents, society, employers, and government for quality improvement (UGC Regulations, 2020), to suggest measures to the authorities of HEI, for qualitative improvement and to put in place a mechanism to disseminate the report of such activities among all stakeholders and to ensure that measures are taken for internalization and institutionalization of quality enhancement practices.

Curriculum refers 'to the total structure of ideas and activities, developed by an educational institution to meet the needs of students and to achieve desired educational aims' Derck, Rowntree (1981).

Curriculum implementation is an important part of curricular planning. This implies utilization of facilities, resources and environment and assessment of the results of such activities through feedback from the stakeholders about the learning outcomes. Obasi, Abaobi and Ajeka (2007) express the view that curriculum is "the viewing together of the subject matter and methods to produce desired learning activities which leads relevant learning outcomes'. The curriculum design practices on learning, connecting and engaging along with the teaching methods adopted, the technology mix and interactivity along with the student's interaction with course content, instructors and other students will have a bearing on the feedback results. Similarly, counselors, teachers, subject experts, also reflect on their interaction in order to enlighten themselves with learner needs and the ODL requirements. Feedback is necessary for having a coherent framework for ODL activities, specially those concerned with learning environment. The Alumni who have undergone through the curricular processes of the Universities also have a say on curricular transaction and

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would provide on the University with information which would help in undertaking revision of it's existing curricular processes and implementation.

The centre for Internal Quality Assurance (CIQA) of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University, established in 2010, has been continuously working on quality improvement aspects. It identifies the key areas and devises mechanisms for obtaining feedback from various stakeholders – learners, counsellors, teachers, alumni, subject experts, departments etc., so as to analyse and suggest measures for qualitative improvement by providing directives to the authorities and ensuring their implementation through regular monitoring. All the stakeholders are thus made part of quality improvement process.

Methodology :

The present Feedback study comprises of 1.Feedback from students about curriculum 2.Feedback from counsellors about curriculum 3. Feedback from subject-experts about counselling 4. Feedback from teachers of the university about curriculum 5. Feedback from alumni about curriculum. The survey was done by providing suitably designed questionnaires to all the stakeholders viz., learners, counsellors, subject experts, teachers of the university and alumni of the university. This is a simple random survey which is spread across all the learner support centres and headquarters of the university. The feedback so received was analysed and feedback reports were prepared.

Data collection and Analysis :

Feedback from the learners of the university on curriculum at the head quarters and learner support centres in the states of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh was collected through study centre coordinators through learner support services division. Similarly, feedback was also collected from teachers, counsellors, subject experts, alumni about the curriculum, at the university headquarters and learner support centres. The forms filled by the learners and counsellors and others were submitted at headquarters and at LSCs (which were later sent to headquarters). The data thus collected was analysed and frequency of responses was calculated, percentage-wise for every category. Statistical tools were used for obtaining comprehensive results and the feedback data is presented in tables. Analysis of the results is presented at the end of each table.

Feed back from different stakeholders are presented in different tables (Table I - Feedback from students about curriculum, Table II - Feedback from Counsellors about curriculum, Table III -Feedback from Subject Experts about curriculum, Table - IV : Feedback from Teachers of the University about curriculum, Table - V Feedback from Alumni about curriculum).

Table - I FEEDBACK FROM STUDENTS ABOUT CURRICULUM

Statement	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)
1. The Orientation program conducted by the learner su pport center is useful.	68.32	24.75	5.15	1.39	0.40
2. The study material provided is compre hensive, with clear concepts, examples, correct pictures and figures.	60.59	31.68	5.74	1.19	0.79
3. The study material provided is compre hensive, with clear concepts, examples, correct pictures and figures.	60.59	31.68	5.74	1.19	0.79
4. The University follo ws the prescribed sche dules of admis sions and examina tion	67.72	24.95	4.16	1.58	1.58
5. The online seminars provided by the university are easily accessible and useful.	52.67	28.71	10.89	4.75	2.37
6. Internal assign ments provided are as per schedule.	50.09	35.64	10.49	1.39	2.18

Statement	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)
7. Examinations are conducted fairly and the sanctity of the examinations is maintained.	60.19	29.70	7.33	1.19	1.58
8. The University results are declared as per schedule.	50.89	32.67	9.50	2.18	4.16
9. The content of the academic program and the assignments enhance the compe tency of learners.	56.43	34.65	7.33	1.19	0.40
10.The study material is available in digital form also.	57.03	32.28	8.32	1.58	0.40
11.The university website/mobile app provide useful infor mation to learners.	57.03	32.28	8.32	0.79	1.39
12.The grievance redre ssal mecha nism of the univer sity is effective.	52.67	37.82	7.52	0.99	0.79
13.The electronic media (audio & video) and Acade mic Counselling supplement the Teaching/ learning process	50.50	35.05	10.69	1.78	1.78

Statement	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)
14.The learner-centric methods adopted by the institution pro mote learning, problem solving skills, employa bility skills, and help to Create a powerful workforce for the nation.	54.46	37.03	6.53	1.39	0.59
15.You are satisfied with the flexible course options provided by the university.	59.20	35.24	4.16	0.79	0.59
16.The performance evaluation followed by the university is satisfactory.	55.84	37.62	5.15	0.59	0.79
17.Contact classes are essential for study ing through the ODL Mode	62.18	27.13	6.14	3.17	1.39

Analysis of feedback from students about curriculum:

Out of 1500 students, 505 students responded to the survey on curriculum from different Learner Support Centres (LSCs)

The learners agreed that the learner support centres were conducting orientation programmes which were useful to them (92.97%), 5.15% stayed neutral, while 1.79% disagreed with the statement.

The study material provided was found to be comprehensive, with clear concepts, examples, correct pictures and figures by 92.27% of the learners surveyed, while 5.74% stayed neutral and 1.98% disagreed.

The self assessment questions given in the study material were found to be helpful for clear understanding of the content by 92.27% of the learners.1.98% disagreed and 5.74% stayed neutral on this statement.

The learners agreed that the university follows prescribed schedules for admissions and examinations (92.67%), while 4.16% stayed neutral and 3.16% disagreed.

The online seminars were found to be easily accessible and useful by 81.38% of the learners. 10.89% of the learners surveyed stayed neutral and 7.32 % students disagreed with the statement.

The students agreed that internal assignments are provided as per schedule (85.73%). However, 10.49% stayed neutral and 3.57% disagreed with the statement.

89.89% students agreed that the examinations are conducted fairly and the sanctity of the examinations is maintained. However, 2.77% of the students disagreed with the statement and 7.33% of the students stayed neutral.

The students also agreed with the statement that the university results are declared as per schedule (83.56%). However, with regard to the declaration of results as per schedule, 9.55% stayed neutral and 6.34% disagreed with the statement.

The competency of learners was found to be enhanced by the content of the academic programme and assignments (91%). However, 7.33% stayed neutral and 1.59% of the learners disagreed with the statement.

89.31% of the learners agreed about the availability of study material in digital form. 8.32% stayed neutral and 1.98% of the learners disagreed with the statement.

The University website was found to provide useful information to learners (89.31%). 8.32% of the learners were neutral on the statement, while 2.18% of the learners disagreed.

The grievance redressal mechanism of the University was found to be effective by 90.50% of the learners, while 9.5% of the learners did not agree.

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85.55% of the learners agreed that the electronic media (audio & video) and academic counselling supplemented the teaching – learning process. 3.56% disagreed and 10.69% of the learners remained neutral on this statement.

91.49% of the learners agreed that the learner-centric methods adopted by the institution promote learning, problem solving skills, employability and help to create a powerful workforce for the nation. 6.53% of the learners stayed neutral and 1.98% of the learners disagreed with the statement.

A large percentage of the learners surveyed (94.44%) were satisfied with the flexible course options provided by the University. 4.16% stayed neutral on this aspect and a small minority of the learners (1.38%) disagreed.

The performance evaluation followed by the university was found to be satisfactory by 93.46% of the learners. 5.15% of the learners were neutral on this aspect and 1.38% did not find the evaluation satisfactory.

89.31% of the learners agreed that the contact classes are essential for study in ODL mode. 6.14% stayed neutral on this statement and 4.56% of the learners disagreed about the essentiality of contact classes.

