

# Best Paper Presentations

Venue: Training Room (Fourth Floor)

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Time: 15:00 - 16:30

Chair: Mr. Chandar Sundaram

Coordinator: Dnyaneshwar Shirode

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# How and Why of Online Education: Perceptions of First Generation Learners in India

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**Sub Theme: Technology Enhanced Higher Education**

## **Abstract**

*Distance education is considered as one of the favored education system in India due to its capacity to meet the demands of its plurality and most important to ensure access, equity and quality of education to the wide range of learners. Today although this mode has attained phenomenal progress in terms of access and equity, more initiatives are required to enhance the quality of these distance education programmes. Online education as an initiative is gradually being introduced by few distance education institutions to widen and enhance the quality of their programmes. This being an innovative as well as a novel experience for most of these institutions, it becomes essential to also understand how the learners perceive and react to this new mode of education. The present study revealed that the learners enroll with anxiety, apprehensions or excitement. These learners either looked forward to a traditional programme in online form or in an innovative form. They expressed the need to be proficient in computer literacy, desired more tutor social presence and showed preference for activities related to social networking and collaboration. This has implications for the distance education institutions that are in the process of development and deployment of quality based online programmes in India.*

## **Introduction**

Online education system is gradually gaining momentum in India and its potential cannot be overlooked due to its capacity to address the needs of learners who are culturally, socially and geographically diverse. Although, we have a long journey to go in e-learning, many educational Institutions have initiated this venture to offer online courses. Presently, this trend is more apparent in the urban vicinities, but eventually with the years to come, it is likely to extend steadily to the other geographically remote regions across the country. Some of the Universities that are offering online courses in India are Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), Symbiosis University, Yashwantrao Chavan Maharashtra Open University (YCMOU) University, Sikkim Manipal University, Anna University, Aligarh Muslim University and BITS - Virtual University. The courses offered by these institutions ranged from certificate to Ph.D Level courses.

Learning in an on-line educational environment is probably going to be their first experience for most of the learners. Hence, this study to obtain the views of those learners who had an opportunity to enroll in an online programme was initiated.

## **Experiences on Online Education**

The learners' experience on online education around the globe has not been consistent. In a study based in Korea, majority of the learners felt that web-based online instruction was useful and convenient. Even though, a few experienced discomfort initially, they gradually overcame it in a short period of time (Lee, 2000). Northrup, Lee & Burgess (2002) also revealed that majority of the students in the United States, took online course for convenience. However, views on the potential of online education when compared to face to face had varied. Existence of discrepancies between face-to-face and online education was noticed by Yildiz and Chang (2003), who indicated that even if there was no difference in the amount of feedback from the instructor in web-based or face-to-face course, the feedback was more constructive in the former course. They also suggested that interaction in web-based courses tend to be richer and of more quality. In terms of learners performance, Hughes et al., (2007) revealed that online students outperformed traditional students. Neuhauser (2002), on the contrary, asserted that the quality of online learning is as effective as Face- to-face learning. Similarly, there were also evidences that showed online teaching to be effective in terms of deriving favorable learning outcomes among the learners. For instance, Hinton (2007) showed that anecdotal reviews and reflections of pedagogical challenges related to online teaching and learning facilitated the intellectual dialog of instructors and students in relevant disciplines. In this context, India still has a long way to go in order ascertain the significance of on-line education for its culturally diverse learners.

The present paper makes an attempt to share some the experiences of Indian learners while undertaking an online programme. Based on their reflections, certain issues and trends have emerged and these are summarized and presented hereafter.

### **Study Sample**

The sample for this study constituted the first batch of students who enrolled for an online teacher education programme offered by 'Indian Consortium for Educational Transformation' (I-CONSENT), a non-profit organization in Pune, India. The data was collected by sending online questionnaire to the students. The questionnaire was sent to 47 students and among which 33 (70%) had responded. This teacher education programme entitled as 'e.B.Ed' is still in its pilot stage. The programme comprises of six courses and the feedback from the students was obtained after the completion of two courses. A blended approach is being adopted to deploy this programme and the mode of instruction is English.

### **Study Findings**

The data obtained from the learners was by and large qualitative. Selected excerpts of these learners have been compiled and shared in the following segments to reflect their views and preferences.

