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ODL SYSTEM OF EDUCATION IN INDIA

INTRODUCTION:

Open and Distance Learning (ODL) system of education gained profound popularity around the world by 1960. It was promoted in early eighties when a bill was passed by the Union Government and a central university was founded in the name of Indira Gandhi, former Prime Minister, in 1985. To harmonize various distance learning institutes and maintain high standards of education at national level, the Distance Education Council (DEC) was also formed under the same Act. But in a developing country like India, it seems like a cloud on horizon while implementing the related government policies especially in its rural and suburban parts. Although conventional learning is still popular amongst the students, but ODL is the next generation education system with innumerable advantages like- flexibility, cost-effectiveness, networking, education beyond the borders and many more.

Open and Distance Learning (ODL) system is a system wherein teachers and learners need not necessarily be present either at same place or same time and is flexible in regard to modalities and timing of teaching and learning as also the admission criteria without compromising necessary quality considerations. ODL system of the country consists of Indra Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), State Open Universities (SOUs), Institutions and Universities offering education and includes Correspondence Course Institutes (CCIs) in conventional dual mode universities.

The concept of open learning and distance education system focuses on open access to education and training to make the learners free from the constraints of time and place, and offering flexible learning opportunities to individuals and groups of learners. Open and distance learning (ODL)is one of the most rapidly growing fields of education now a days and it has substantial impact on all education delivery systems. The new ODL system growing fast because of the development of Internet-based information technologies, and in particular the World Wide Web.

THE ODL SYSTEM IN ASYNCHRONOUS MODE:

Asynchronous mode issues have been thought to be quite complex because they usually are fundamental for the correct educational and functional procedure. They involve both programming and installation techniques that demand extreme customization during development according to the projects special requirements. The learner has to keep in mind that educational matters are extremely delicate and that makes database structure rather complicated at first place. The services that are offered contained quite a few troubling issues

in the database management and data transfer level. All asynchronous discussions are stored in a special database that keeps log for all participants and their statements.

THE ODL SYSTEM IN SYNCHRONOUS MODE:

In the synchronous mode in ODL system the issues are totally different from asynchronous study and this is to be dealt separately. The components of the system were coherently stuck together and troubling issues were focused in logging and scheduling features. Synchronous component data accounting is centralized mainly to record different states of file and discussion sessions and not the data exchanged. Things tend to be simpler but in no way less delicate than the previously described procedures and problems. Logging for file transfer and chat-like communication had to be provided. The logs had to be explicit especially whatever concerned the members involved in the communication. Special care had to be taken for the detailed view and archive recording of the system file exchange. They had to be written down explicitly also the chat requests just for the record. · Scheduling of the meeting had to be available. The meeting-time database had to update the announcements and the calendar of the instructor.

Scope Of ODL System:

To achieve this difficult target Govt. of India is considering ODL system as alternative model with special emphasis from the 10th Plan. ODL system is the only system that can reach the door step of every section of the society irrespective of class, creed, gender, race and geographic location. The characteristic features which make the system so important are:

1) Flexibility: The system is flexible in regard to modalities, timing, pace, place, age, admission criteria etc. Learners who are not able to continue their education through traditional system due to socio-economic or cultural reason are getting opportunities here. Flexibility in age and qualification to enter in desired academic programs makes the system learners friendly. Here students are free to choose the subject of studies according their interest. Use of satellite, e-books/journals, audio-visual system in teaching learning process helps the learner to study their course materials in their own space and place.

2) Cost Effective: Expenditure for higher education in the traditional system, both for public and private institutes, is very high. Education through distance mode is able to help the students by saving considerable amount of money by removing the cost of transportation and high-priced printed text books of high cost. As the teaching learning process in this system adopts multimedia approach, students can avail digital study materials for a reduced price.

3)Learning satisfaction: Unlike traditional system, students of ODL system attend online classes individually without any disturbance from others. When difficulties arise students review their lessons more than once and solve the problem. Students can also manipulate the coursework to fit their learning by focusing more on their weaker topics. In this way students can build self-confidence and get higher satisfaction with their learning experiences.

4) Equal access: In the traditional system, students of a certain age group are allowed. Again, for SC, ST and Physically Challenged students some reservation is there. It is very difficult for Trans-Genders to take education in the traditional system. Peoples who are in jail are unable to

obtain any degrees through traditional system. Distance education may provide equal access irrespective of socioeconomic status, gender, race, age, or cost per student.

5) Dual degree: While studying under traditional system a student can simultaneously enroll for a degree of the same level in Open University. In such case credit transfer will be given due consideration through a MOU between Open University and the respective University. II.6) Migration Problem: Students taking admission for Masters degree in Open University do not need any migration from previous university where he/she obtained Bachelor degree. However, when a student graduated from Open University takes admission for Masters degree in a traditional university he/she needs migration.