II. FEEDBACK FROM COUNSELLORS ABOUT CURRICULUM

Statement	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)
1. The curriculum and course material were supplied prior to the commence ment of counselling sessions.	58	32.44	3.11	2.67	3.56
2. The curriculum is in accordance with the UGC & State Council model curriculum.	49.78	45.78	3.11	1.33	---
3. The self- learning printed materials are clear and relevant	52.4	37.78	8.89	---	0.44
4. You prepare the Teaching plan before the comme ncement of acade mic year.	55.11	36.89	8	---	---
5. The students study the course material before coming to counselling se ssions.	37.78	43.56	14.22	2.22	2.22
6. The students are satisfied with the content (SLM) of the lessons develo ped by the Univer sity	45.78	44.89	8	0.44	0.44

Statement	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)
7. The students are provided with up-to-date knowledge during counselling sessions.	49.33	44	4.44	1.33	0.89
8. You employ different models of presentation for clear understanding of the subject. (Online / Offline)	47.56	38.67	12.44	1.33	-----
9. The students are provided with recorded Audio and Video lessons.	40.89	37.78	19.11	1.33	0.89
10. You receive complaints from the students regarding the curriculum	33.33	37.78	17.78	8.88	4
11. All your instructional activities are aligned with the learning out comes.	48.89	45.78	3.11	0.89	0.89
12. The assessment systems developed are based on the learning outcomes.	51.56	40.00	7.56	0.88	--

Analysis of Feedback Data from counselors on curriculum:

Out of 680 counselors served with the questionnaire, 225 counselors from different learner support centers and headquarters responded to the survey on curriculum and course material

90.6% of the counselors agreed that course material was supplied prior to the commencement of counseling sessions, while 6% of the counselors disagreed with the statement.

The curriculum is found to be in accordance with U.G.C. & State Council model of curriculum by 95.5% of the counselors, while a small minority of the counselors disagreed with the statement and 3.11% of the counselors stayed neutral.

90% of the counselors agreed that the self learning printed material was clear and relevant, while 8.89% counselors remained neutral and a small minority 0.4% of counselors strongly disagreed with the statement.

92% of counselors said that they prepared the teaching plan before the commencement of the academic year while 8% of the counselors remained neutral. No one (0%) disagreed with the statement. Many of the counselors (81.34%) agreed that the students studied course material before coming to counseling sessions, while 14.22% of the counselors stayed neutral and 4.44% of the counselors disagreed.

The counselors (90.67%) felt that the students are satisfied with the content of the lessons (SLM) developed by the University. A small minority of the counselors disagreed (0.88) and 8% of the counselors stayed neutral.

93.33% of the counselors agreed that the students are provided with up-to-date knowledge during the counseling sessions, while, 0.899% of the counselors strongly disagreed and 4.44% of the counselors were neutral.

The counselors were mostly employing different models of presentation to the learners for clear understanding of the subject, both off line and online (86.23%), while 13.77% did not employ different models of presentation to the learners.

The counselors felt that the students are being provided with recorded audio and video lessons (78.67%), while 19.11% remained neutral and 2.22% of the counselors disagreed with the statement.

71. 11% of the counselors agreed that they received complaints from the students regarding curriculum. 17.78% of the counselors remained neutral and 12.88% of the counselors disagreed, implying that they did not receive any complaints about curriculum.

94.67% of the counselors agreed that their instructional activities are aligned with the learning outcomes. A small minority (1.7%) disagreed and 3.11% of the counselors were neutral on the statement.

91.56 % of the counselors agreed to the statement the assessment systems are developed based on the learning outcomes, while 0.88% disagreed with the statement and 7.56% of the counselors stayed neutral.

Table - III : FEEDBACK FROM SUBJECT EXPERTS ABOUT CURRICULUM

Statement	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)
1. You were briefed about the teaching methods of Dr.BRA OU at the time of Curriculum Design Development meetings.	89.7	10.2	0	0	0
2. Learning outcomes of programs were discussed before finalizing the Curri culum.	86.9	12.1	0.93	0	0
3. Subject Expert Committees reviewed the curri culum based on UGC's model and State Council's recommendations.	81.30	18.69	0	0	0
4. SLM Guidelines were provided for development of the curriculum.	77.57	20.56	1.86	0	0
5. You were involved in the curriculum review process.	77.57	19.62	2.80	0	0
6. Audio, Video, Radio lessons were planned in support of the curriculum	76.63	20.56	1.86	0.93	0
7. The Curriculum of your subject is updated from time to time	80.37	18.69	0.93	0	0

Statement	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)
8. The curriculum matches with the level of the programme	79.43	18.69	0.93	0.93	0
9. Evaluation processes were also planned on the basis of learning outcomes by subject experts.	79.43	16.82	2.80	0.93	0
10.The Self - Learning Materials are Learner Centric.	86.91	12.14	0.93	0	0
11.The Curriculum was developed keeping in view the enhancement of core knowledge and employable skills.	85.98	12.14	1.86	0	0
12.The practical training sessions were sufficiently well-incorporated	83.17	13.08	3.73	0	0

Analysis of Feedback Data from Subject Experts on Curriculum :

Out of 300 subject experts who were given the questionnaire, 107 subject experts responded to the survey on curriculum.

99.9 % of the subject experts agreed that they were briefed about the teaching methods of Dr. BRAOU at the time of curriculum design and development meetings and most of the subject experts agreed that the learning outcomes of the programmes were discussed before finalizing the curriculum (99%).

The subject experts agreed (100%) that the subject expert committees reviewed the curriculum based on UGC's model and State Council's recommendations. All the subject experts agreed that the Self Learning Material (SLM) guidelines were provided to them for development of the curriculum (98.13%) while a small percent of the subject experts (1.86%) stayed neutral.

97.19% set of the subject experts said that they were involved in the curriculum review process, while 2.8% of the subject experts stayed neutral. The subject experts agreed that Audio/Video lessons were planned in support of the curriculum (97.19%), while (1.86%) of the subject experts stayed neutral and a small percentage disagreed (0.93%).

The curriculum of the subjects was found to be updated from time to time by 99.16% of the subject experts. There seems to be concurrence among the subject experts about the statement that the subject curriculum matches with the level of the programme. A small percentage stayed neutral (0.93%) and a small percentage disagreed (0.93%).

The subject experts found that the evaluation processes were planned on the basis of learning outcomes (96.25%) and the self learning materials are learner-centric (99.25%).

The subject experts agreed that the curriculum was developed keeping in view the enhancement of core knowledge and employable skills (98.12%) and they also agreed that the practical sessions were sufficiently well-incorporated in curriculum (96.25%).

Table -IV : FEEDBACK FROM TEACHERS OFTHE UNIVERSITY ABOUT CURRICULUM

Statement	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)
1. The curriculum is in accordance with the UGC and State Council's model curriculum.	95	5	--	--	--
2. The Need Analysis been done before finalizing the curriculum	95	5	--	--	--
3. All your instruc tional activities are aligned with the learning outcomes	95	5	--	--	--
4. The learning out comes framed are useful for the enhan cement of the core knowledge and employability skills.	95	5	--	--	--
5. The University updates the curri culum from time- to- time based on the UGC and State Council recommen dations.	95	5	--	--	--
6. The curriculum and course material supplied by the University motivates the students.	80	20	--	--	--

Statement	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)
7. The self-learning material is ready before the commen cement counselling classes.	85	15	--	--	--
8. The students are satisfied with the course materials supplied by the University.	85	15	--	--	--
9. The science stu dents are suffi ciently exposed to hands- on training.	85	10	5	--	--
10.The assessment system developed is based on the lear ning outcomes.	95	5	--	--	--

Analysis of Feedback Data from Teachers of the University, about curriculum:

Out of 60 teachers who were given the questionnaire, all the 60 teachers from the University responded to the survey on the curriculum. All the counsellors agreed :

1) The curriculum is in accordance with the UGC's and State council's model of curriculum (100%)

2) The needs analysis has been done before finalizing the curriculum (100%).

3) The instructional activities are aligned with the learning outcomes (100%)

4) The learning outcomes framed are useful for the enhancement of the core knowledge and employability skills (100%)

5) The University updates the curriculum from time – to – time, based on the UGC and State Council's recommendations (100%).