#### ***Enroll with Apprehensions, Anxiety or Excitement***

Online learning environment being a unique experience for most of the learners, it was considered essential to understand their thoughts and outlook towards online programmes. The learners in this study were asked 'before joining this programme, what were their assumptions or apprehensions about on-line learning'. From the learners' responses, it was evident that these

learners prior to their enrollment to this on-line programme had carried certain pre-determined assumptions about on-line learning. Less clarity about online was indicated by a few and among them one expressed *“I was not sure about teaching online or getting education online”*, while the other said, *“Before joining I was concerned about the method of teaching, content, what we are going to learn, in what way and the evaluation system.”* Fears about adapting one- self to this new mode was also noticed in this statement made by a learner, *“As I was not from the IT background, I had doubts in my mind that how i will be comfortable working in such kind of atmosphere.”*

Curiosity and excitement was also noticed by few as one learner said *“I was very excited about online Learning and Teaching”* and another expressed, *“I only heard about online learning concept and very curious how it will be conducted”*. Irrespective of what on-line meant, at times, just the ‘e-mode’ in itself drew learners to enroll, which was evident by this learner who said, *“The word ‘e’ had attracted me”*. By and large it is noticed that the learners either joined with certain apprehensions and uncertainties or were excited and curious to know about e-learning. The above experiences of fear, anxiety and excitement among novice learners were also revealed by Conrad (2002) and Hara &Kling (2003). There were also times where the learners re-experienced strong degrees of anxiety when they began subsequent online courses (Concord, 2002).

### ***Expectations can be Traditional or Unconventional***

Based on the learners’ responses, it was interesting to see that the learners who enrolled for this online programme either anticipated the same traditional B.Ed programme or looked forward for an unconventional programme. Those who came with a traditional view assumed that this online course is just a conversion of an existing conventional course from text to e-format. For instance, one stated, *“Before joining this course I thought that it is a(n) online, regular B.Ed course”*. Similarly, a different learner quoted *“i thought that the conventional b. ed course will be put on the net”*. Being accustomed to the conventional system of education, is reflected in this learner’s expression who said, *“I assumed that there will be different subjects, the texts of the subjects would be displayed on the net respectively and we have to read and answer the questions and send it to the mentor”*. Few others thought, *“Some specified syllabus, study material and then on line examination”*; *“I thought online books or study materials will be available and submission of assignment will be online and we will be able to correct, update and resubmit them with flexibility.”* Nakos et al. (2002) also discovered that students have accepted on-line courses as an alternative to the traditional classroom environment.

However, after undertaking two courses, the learners appreciated this programme as it was not similar to any traditional course. This programme had adopted the scenario-based learning approach. A learner communicated by saying *“there are more practicals and less theory as the course is evolving”*. Their preference for something new and different is evident in this statement, *“We are judged based on our periodic assignments than some artificial 3-hour exam”*. Online can also be unique according a learner who stated *“First of all it is different, it has provided opportunity to be creative with result oriented learning”* and the purpose of online changed for this learner who conveyed by saying, *“Yes, slightly as I was only using computers and internet more for chatting and surfing”*.

## ***Benefits & Hardships***

The learning process in an on-line environment has not been similar for most of the learners. It depended on the learners comfort level with technology, ability of being autonomous and independent. The learners in this study has admitted that online learning was beneficial at times, due to its advantage of being time and place independent, but there were times it has been difficult. A student confessed by saying that *“I thought it would be more fun learning online but at time online learning creates chaos”*. Some of the benefits enlisted by the learners were, *“Flexibility of time”*, *“Can be completed anytime, anywhere”*, *“More comfort level”*, and *“More creativity”*.

Apart from the above aspects, the learners also confronted that online learning is not easy as they felt while enrolling for this course. Just as one indicated *“i have realized that it can be a better option for the students those who cannot attend regular classes. It is no more less than the regular ones as here also we need to work hard even harder”*. The reaction of another learner was *“Sometimes i feel we are being left too much to ourselves and should be given more accurate guidance - this could put off students who are not net savvy or smart enough”*. This may imply that the learners while taking enrolment in online courses are actually not aware of the expected skills or competencies. Lefoe et al. (2002) also showed that the students indicated a need for clear role expectations in a distributed learning environment.

## ***Computer Literacy is a Must***

One of the pre-requisite skills laid for the learners to obtain enrollment for this programme was proficiency in computer literacy skills. Yet, the learners indicated need for updating their technology skills. The need for training the learners in technology skills was also highlighted by few researchers (Lefoe et al., 2002; Reddy & Srivastava, 2001). Computer literacy skills in this study would refer to typing speed, navigation skills on the Internet, uploading and saving files and also power point skills. Efficiency in computer literacy skills was mentioned by most of the learners in this study. One amongst them indicated *“No doubt, this course has changed my attitude towards online education but not a great deal. The reason, may be, I am not well equipped to work with the internet. To promote online education the participants must be well trained to work with computer and internet”*. Many had stated *“Lack of computer knowledge”* as one of the difficulties they faced while undertaking this online course. They felt *“Basic training on "Computer Literacy" is must for everyone”*. It has been frustrating to many who were not able to complete their assignments within the given time line, which is evident in this response *“Yes, I have realised online courses you develop your personality and knowledge much more but still it becomes difficult at times when you can't do certain tasks come what may”*. The other requirements for an online course were elicited by this learner as, *“My perception got confirmed as follows,*