7)Assignment Marks: Apart from contact session or PCP (Personal Contact Program) there is also a provision of assignment in ODL system. Students are asked to collect question papers from study centres or directly from homepage of the respective Open University. Afterwards they submit the answer scripts in a limited time frame. This is then evaluated by subject expert and given back to the students for checking their mistake. Writing of assignment is must for the students willing to sit in the forth coming examination. 20% of assignment marks and 80% of the marks obtained in Term-End-Examination is added to make the total. This kind of marks distribution directly helps distance learners to secure pass marks.

Constraints To ODL System:

To improve the quality Govt. has changed education policy time to time. However, simultaneous improvement in quality and quantity will not be possible unless we consider the following real problems before implementing any education policy/ technique.

1)Lack of knowledge in using technology: With the progress of time technology for communication system is being developed and ODL system is adopting this. However, students especially from rural area are enrolling in ODL system without proper training of the tools to be used for successful program. These students, due to lack of technology skills, mostly become unsuccessful or drop outs.

2) Vast curriculum area: Online courses are normally not restricted to an upper size. As a result traditional teaching method cannot be applied here. Both teachers and students face problems.

3) Lack of sufficient infrastructure: Distance learning program is quite new and it does not have sufficient infrastructure and learning environment like traditional system. For this reason instructors are facing problems in organizing and planning distance learning programmes, especially for new courses.

4) Scarcity of counsellors near study center: Although care has been taken in opening study centers near the door steps of learners, the availability of skilled and knowledgeable counselors near the study center is not checked in most cases. As a result study centers as well as the learners are facing difficulties.

5) Hidden Cost: For online learning, students need training to use technology. They must have their own or rented computer and internet connection. Again if they want hard copy of any study materials downloaded from web site extra cost has to be paid. To attend live video

program they have to do proper time management. When contact programs are not arranged nearby or become obscure then learners look for private coaching, paying extra money.

6) Unavailability of desired course in nearby study center: There is a difficulty to run practical based subjects in Open Education as it needs permanent Laboratory set up. Again there are some courses like nursing, clinical which are not available through distance learning. Thus distance learning is not suited for all subjects.

7) Lack of oral communication skill: Distance learners do not get opportunity to interact with their classmates and with the professors like traditional system. Hence their oral communication and presentation skills do not develop properly.

Indira Gandhi National Open University

Indira Gandhi National Open University, known as IGNOU, is a Central University located at Maidan Garhi, New Delhi, India. Named after for Prime Minister of India Indira Gandhi, the university was established in 1985 with a budget of ₹20 million, after the Parliament of India passed the Indira Gandhi National Open University Act ,1985 (IGNOU Act 1985). IGNOU is run by the central government of India, and with total active enrolment of over 4 million students, it is the largest university in the world. It has tried to increase the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) by offering high-quality teaching through the Open and Distance Learning (ODL) mode.

IGNOU was founded to serve the Indian population by means of distance and open education, providing quality higher education opportunities to all segments of society. It also aims to encourage, coordinate and set standards for distance and open education in India, and to strengthen the human resources of India through education.

IGNOU has started a decentralisation process by setting up five zones: north, south, east, west and north-east. The first of the regional headquarters, catering to four southern states, Pondicherry, Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Lakshadweep, is being set up in the outskirts of Thiruvananthapuram in Kerala.

IGNOU has 21 schools and a network of 56 regional centres, 1843 study centres, and 21 overseas centres (in 15 countries). Approximately 20% of all students enrolled in higher education in India are enrolled with IGNOU. IGNOU offers 226 academic programs comprising courses at certificate, diploma and degree levels. IGNOU is accredited by National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) with the highest grade of A++.

The mandate of the University is to:

- Provide access to higher education to all segments of the society;
- Offer high-quality, innovative and need-based programmes at different levels, to all those who require them;
- Reach out to the disadvantaged by offering programmes in all parts of the country at affordable costs; and
- Promote, coordinate and regulate the standards of education offered through open and distance learning in the country.
- To achieve the twin objectives of widening access for all sections of society and providing continual professional development and training to all sectors of the economy, the University uses a variety of media and latest technology in imparting

education. This is reflected in the formulated vision of IGNOU, keeping its objectives in focus, which reads:

Objectives:

- To provide personalized, digitally connected, experiential learning to diverse group of leaners using latest online technologies and pedagogies.
- To provide need-based online learning opportunities for continuous professional development and skill upgradation to in-service professionals.
- Strive towards continuous updation of learning technologies through research in and networking with other institutions working in the area of online/ virtual learning.
- To provide capacity building opportunities to all online education providers in the country.
- To ensure quality assurance in design, development and implementation of online education matching the requirements of national and international standards.

There is a wide range of programs available at IGNOU University. Most students prefer IGNOU Courses for their higher studies. Presently, the university has various programs at the following level:

- Undergraduate
- Postgraduate
- Doctoral Programs
- Master of Philosophy
- Diploma
- PG Diploma
- PG Diploma and Advanced Diploma
- PG Diploma and Advanced Certificate
- Certificate