6) The curriculum and course material supplied by the University motivates the students (100%)

7) The self learning material is ready before the commencement of counselling classes (100%)

8) The students are satisfied with the course material supplied by the University. (95%), 5% of the teachers stayed neutral.

9) The Science students are sufficiently exposed to hands – on- training (95%). 5% of the teachers stayed neutral.

10) The assessment system developed is based on the learning outcomes (100%)

V. FEEDBACK FROM ALUMNI ABOUT CURRICULUM

Statement	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)
1. I feel proud to be associated with Dr. BRAOU as an alumnus.	88.42	10.74	0.82	0	0
2. My admission process into Dr. BRAOU is smooth and transparent	78.51	21.48	0	0	0
3. My doubts and queries have been attended by the help-desk members	76.03	20.66	3.30	0	0
4. I received course material on time.	61.98	35.53	1.65	0.82	0
5. The quality of Resource Persons is good.	70.24	28.92	0	0.82	0
6. I am satisfied with the content and updating of sylla bus from time-to-time.	66.94	30.57	0.82	162	0
7. I am satisfied with the printed course material.	62.80	33.05	4.13	0	0
8. I am satisfied with the electronic cour se material.	64.46	30.57	4.13	0.82	0
9. I am satisfied with the curriculum design	65.28	32.23	2.17	0	0

Statement	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)
10.The infrastructure at University/ Study Centre is adequate.	60.33	36.36	3.30	0	0
11.The assessment and evaluation at Dr. BRAOU is objective.	69.42	29.75	0.82	0	0
12.I gained ade quate knowledge during my course of study at Dr. BRAOU.	66.11	30.57	3.30	0	0
13.The study at Dr. BRAOU helped me to pursue higher education.	58.67	31.40	9.09	0.82	0
14.The Open Uni versity programmes helped me in getting employ ment.	71.90	25.61	2.47	0	0
15.The overall experi ence from admis sion to awarding degree is good.	76.03	22.31	1.65	0	0
16.Iam positively impa cted during my stu dy at Dr. BRAOU.	62.80	31.40	4.95	0.82	0
17.The study at Dr. BRAOU has helped me to upscale my career.	65.28	29.75	4.95	0	0
18.I recommend my friends and relative to study at Dr. BRAOU.	68.59	30.57	0.82	0	0

Feed back of Alumni about the curriculum:

Out of the 200 Alumni members supplied with the questionnaire, 121 responded to the feedback on curriculum and their interaction with the University.

1. 99.16% of the Alumni were proud to be associated with Dr. BRAOU

2. 100% of the learners agreed that their admission to Dr. BRAOU was smooth and transparent.

3. 96.69% agreed that their doubts and queries have been attended by the help desk.

4. 97.51% agreed that they received the course material on time. 1.65% were neutral in this regard and 0.82% disagreed.

5. 99.16% of the Alumni members surveyed agreed that the quality of resource persons was good, while 0.82% of the members surveyed did not find the quality of resource persons good.

6. 97.51% of the Alumni surveyed were satisfied with the content and updation of syllabus from time to time. 1.65% of the Alumni members surveyed seem to be unsatisfied with the content and updation of the syllabus. 0.82% stayed neutral

7. 95.85% of the Alumni members surveyed were satisfied with the printed course material and 4.13% remained neutral about printed course material.

8. 95.03% were satisfied with electronic course material supplied by the University. 0.82% were not satisfied with the electronic course material and 4.13% stayed neutral on this aspect.

9. 87.51% of the Alumni members surveyed were satisfied with curriculum design. 2.47% were neutral on this aspect.

10. 96.69% of the Alumni members surveyed agreed that the infrastructure at University/study centre was adequate. 3.3% remained neutral.

11. The assessment and evaluation was found to be objective by 99.17% of the Alumni members surveyed.

12. The Alumni who responded to the survey agreed that their study at Dr. BRAOU helped them to gain adequate knowledge (96.68%).

13. 90.07% of Alumni members who responded to the survey agreed that study at Dr. BRAOU helped them to pursue higher education. 9.09% stayed neutral and 0.82% disagreed with the statement.

14. 97.5% of the Alumni members surveyed agreed that the Open University programmes helped them to get employment.

15. The overall experience from admission to awarding of the degrees at Dr. BRAOU was found to be good by 98.34% of the Alumni surveyed.

16. Dr. BRAOU was found to positively impact the Alumni members (94.2%).

17. The Alumni members surveyed agreed, that Dr. BRAOU helped them to upscale their careers (95.03%).

18. 99.16% of the Alumni surveyed said that they would recommend their friends and relatives to study in Dr. BRAOU

Inferences :

Most of the learners seem to have a positive feel about curriculum and its transaction in Dr. BRAOU It is however, interesting to note that a small minority of learners (ranging from 10.89 – to 5.15%), stayed neutral on different statements, which indicates that they may not be aware of the curricular processes of the University to the extent needed. A small minority of students disagreed with the statements (7.32%-1.59%) showing that some of the learners were not completely content with the curricular transaction processes. The timely delcaration of results, accessibility of online programmes like seminars was contested by small minority of learners pointing to fact the these issues have to be addressed by the University.

This feedback from counselors about curriculum tells us that the counselors agree that the course material was supplied to learners before the commencement of the examinations and that the curriculum is transacted in accordance with the UGC's and State council's model of curriculum. The self learning printed material was found to be clear and relevant. The teaching plan was prepared by most of the counselors (92%). The counselors agreed that the students were supplied with course material and they were satisfied with the SLM developed by the University and they are provided with up-to-date knowledge about counseling sessions. However, 84% of the counselors were employing different models of presentation for understanding of learners while, 13.77% refrained from employing different models of presentation in counseling classes (both online and offline). Although many counselors provided the learners with audio and video component (78%), 22% of the counselors were not using audio/video component in their lessons. Complaints regarding curriculum were received by 70% of the counselors but the remaining counselors did not have any complaints from the learners. This indicates that complaints were received by counsellors from students regarding curriculum. The counselors agreed to a great extent that all instructional activities are aligned with the learning outcomes. The assessment systems developed are based on the learning outcomes (91-93%) but 7.56% remained neutral on the assessment systems being based on learning outcomes of the learners.

It is found that the counselors are convinced about the suitability of curriculum to learners but are not adopting technology (presentation models or audio./video material) hundred percent. The counselors are aware that the students have certain complaints about the curriculum (70%). Over all, the SLM, curriculum model, teaching plan, conduction of counseling sessions by the University and aligning of learning outcomes to instructional activities and assessment systems (91-93%) were found to be satisfactory by the counselors.

However, the counselors may have to bring new presentation models to the classroom (online/offline) and update their counseling in terms of new technology in the near future to make curricular transaction effective.

The subject experts' views affirm to a great extent there was involvement of subject experts in curriculum design, development and on the general aspects of curricular planning and the key aspects of curriculum like incorporation of audio/video components, practical training, skill component, preparation of self learning material, evaluation processes. The subject experts agreed that there was curriculum review from time to time and the learning outcomes of the programmes were in concurrence with the curriculum.

The feedback from the teachers of the University is found to be positive and they seem to agree with all the statements about the curriculum adopted by the University and the way it is delivered to the learners. This may be due to the fact that they are well aware of the functioning of curricular processes of the university and are involved in them.

The Alumni members surveyed seem to be proud to be associated with Dr. BRAOU and agreed that their experience with the University, right from admissions to examinations was smooth and that they are satisfied with the course material, curriculum design and resource persons. Majority of Alumni members surveyed (90 -100%) agreed that their study at Dr. BRAOU was rewarding and that they were positively impacted and their study at Dr. BRAOU helped them to up-scale their careers. Overall, the Alumni members surveyed for the feedback seem to be satisfied about the teaching-learning aspects of curriculum and its impact on their lives.

Conclusions :

1) The feedback from students about counselling indicates that the students have expectations from counsellors to provide more learner-centric methods in class and general guidance to them.

2) The students' feedback about curriculum indicates that a small percentage of them have complaints regarding the study material, examination results, grievance redressal mechanism and timeliness of internal assignment schedules.

3) The feedback from counsellors also indicates that different models of presentation for clear understanding of the subjects and provision of audio/video component needs to be improved upon. Some amount of time should also be assigned for receiving and addressing the complaints from students regarding curriculum.