*“We need to have more patience to establish online education.”*

*“Increase awareness level about benefits of online education.”*

*“Basic training on "Computer Literacy" is must for everyone.”*

### ***Blogging & Social Networking: Promising Tools***

Both the first and second courses in this programme had required the learners to create their own blog and they also had opportunity to interact in a social networking site ‘*Multiply*’. These blogs were created on individual and group basis. Blogging has enabled the students to liberate, reflect and share their views with the others (Al-Fadda & Al-Yahya, 2010; Cuhadar & kuzu, 2010). The learners had also supported this view, which is evident in this statement made by one “*I liked the aspect of making my own websites, blogging for social cause*”. Another student’s blog received response from one of the teachers from Europe, who shared views on online education. The effectiveness of blogging has also been revealed by other researchers. Its impact especially in terms of facilitating autonomy was established by Bhattacharya & Kiran (2010). They found that blogging helped the students to be more aware of developing interaction within the virtual space and it also made them more autonomous as they had to make their blogs attractive enough for others to visit. Makinster et al., (2006) found that the students in the private journal wrote better initial reflections than the other discussion forum groups. Further, Andrusyszyn (1997) found that the process of reflection may be actively facilitated through interactive journal writing.

### ***Tutors’ Social Presence- An Important Element***

Teaching - learning styles or approaches to a large extent also depend on the socio-cultural context of its learners. India being known for its rich and diverse culture that is unique in its own way, has always laid emphasis on social context. In this context, the on-line education learning environment would be a challenge for most of the Indian learners, to especially adapt to the social space created in virtual classrooms. Tutors’ can play a significant role by enhancing their social presence to assist and facilitate learners’ participation in this environment, Tu & Mclsaac (2002) showed that there is an increase in the level of online interaction with an improved level of social presence.

Hence, it is perceived that the blended approach would be appropriate to bridge the gap between the learners and tutors in Indian scenario. This was also evident from the learners’ responses in this study. A learner affirmed by saying “*I like the practical aspect, face-to-face meeting as they add up spice to the course*” and another stated “*I feel the need of extensive discussion by experts on basic concepts*”. More efforts are required to identify ways to enhance the social presence of tutors in online programmes. Tu & Mclsaac (2002) based on learner perceptions, identified three elements; social context, online communication and interactivity as the three elements of social presence important for establishing a sense of community among online learners.

### ***Instant Feedback: Motivating***

With respect to assignments, majority of the learners demanded the interaction with the tutors to especially obtain clarifications before submitting an assignment or receiving feedback after submitting the assignment. Feedback from the tutors was more required for providing guidelines for completion of their assignments. As one indicated “*May be we would demand slightly more time and attention from our mentors and tutors even if it is online.*” Another also

requested by saying, *“I would also very much like it if we could get some kind of feedback regarding our assignments.”*

Lee (2000) also showed that Learners expressed stronger expectations of feedback, and what is more required is ‘instant feedback’ in online environment. A similar observation was also made by Northrup, Lee & Burgess (2002) who indicated that for the students in an online course, timely response from their instructors was of utmost importance.