4) Feedback from subject experts about curriculum is found to be positive and they seem to be aware of University's goals and objectives.

5) Feedback from teachers of the University about the University curriculum and it's transactions is also found to be positive. This shows that the teachers are aware of the objectives of the University with regard to curriculum and that they are aware of the University's learning goals and learning outcomes that are expected out of the course curriculum.

6) The feedback from alumni shows their satisfaction with the services of the University and their overall satisfaction with their learning experiences at Dr. BRAOU

In general, this feedback survey helped to understand the impact of curriculum adopted by Dr. BRAOU on various stake-holders.

Recommendations :

Based on the analysis of feedback data from different stake-holders – learners, subject experts, teachers of the University, counsellors, alumni, certain corrective measures are to be taken by the University.

1) Counsellors are to be provided training with regard to induction of technology in their counselling classes.

2) The counsellors should be trained to streamline the grievances of the students to the university through established channels of grievance-redressal mechanism. An interactive website with access to study centre counsellors, who can channalize the student compliants with regard to curricular transaction may be an effective means for active redressal of student compliants.

3) Training sessions to counselors about the university's modus operandi with regard to different policies, curricular transaction, examination and evaluation patterns and their schedules to counsellors will in turn help them to convey information about these aspects to distance learners at different Learner Support Centres.

4) Usage of Technology to reach students more intensively in their home – front, so as to communicate with them about the ongoing processes of teaching-learning, evaluation, extra-curricular activities through aninteractive website and through other communication technologies should be explored.

OER AND ODL

*Dr G. Lakshmi**

Abstract

Open Educational Resources [OER] and Open and Distance Learning [ODL] system seem to have a natural linkage. Both these concepts are based on the principle of 'openness', which is open access to education and educational resources.

The OER open a new world of potential for Open and Distance Education. They play a significant role in improving higher education, as they offer not only the advantages of open access to educational resources but expand knowledge through the tenets of reuse, recycle and redistribute.

This paper discusses how OER can support Open and Distance Education and analyses the benefits that accrue from OER to the ODL universities/ institutions.In addition, the author proposes developing a website consisting of all knowledge repositories that are built by integrating the ODL-related OER.

Introduction

Open Educational Resources [OER], when first coined as a definite term at the 2002 UNESCO Forum, was defined as "open provision of educational resources, enabled by Information and Communication Technologies, for consultation, use and adaptation by a community of users for non-commercial purposes." [UNESCO, 2002, p.24] Hence, the main objective of OER initiative worldwide is to explore ways and means to create, share and evolve open educational learning materials.

Open and Distance Learning (ODL) is a system or approach to education that seeks to remove all unnecessary barriers to learning with an aim to provide educational opportunities to all those, who for some reason or the other, could not get access to mainstream education. Since ODL institutions engage in an ongoing investment in the development of learning materials, using OER in developing learning objects would help then to save both time and cost. So

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also,sharing distance education learning resources as OER will help further to open access to quality learning opportunities.

The Study: The study is relatively broad-based and the time-tested library-cum-reference method has been adopted. Reference material for this paperhas been culled out from relevant books, periodical literature, cross-references from other books and handouts of seminars and workshops on OER. A major part of data was obtained from e-resources.

Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to explore how OER and ODL can support each other to achieve common goals and how both can synergise to create a knowledge society.

OER are educational materials that may be freely accessed, reused, modified and shared. The author believes integrating OER into higher education in general, and ODL institutions in particular, in India, promise a lot of returns. To this end, the decision-makers in government and ODL institutions should be encouraged to invest in the systematic production, adaptation and use of OER and to bring them into the mainstream of higher education thereby improving the quality of curricula and teaching. Indira Gandhi National Open University's. e-Gyankosh and FlexiLearn portals, OER courseware on Sakshat – one-stop education portal of the Ministry of Human Resource Development, government of India,are cases in point.

The concept of OER

Although the OER concept emerged during UNESCO forum in 2002, it has got worldwide attention rapidly.Since the last decade, OER activities have been taking place globally— the promotion, sharing and use of OER.

OER are teaching-learning and research materials in any medium that reside in the public and have been released under an open licence that permits access, use, re-purposing, re-use and re-distribution by others with no or limited restrictions [Atkins, Brown & Hammond, 2007, p.4]

The Commonwealth of Learning and UNESCO, in their book entitled, "A Basic Guide to Open Educational Resources (OER)", edited by Butcher and Kanwar [2011, p.5], gave a comprehensive definition of OER as:

"Any educational resources (including curriculum, maps, course materials, text-books, streaming videos, multi-media applications, podcasts and any other materials that have been designed for use in teaching and learning) that are openly available for use by educators and students, without an accompanying need to pay royalties or licence fees."

Butcher and Kanwar [2011, p.6] clarify that OER is not the same as *e*-learning or open learning/ education. However, it is, to some extent, synonymous with Open Course Ware.

Hyleen [2006, p.2] says that openness demands free availability, minimum restrictions, no technical as well as price barriers, and minimum permission barriers for the end-users. Geser [2007,p.20] contends that the aim of OER is educational leveraging and the open in the OER implies four aspects of "open" – open access, open licensed, open format and open software. Openness is about removal of restrictions involved in accessing learning resources from copyright regulations to financial constraints.

In the Creative Commons portal,www.whyopenedmatters.org/faq/index.html, one of the answers to FAQ mentions that users of OER can engage in 4 'R' activities while using them, such as:

• **Revise:** adapt and improve OERs so it better meets your needs

• **Reuse:** use the original or your new version of the OER in a wide range of contexts

• **Remix:** combine or "mashup" the OER with other OER to produce new materials

• **Redistribute:** make copies and share the original OER or your new version with others

Thus, OER are quite flexible in the sense, they allow use, reuse and adaptation of materials for local contexts and learning environments, while the authors have their work acknowledged.

Significance of OER

OER is a unique and harmonious blend of traditional and modern approaches. It is traditional in the sense; it signifies the revival of intellectual philanthropy in the teaching-learning process, that is, teaching without expectation of any monetary benefits. It is modern in the sense, it utilizes the recent technology and has the potential to provide the right to education for all.

OER has the potential to provide evenly balanced educational opportunities to every human being, irrespective of geographical, religious or race differences. In short, it can act as a great equaliser in any society.

OER includes all educationally useful materials such as course materials, modules, student guides, teaching notes, textbooks, research articles, videos, interactive materials, databases, software applications, including mobile apps, assessment tools and instruments. Many OER are not only basically shareable

in a digital format, but they are also printable. Thus, OER can benefit millions of individuals as well as educational institutions

The ODL context

In the present globalised world and knowledge societies, higher education institutions play a major role in socio-economic development. However, higher education institutions face immense challenges in meeting growing demands for enrolment, while there is no equivalent increase in the human and financial resources [from the government] to the higher education sector.

Most of the open universities in India are incorporating ICTs into their management, administration and educational programmes in order to serve their learners more cost-effectively. They are in the process of adopting better ways and means to reach the unreached while ensuring high quality and relevant educational opportunities. However, in India, access to software, hardware and Internet connectivity remain challenges.

At the same time, ICTs are phenomenally increasing the transfer of information through global communication systems leading to an explosion of information and collective sharing of knowledge. This opens up opportunities for knowledge creation and dissemination of all educational resources to the learners.

This ever-growing impact of ICTs has created unique challenges for higher education institutions in general and ODL institutions in particular, in the form of increased competitiveness from private institutions. It has become increasingly important for higher educational institutions to support ongoing programmes with quality teaching and learning materials, develop and improve curricula and learning materials, conduct interactive contact sessions with and among students and develop effective assessment tools for diverse environments.

OER can play a significant role in this process. Using and adapting OER by ODL institutions might be a cost-effective way of investing in design and development of learning materials. At this juncture, it is imperative to mention the potential of OER to benefit higher education/ODL systems.

Benefits of OER-ODL integration

Over the past two decades or so, increased online access to OER has promoted individualised study. As mentioned earlier, the key benefit of OER is that they are 'free' and the open content can be shared with others without permission and without paying licence or any access fee.

According to OECD [2007, p.11], using and integrating OER by educational institutions for teaching-learning promises the following returns:

- The altruistic argument that sharing knowledge is in line with academic traditions and a good thing to do.

- Educational institutions (particularly those publicly financed) should leverage taxpayers' money by allowing free sharing and reuse of resources.

- Quality can be improved and the cost of content development reduced by sharing and Reusing. It is good for the institution's public relations to have an OER project as a showcase for attracting new students.

- There is a need to look for new cost recovery models as institutions experience growing competition.

- Open sharing will speed up the development of new learning resources, stimulate internal improvement, innovation and reuse and help the institution to keep good records of materials and their internal and external use

Bossu, Brown and Bull [2012 p.6], based on their survey enlisted the benefits of OER for teaching-learning process as follows:

- Educators can save time and avoid duplication of effort.

- OER can improve the quality of educational learning materials.

- OER have the potential to increase collaboration within an institution and internationally.

- OER help to enhance quality of teaching and learning in higher education.

An OER project is a good marketing strategy to showcase the institution and attract new students.
An OER project will raise the international profile of an institution within the global community.
OER use is a catalyst for institutional innovation. The use of OER has the potential to lead to new pedagogical practices, increasing efficiency in time and/or money and improvement of the quality of teaching resources.
OER with their transformative educational potential can help collaborations among ODL institutions and extend the benefits of sharing educational resources.
Usually, distance education services were offered to a limited number of students because of their production, reproduction and distribution costs. OER act as enablers or facilitators to expand the services of distance education and realise its twin motto of 'education at your doorstep' and 'reaching the unreached', in the true sense of the term.OER has been enabled and facilitated by the advancement of ICT – the Internet. The prime objective of OER is to

provide access to learning opportunities to those who would not otherwise be able to get them.

Several universities world over are already engaged with national and global initiatives related to OERs

Suggestions and Conclusion

From the foregoing discussion, it can be inferred that by integrating and adapting OER, the ODL universities can contribute to the UNESCO policy of 'Education for all', in capacity building, as well as in widening participation and access.

In this context, the ODL universities/institutions have to consider OER at three levels:

i] at the institutional level, the ODL universities/institutionswill need to develop its own policies and standards. This includes course design standards, intellectual property policies, and faculty release agreements. They need to set-up technological infrastructure to create repositories/portals to store, manage and share educational resources and content, both internally and externally.

ii] at the academic level, the teaching staff should be supported for OER development skills;and they should be trained to assemble, adapt, contextualise/ localise existing OER.

iii] at the learners level, they should be encouraged to use OER for the purpose of self-learning. They should also be encouraged to create their own OER repositories through social networking. The learners can become active participants or even partners to the academic staff in the educational process.

OER has gained global prominence within educational circles, particularly those related to open and distance education and experience shows that ODL institutions are supposed to be the largest consumer/user and contributor to OER. Its adaptability in distance education would suit the teaching-learning conditions of providing quality education to distance learners.

In the present era, where there are problems of high costs and sustainability in education and budget cuts, there is a need to use OER, which are cost-effective. OER can be printed like textbooks thus allowing learners to save the cost of text-books. For those institutions that use outdated technology and inadequate teaching materials that cannot be updated, customised or localised to meet diverse needs of learners, use of OER is the best option.

Open Educational Resources are an innovation, giving new opportunities for open and distance learning. By integrating, adapting and using OER, the ODL

institutions can get a unique opportunity to deliver the universal right to education.

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Feedback Survey on Practical Training in Mathematics at UG Level in Dr. BRAOU

Dr. K. Sridevi *

Abstract

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar Open University is offering Mathematics as one of the main Subjects at Undergraduate level from the Academic Year 1983-84. Mathematics is one of the Optional Subjects in Undergraduate Programme in the 3 year Degree Programme. Initially the Programme was offered as annual programme. From the Academic Year 2017-2018, the UG Programme is offered as **Choice Based Credit System** (CBCS) in Semester pattern. In this regard, the Department of Mathematics introduced Practical Training Component on par with other science subjects in both Telugu and English medium. The purpose of this paper is to analyse the benefits for learners in introducing the practical component in Mathematics Subject at UG level in Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University, as a case study.

Introduction of Practical Training in Mathematics at UG Level

Introduction of the Practical Training Component in Mathematics at UG level in Dr. BRAOU is aimed at enhancing the cognitive skills of Learners. One of the important aspects of introducing Practical Training Component in Mathematics teaching is to develop the ability to internalize problem solving skills in Students. In small group settings, in a class room situation, face to face interaction occurs between the learners and the counsellor and problem solving techniques are imparted and personal attention is given to the learners.

The duration of practical training classes for mathematics in U.G. is 24 hrs. A Mathematics student (or any Science Student) must attend 70% of the practical sessions to become eligible to write the practical examinations. The students are advised to attend the Mathematics (or any Science Subject) practical sessions without fail. If a student fails to attend the practical sessions, he/she should complete the training in the subsequent academic year.

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Examination Pattern

(a) Out of 5 credits, 4 credits are assigned to Theory and 1 credit to Practical classes. Accordingly, 20 marks are assigned to the practical examination in Mathematics every semester and totally 160 out of 600 marks are allotted totally for all the six semesters. 5th and 6th semesters have additional electives. The practical examination question paper examines the problem solving skills of the students for 16 marks and 4 marks are allotted for record maintenance every semester.

Learning Outcomes of Practical component in Mathematics at UG Level

- Learners acquire in-depth knowledge of Algebra, Calculus, Geometry, Differential Equations and several other branches of Mathematics.
- The students are familiarized with tools of Mathematical Analysis to handle issues and problems in Mathematics.
- Students acquire good knowledge and understanding to solve specific theoretical and applied problems in advanced areas of Mathematics.
- Learners gain sufficient knowledge and skills enabling them to undertake further studies in Mathematics and its allied areas concerned with Mathematics.
- Students develop a range of generic skills helpful in employment, internships and social activities.

Methodology :

A survey on students who studied mathematics as an optional subject at U.G. Level and have undergone practical training in mathematics in the years 2020, 2021, 2022 were given a questionnaire on the practical component in mathematics teaching. The students were randomly selected from the students who passed in mathematics exams in the three year degree course. Out of 463 learners served with the questionnaire at BRAOU campus study centre, 452 students responded. The results were analysed and the percentage of responses (yes/no) was calculated.

The questionnaire and the percentage of learners' agreement with the statements are tabulated in the Table given below.

Table : Percentage of Learners who agreed with the statements in the questionnaire

	Statement	% of learners who agreed with the statement
1.	The Practical-sessions brought in me a new perspective in learning Mathematics Subject.	93.36%
2.	The Practical-sessions helped me to develop cognitive skills in Mathematics.	100 %
3.	The Practical-sessions helped me to know the problem solving techniques.	100 %
4.	The Practical-sessions helped me to learn how to apply mathematical methods.	100 %
5.	The Practical-sessions helped me to understand Theory course material better.	100%
6.	The Practical-sessions helped me to prepare for Theory examinations.	89.60%
7.	The Practical-sessions helped me to pass in Theory examinations	92.03%
8.	The Practical-sessions helped me to sustain my interest in mathematics subject.	85.39%
9.	The Practical-sessions made the whole course more interesting.	81.19%
10.	The Practical-sessions was a special experience itself.	100%
11.	The Practical-sessions helped me to interact with my classmates.	100%
12.	The Practical-sessions helped me to interact with the counsellor.	100%

Results :

The learners agreed that the practical sessions in Mathematics helped them to develop cognitive skills, problems solving techniques, application of mathematical methods and understand the theory course material in mathematics better (100%). They also agreed that the practical sessions were a special experience to them (100%) and helped them to interact with the counsellors and their classmates (100%). However, some of the students did not agree with the statement that the practical sessions helped them to sustain interest in mathematics subject (85.39). Some of them also did not agree with the statement that the sessions made the whole course more interesting (81.19%). Mostly the learners agreed that the practical component helped them to prepare for theory examinations (89.6%) and to pass in theory examinations (92.03%) and also brought a new perspective in learning mathematics in them (93.36%).

Conclusion :

This feedback study is a preliminary study to understand the learners' feelingsabout the introduction of practical component in mathematics at U.G. level in Dr.BRAOU. It is felt that the practical sessions should be enriched with more interesting experiments and involve the students. The learners should also be made aware of the significance of practical classes to the overall course structure and their relationship to the theoretical aspects of mathematics right at the beginning of the first semester. From this feedback survey, it was found that the introduction of practical component in Mathematics subject was generally welcomed by learners and the benefits accrued to the learners by the introduction of practical classes in mathematics at degree level are many.

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OUTCOME BASED EDUCATION AND ODL SYSTEMS

Dr.V.V. Kanakadurga *

"ALL EDUCATION IS OUTCOME BASED"

Introduction

Outcome based Education is the new slogan in Education and it has caught the attention of Policy makers in the recent years. The philosophy of Open Distance Learning (ODL) basically believes in addressing the non-formal learner clientele and ensuring that their learning is outcome – based. Outcome based education has gained prominence in recent years with increasing awareness of educationists on the failings of modern educational systems and the need to rectify the same.

The change from industrial age to information age necessitates change in educational settings and structures. The new age changes in technology and economic and social structures of the world emphasize adoptability, interpersonal competence and the ability to deal with complex, open ended issues and work out solutions for newly emerging problems.

While ODL tries to address the learning needs of disadvantaged / marginalized sections of the society who do not have access to education due to various reasons in the formal stream of education, Outcome based education tries to deal with failings of modern day educational system which could not deliver desired results inspite of concentration of resources. ODL offers to bring out certain learning outcomes through its programmes learners who have had no recourse to formal learning. Outcome based education, on the other hand brings in a positive outlook and promises to look at ways to address the issues that have cropped up in the modern educational system. In that way, both are result oriented and try to address certain pitfalls in the educational sector.

There is increased demand to accept Outcome – Based Education in ODL systems also. This requires a critical analysis, as the needs of the distance learners vary from those of formal learners and the ODL curriculum incorporates course programme outcomes in its self-learning material, teaching – learning activities and assessment methods. This paper analyses outcome based education, its relevance to ODL and the extent to which the concept of outcome based education can be adapted to ODL systems.

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Outcome based Education

Outcome based Education builds everything on clearly defined frame work of exit – outcomes. Curriculum instruction and assessment are viewed, as flexible and alterable means for accomplishing clearly defined learning outcomes or 'ends'. Outcome based systems focus on ultimate performance abilities of students to the highest possible level. This is directly reflected in what students can do successfully after their instructional programme has ended. According to Spawdy, the author of 'outcome-based Education' (1994) 'what' and 'whether' students learn successfully is important then when' and 'how' they learn. The outcome based Education (OBE) focuses on exits – outcomes, which give the institutions a clear purpose and goal for operating and flexibility to learners who would want expanded opportunity, to be successful. The standards are set and the students must perform all the criteria of the defined performance to a defined standard, which are established at the outset itself (Criterion-based standards). The premises of Outcome - based Education (OBE) are :

1) All students can learn and succeed but not at the same time and in the same way.

2) Successful learning promotes more successful learning.

3) Institutions control students which directly affects their successful learning.

These premises are offshoots of Howard Gardner's multiple intelligent theory.

Open Distance and Learning (ODL) systems :

The designing of curriculum, delivery of instruction and documentation results and determining the levels of advancement of students are well integrated in the open distance learning (ODL). The paradigm of distance education provides students with a purpose for learning and learning outcomes are built in to the system and curriculum. This has helped ODL to withstand the rigors of time and has become a popular way of learning, for learners who cannot afford time and money and to those who have missed the chance to study in formal institutions of learning

However, there is a fundamental glitch here, In the formal educational System, Outcome based education entails a fundamental shift on how educational systems operate – a shift that makes 'accomplishing results' more important then simply 'providing services'. Implicit in the OBE paradigm is a desire to have all students emerge from the system/institution as genuinely successful learners. These outcomes can be achieved and maximized for all students by

having structural and operating principles in place. However, the focus on accomplishment of results can be counter productive to learning.

OBE also assumes, that institutions have to change the way they operate to fulfill their obligations to learners and equip them with exit-outcomes or competencies.

This would require that the academic inputs in the curriculum must be thoroughly researched, updated and enriched before they are introduced in the curricular frame work of ODL system. The ODL system however, takes care to see that the curriculum is Outcome based. For better results in learning achievement, 'providing services' to learners is also an essential aspect and these services need to be built in the functioning of Learners support services / Examination services, which would make OBE a reality in ODL systems. Teaching time or duration of learning opportunities and frequency of learning by which learners can be engaged and the precise timing are ways by which such opportunities for learning can be used by learners. Provision of opportunity for learning both synchronously and asynchronously can make an impact on learners.'The concept of opportunity' is one such dimension which involves the methods and modalities of learning provided to a learner at a particular time in an academic year. In ODL, these opportunities are given at a particular timing and academic year. Flexibility / provision of such services repeatedly enhance students' success rate.

To work effectively with learners with different learning styles in ODL systems, the teachers may use different instructional methods and modes which would expand opportunities for successful learning.

Clarity of focus can be achieved by establishing clear goals and targets for learning performance which can enhance learning. High expectations and informing these expectations to students can open up the students' motivational levels and help them to succeed. Such a design-down process provides clear directions to students to achieve desired learning levels.

Assessing the performance levels of students by defining them clearly at the outset and applying same standards to all students can make assessment just and justifiable. Rather then setting a competitive / comparative system of evaluation wherein some students excel, while some students fail or have limited chance for success, it is better that no limits are imposed and all students are given opportunities to reach a given performance level and succeed. If opportunities for critical learning experiences are given repeatedly throughout a student's career, there is more likelihood of improvement in learning and internalization of learning. In the above scenario, students must perform all criteria of a defined standard to be called successful. If the standard is not met,

the student is still responsible for meeting it. The conditions to 'earn' an extended opportunity to perform at a higher level must be established at the outset of the learning experiences itself. Such a scnario needs raising standards and also increasing motivation in students to succeed. Along with in built freedom and flexibility, a deterministic' role is given the students so that the student is able to meet the prescribed goals and become successful learners and do not go haywire in their attempts because of the flexibility offered, which is the hallmark of ODL systems.

ODL institutions and OBE

1) Clarity of focus : This can results in significant Exit-outcomes. The programmes and their outcomes must be clearly spelt out before the launching of a programme. There should be a clear cut design – down process and operational structures in the organization, which govern key patterns of action and decision making. Clear performance standards, curriculum instructions, guidelines of assessment should be clearly spelt out. Programme manuals to such effect should be initially published and circulated.

2) Strategic design : There should be linkage to institutional framework and exit outcomes of programmes and operating priorities should be explicitly spelled out. This process also involves careful analysis of information pertaining to curriculum which may also incorporate future trends and conditions. Educational planning and planning the curriculum should be based on needs – analysis and structuring of information and transforming information and real Such information should be transferred to the stakeholders through processes and modes that are compatible with the curricular requirements.

3) The instructional planning and delivery: This should be multimodal in order to ensure student success in performance at Exit level. The difference in students' learning rates and learning styles should not be barriers to successful learning but must be seen as factors that must be designed and interwoven into sound instructional practices of the institution.

4) Flexibility of learning opportunities : Expanding opportunities with respect to flexibility in time as well as number of opportunities provided to learners, can enhance learning success for students.

5) Clear Rubric : Having a clear rubric for exit outcomes and well defined criteria to access the essential attributes of a successful performance can result in quality evaluation practices.

Conclusion :

ODL accounts for about 12% of total enrollment in the segment of higher education. ODL belies outcome based education. However, enabling outcomes to learners vary from generation to generation. In this context, it is always preferable that the ODL institutions check the learning outcomes of their existing programmes and when the required outcomes change they should be reconsidered and the curriculum should be suitably restructured and re-designed. Today, higher grade expectances like problems solving, critical thinking, decision making, communication and skill learning are gaining increased significance. The learning outcomes besides cognitive capacities, also involve social, ethical, emotional capacities and dispositions. This would require restructuring and redesigning of programmes ('Re-Imagining Assessment And Accreditation in Higher Education in India white paper – by National Assessment and Accreditation Council, NAAC, July, 2022). It is therefore an undeniable fact that OBE has become a structural component of Curriculum planning and implementation of all educational systems, including ODL.

The changing demands of the clientele, state and society and the employability factors are impinging on educational sector. Outcome based education gives rise to expanded opportunity, performance credentialing and inclusionary success. This requires concept integration in curriculum and instructional co-opting and collaboration. Criterion – validation is required during assessment for addressing quality concerns. Underlying the OBE movement, there is a demand for change in curriculum suitable to modern day needs and this would imply large scale reinterpretation and restructuring of curriculum in all HEIs and ODL systems in alignment with expected outcomes.

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Reimaginning Indian Universities

Pankaj Mittal and Sistla Rama Devi Pani (eds.)

Reviewer : Prof. E. Sudha Rani*

India, a pioneer in knowledge systems and universities right from ancient times, has to come up with modern Universities in 1857 under British regime. Later the number of Universities has risen and now the Indian Higher Education System is the third largest in the world, with a total number of 1113 Universities and 43, 996 colleges and 11246 stand alone Universities. Yet in terms of Gross enrollment Maintained Ratio (GER) it stands about 26.3 persent, a far cry from the GER of less developed nations. With a target of a GER of 50 by 2035, there is still a gap in the number of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) that are required.

The challenges posed in terms of five 'e's are : Enrollment, excellence, equity, employability and entrepreneurship, which are persistent challanges and universities have to reinvent themselves to meet the demands of the 21st Century. To meets this obligation, The Association of Indian Universities, has come out with the book 'Reimagining Indian Universities'.

New initiatives with the onset of NEP-2020 are visible. The emphasis on multidisciplinary universities and on Research by setting up Natural Research Foundation (NRF) are such benchmarks.

The book has foreword by Ramesh Pokriyal, the Union Minister for Ministry of Education, Government of India, a preamble by Tej Pratap, President, AIU and preface by the editors.

The book is organized in to various subsections namely Governance Reforms, Employment and Entrepreneurship, Internationalization of Higher Education and Teaching - Learning process apart from a main subsection on New Vision for reimagining Indian Universities. Skill development for employment and entrepreneurship; creating technology - enabled learning ecosystem in our universities for upscaling them to global standards. Improvement in Research and innovation are the key areas projected for excellence in universities.

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* Director, Prof. G. Ram Reddy Centre for Research and Development, Dr. Ambedkar Open University, Hyderabad.

Absence of effective governance and accountability have taken a toll on the quality of higher education and Research in India. Outdated curricula, vacant faculty positions, poor quality of faculty in terms of both competence and commitment, less student mobility, absence of Research Culture, poor methods of teaching and learning, low levels of skill development among students, flawed and rigid system of examinations have all resulted in the poor quality of education visible to us, today, say the authors.

The book gives insights in overcoming these challenges by bringing in excellence in higher education through professional management. The HEIs should be lead by academicians of callibre, profess the authors.

The global changes are inducing new types of knowledge transfer. There is an impending skill gap and shifts are seen in the way that education is being consumed either in the form of dual degrees, online education and multiple disciplines being offered by Universities. This is due to the evolution of learner - centric paradigm. It has become increasingly difficult for universities to have enhanced quality, engage students and maintain enrollment and also offer courses in many disiplines. The survival of universities is now based on the 'survival of fittest'.

For educating the burgeoning learners and to meet the requirements of 21st Century, the Universities have to 'reimagine' themselves in new contexts. The dire quality of Research in Universities can only be corrected with adequate funding, say the authors. Developing research infrastructure with focused research policies at state / national level can enhance research, it is felt by the authors. The onslaught of Covid - 19 has made this work more imperative. Hence, this edited volume serves the purpose of rethinking on the role and functions of the Universities in the modern day.

There are totally 32 chapters in this book, divided under 6 subsections.

The 1st subsection 'New vision for Reimagining Higher Education' has several chapters which deal with making Indian Universities relevant and ready for the future. Governing reforms, enhancing access, promoting employability and entreprenuership, promoting research, internalization of Indian Education, importance of traditional knowledge systems, induction of quality in HEIs, the future of ODL institutions, making HEIs agile and adapting for future, inculcation of sports in HEIs are dealt under this subsection.

Institutional autonomy, Open Universities in digital age, fostering academic leadership, overcoming constraints, looking for new constructs and achieving excellence are the chapters dealt under second sub-section 'Governance reforms'.

The third sub-section is on global best teaching learning processes. It deals with chapters on Teaching - learning, curriculum - design framework, constructivism based blended learning and strategies for reimagining HEIs.

Subsection four deals with 'Research and Innovation' and measures for promoting Research & achieving excellence. The overhauling of Research and making innovation an antecedent of the Universities are other chapters under this section.

Under Subsection five, the internationalisation of Higher Education is dealt with. Here, three chapters deal with global trends, internationalisation as a pathway to future universities and bench marking internationalisation with world's best Universities.

The last subsection deals with four chapters on employability and entreprenuership - the twin factors which have become critical for Human excellence. The issues / challanges faced by Universities and the required reforms which can promote employability in the 21st century are covered by the other two chapters.

Overall, this book is a compendium of thoughts of the intellectuals on how the universities have to reimagine themselves in India in the new century. This reimagination coupled with strategies and plans for practical action will bring the must needed changes in the HEIs and make them robust, strong with 'Universal' values and serve the purpose which they have come in to existence i.e., serving the humanity with knowledge and provide a living.

This books helps the readers acquaint themselves with the predicaments that the present day universities face and futuristic predictions on the role of the universities along with new processes that the universities should adopt to survive in the digital age. This book provides good information on making our universities viable to students, University officials and intellectuals.

This book is published by Association of Indian Universities, AIU House, New Delhi - 110 002 in August 2020 with ISBN : 81-7520-154-1.

National Education Policy 2020 : Issues, Challenges and Reflections

Rajendraprasad Das and Santosh Panda (eds.)

Reviewer : Dr. V.V. Kanaka Durga*

Much has been said on National Policy of Education 2020, which is said to provide a comprehensive roadmap to future education in India, for the next 25 years. The global challenges and economic forebodings for the coming century have made it necessary to relook at processes and strategies which can make it possible to develop robust, need-based, sustainable and quality education systems which can address the issues comforting the new generation as well as provide accessibility and inclusion to all those who had to stay out of the educational forefront till now.

The post Covid scenario has mandated the diversification of teaching using technology. Inspite of much rhetoric, the issues surrounding NEP 2020 need to be clearly discussed and the action that is to be taken has to be clarified. This volume has tried to look into the various aspects of NEP 2020 which can make good sense to the novice as well as to the intellectuals.

The narratives talk about the initiatives taken in NEP 2020. The integration of vocational education with higher education and strategic actionable plans like MOOCs, video - audio contents, swayam courses, multiple entry - exit options - all of which have come to be deployed as an offshoot of NEP 2020. This was well explained in the first chapter by Nageswar Rao. The transformative aspect of NEP 2020 and strengthening of higher education along with having a new regulatory structure was elucidated in 'A key to transforming Indian Higher Education' by Pankaj Mittal. Jitrendra Srivastava talks about (in Hindi) how implementation of NEP 2020 can rise the status of India to 'Viswaguru' (Chapter 21).

Strategic intent is the first step for reorientation of HEIs says Rajendra Prasad in the chapter 'towards reorientating and managing strategic intent'. V.S. Prasad in his article 'National Educational Policy 2020:Perspectives on quality assurance in Higher Education' talks extensively about quality assurance aspects and the required bench marks and how the accreditation process has to be reconsidered and modified in the context of the agenda set by NEP2020.

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There are four chapters on Equity and Inclusive Education. Manimala Das in the chapter 'Equity and inclusion in Higher Education - NEP 2020' talks about the explosion of Higher Education and how distance education can increased the General Enrollment Ratio (GER) with suitbale action plans. Strategies for adult education and life long learning have to be addressed by HEIs both in the context of social inclusion and active citizenship and in increasing employability, she concludes. 'Equitable and Inclusive education in NEP 2020: Provisions, Challanges and Implementations strategies' by Sumithra Kukreti emphases the need to address Socio Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDG) and Persons With Disabilities (PWD) in the context of NEP 2020. Debel K. SinghaRoy talks about the shift to online learning for equity in the chapter 'Equity and Inclusion in Higher Education : Challanges and Opportunities for the ODL system under NEP 2020'. Manjulika Srivastava explains about strategies for inclusion in her chapter 'Equity and Inclusion in Higher Education', with provision for establishment of HEIs in rural and underserved regions, reservations in private HEIs and integration of vocational education with education and promotion of ODL and distance education.

Santhosh Panda in his chapter on 'NEP 2020 and Reflections on Curriculum and Pedagogy in Higher Education' talks in detail about 21st Century Skills and the need for skilling and Vocational Education and how technology is to be fine tuned to pedagogy and the need for open Pedagogy with recourse to blended learning. Every teacher must be ready to be an open teacher, he says. It is interesting to note that in recent times open learning is found to be complementary to regular teaching - learning. Needless to say, the 10 levels of National Skills Qualifications Framework (NSQF) have to be understood in the larger context of developing evolved, multi dimensional human beings with larger employment potential.

Chapters 10,11,12,13,14 deal extensively with digital education. Suresh Garg talks about access to multi-media tools and embracing new emerging technologies to eliminate routine, repeititive tasks to teacher. Madhu Parhar tasks about ensuring Sustainability Development Goals (SDGs) through technology and through a clearly chalked out plan of implementation and Plan of Action (PoA) and appropriate usage of teaching platform and tools training of teachers and addressing the digital devide through a clear Plan of Action can make the transition easier, she feels. Access to quality learning resources through online virtual education in HEIs through technological interventions can provide a way says Uma Kanjlal in her article 'ICT interventions for enhancing Digital Learning Environment in the light of NEP 2020 recommendations'. 'Using Podcost as enabler for NEP 2020   ' byNayantara

Padhi and Neethi Agarwal and 'Online support by Socis - IGNIS on facebook by IGNOU' by V.V. Subramanyam try to look at technological interventions as ways of reaching out to isolated learners.

'Growth and commercialization of higher education in India ; A futuristic study in the light of National Education Policy' by Barsh Gopal Singh etal., looks at the rising demand for Higher Education in India and Gross Enrollment Ratio which is still lower than the anticipated rate and changes in employability NEP 2020 has provided scope and hope for change in Educational System through curbing commercialization. However, a ground level efforts are to be made to make this a reality, the author asserts.

'IGNOU initiatives with regard to inclusion of students with disabilities in the context of NEP 2020' are dealt in detail by Hemalatha, where she eluciadates the work of the National Centre for Disability Studies established IGNOU in 2006.

The necessity to overhaul the curriculum in Open Distance Learning for quality enhancement in line with NEP 2020 by K. Parthasarathi talks about Tamil Nadu Open University's initiatives for implementation of NEP 2020.

Prasanth Kumar Acharya etal., discuss about Internationalisation of Higher Education of India : Action plans and implementation stategies in the context of NEP - 2020). The activities that are to be undertaken and the objectives for undertaking such activities are discussed in detail.

The proposed action plan for regulation of HEIs in India is explained with clarity in 'Light but tight regulations in Higher Education in NEP' by Swaraj Rajan. Implementation of such strategies would require systemic approach, good legislation and funding. ODL institutions, it is felt, can pave the way for evolving such strategies which can raise quality. They necessities

Chapter 20 by Satyakam talks about language, art and culture (In Hindi) and cultural independence and how culture is dependent on language and training is dependent on language and the need to take into consideration the diverse languages of India while teaching.

This book was released as a commemorative volume on the occasion of 26th Professor G. Ram Reddy Memorial lecture and balances not only the 'issues' that have arisen with the launch of NEP 2020 but also the 'reflections' of the distance education practitioners. Some of the implications of NEP 2020 and their significance to the educational scenario can be understood by reading this book. This can be a guidepost to freshers to ODL and throw light to them on some of the nuances of NEP 2020. For ODL practitioners, 0this can provide food for thought and a rationale to carryout actions in accordance with NEP 2020.

This   book   is   published   by   IGNOU   in   2021.

GUIDELINES FOR PUBLICATION OF PAPERS

The editors invite original, scholarly articles and research papers on Open and Distance Learning within the aim and scope of the journal. Articles, etc., that have not been published previously or submitted elsewhere, and that are not under review for any other publication in any medium (e.g. printed journal, conference proceedings, electronic or optical medium) should be submitted to the Editor, BRAOU Journal of Open Distance Learning (JODL). A declaration to this effect should be submitted to the editor along with the full length article. Authors will hold the responsibility for copyright violations, if any in their work. It will be assumed that submission of an article to this journal implies that all the foregoing conditions are applicable.

Peer Review : All contributions submitted will be subjected to Blind review. Author(s) need to submit their identification, affiliation information on a separate sheet in order to facilitate anonymous refereeing. Author(s) should see that this information is not included in the main text of the article.

Format : The following guidelines apply for the length of articles and other texts included in the journal.

The length of special article in 3000 - 6000 words

Other articles/research paper in 2500 - 3500 words

Case studies, Experiences and commentaries in maximum of 2000 words.

Book reviews in maximum of 1000 words

All the Abstracts in 200-300 words.

Page Layout

Times New Roman font size=12 regular

Paper - A4 size

Line spacing = 1.5

Alignment = Justified

Indentation Left = Right = 0"

Organisation : The general organisation of research papers should be as follows :

Title should be specific followed by an abstract. Article should start with an Introduction. The objectives of the study should be stated clearly, followed by Materials and Methods, Analysis, Discussion, Findings and Discussion. Appendices may be used to amplify details where appropriate. Scholarly papers should have introduction, main section and sub-sections, and conclusion.

Tables and Figures should be typed in separate sheets and their position in the text should be indicated clearly. Please supply camera ready copy of all figures, as these shall not normally be redrawn.

Footnotes to the text should be avoided, but where used, should be numbered consecutively and presented as endnotes.

Citations of other works should be limited to those strictly necessary for arguments. Short quotations should be included in the text within inverted commas (" ") and quotations of more than 30 words should be placed in a separate paragraph indented from the main body of the text. However, all quotations should be accompanied by in - text citations, in author date style. Copyright of others' works in the text, wherever applicable, shall be obtained by the authors.

References should be in APA Style, All references should be alphabetically issued at the end of the paper in the following standard format. Some examples of references are given here.

Books : Rowntree, D(1992) Exploring Open and Distance Learning, London : Kogan page.

Journal Articles : Bansal, T. and Joshi, D. (2015). OER and Teacher Educators : Awareness and Barriers, Indian Journal of Open Learning, 24 (1-2), 59-68.

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Conference Papers :

Santhanam, E. Martin, K Goody, A. & Hicks, O. (2001) Bottom-up steps towards closing the loop in feedback on teaching: A CUTSD project. Paper presented at Teaching and Learning Forum - Expanding horizons in teaching and learning, Perth, Australia, 7-9 February, 2001.

Dissertations : Singh, S.K. (1994) 'Problems of women pursuing university degree course through distance education in India', MEd Dissertation, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi.

Offprints : Ten offprints along with a copy of the journal would be supplied to the first author, and a copy of the journal to each of the co-authors.

BRAOU - JOURNAL OF OPEN DISTANCE LEARNING

The Aim and Objectives

''BRAOU' Journal of Open Distance Learning (JODL)'' is a bi-annual academic. Journal launched by Dr. B .R. Ambedkar Open University with an intention of bringing intelligentia on open Distance learning together for exploring all possibilities for the implementation of the idealogy of Open Distance Education in the country. It is felt that this system has thrown open and brought many facts of learning under the control of learner. This concept is emerging as an alternative method of learning for development and is extensively used as an alternative model for capacity building, skill development and for professional development of working population. This is possible because of the quality of learning material, student support services, student evaluation and administrative service that the system embedded in it. The ODL system may exhibit as a "one system, many models" but the spirit of the system in democratization of higher education with a focus on taking higher education to the doorsteps of the common people who were denied the opportunities of entry into portals of higher education for many centuries. The beginning of correspondence education, more particularly the Open University system with liberal entry revolutinzed the learning process and access to higher education. As a result, millions of students all over the world are pursuing higher education through distance mode. The trends call for the systhesis of ideology as well as technology and culture of sharing among the institutions for enhancing the quality of academic programme offered through distance mode. With the objective, this journal intends to provide a platform for debate across the world, more particularly in the developing countries.