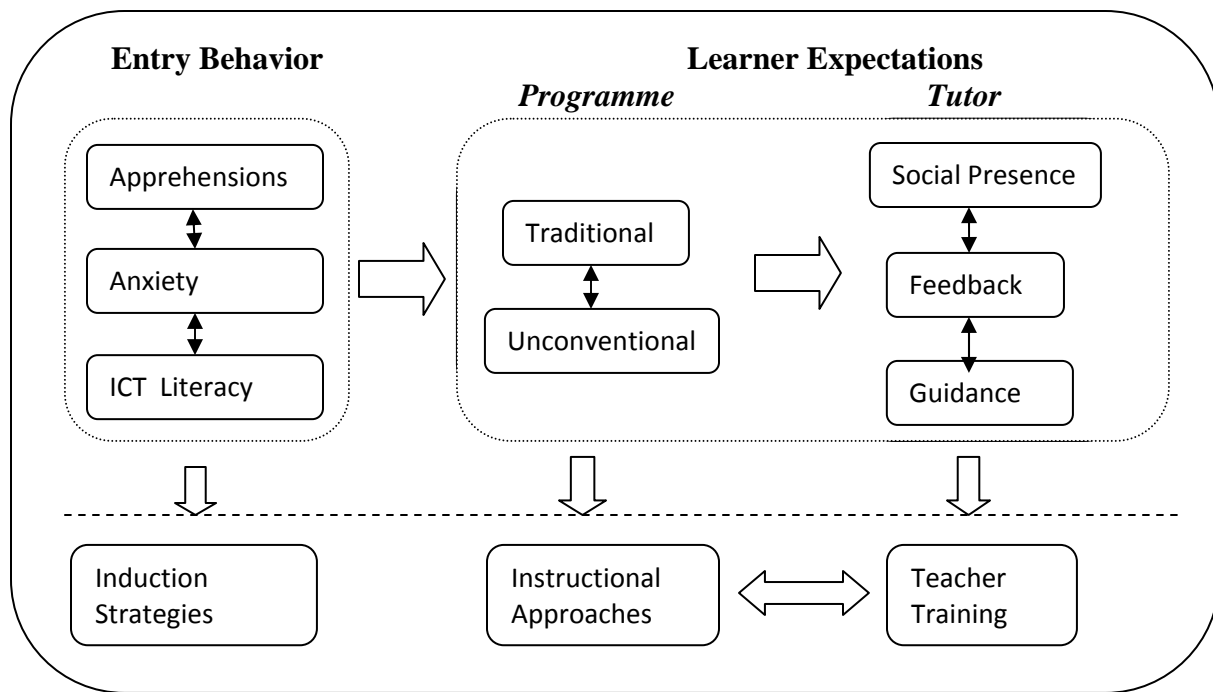
### ***Collaborative Ventures: Challenging***

Peer collaboration is a challenge in online learning environment as social presence is a pre-requisite for peer collaboration. Collaborative activities enabled learners to perform independently and most importantly enabled to view themselves as future innovators (Foulger et al., 2008). Collaborative activity was one of the aspects the learners liked about in this course. For instance, one revealed *“The aspects I like about this course is that we have learnt to use the networking tools in carrying out discussion thereby learning to cooperate, share our idea, develop a team feeling and learning through group discussion”*. And another stated, *“What I liked about this course is the sharing of information”*..., which was also said by other learner *“Online discussions and the cooperative attitude of the participants during course”*. Group activities had facilitated values of cooperativeness, as noted by these learners, *“The course was a good learning experience and networking with our classmates ..... through ‘Multiply’ and group activities taught us a co-operative learning and adjustment with different temperaments.”*

### **Implications and Conclusion**

Learning can be effective for online learners unless attempts are made to adopt the appropriate instructional approach and appoint proficient on-line tutors. Young (2006) identified seven items that students view as effective online teaching in higher education. The seven items that emerged as core indicators were; adapting to students needs, using meaningful examples, motivating students to do their best, facilitating the course effectively, delivering a valuable course, communicating effectively and showing concern for student learning. In the present study, learners’ preference for constant feedback, guidance and social presence of tutors, also emphasized that the involvement and role of tutors is critical for the success of any online course. Tutors would also be required to use a variety of instructional approaches to appeal to learners’ varied learning styles and explore alternative communication modes to ensure their social presence and enhance feedback mechanisms both through synchronous as well as asynchronous ways. From a design and organizational perspective, Garrison & Cleveland-Innes (2005), suggested that defining clear expectations and selecting manageable content, structuring appropriate activities, create and sustain cognitive presence in an online educational environment.

Further, keeping in view the learners entry behavior and their orientation towards the programme, appropriate induction strategies may be adopted to facilitate their smooth transition from the conventional to this new paradigm of education. Training students to use technology could be integrated in courses to enable the students develop the required skills as they are required (Lefoe et al., 2002).



Lastly, as there is a rise in the number of online programmes, the learner enrollment would increase and simultaneously there would be more demand for savvy online tutors. Keeping in view the classroom realities of Indian context, it is certain that the management and monitoring of on-line classrooms with high learner-tutor ratio would be a major challenge for institutions and tutors in the forthcoming years. Hence there is a need for extensive research to explore and identify compatible models or systems of online education suitable for Indian context.

### Acknowledgements

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# Student Learning Support

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**Sub Theme: Extending our student support services to the region**

## Abstract

*The University of the South Pacific (USP) is a twelve member regional university, one of only two regional universities in the world. As such it facilitates learning and teaching to diverse groups of learners in terms of age, ethnicity, language, learning methods and the levels of academic support they need to attain success in tertiary education.*

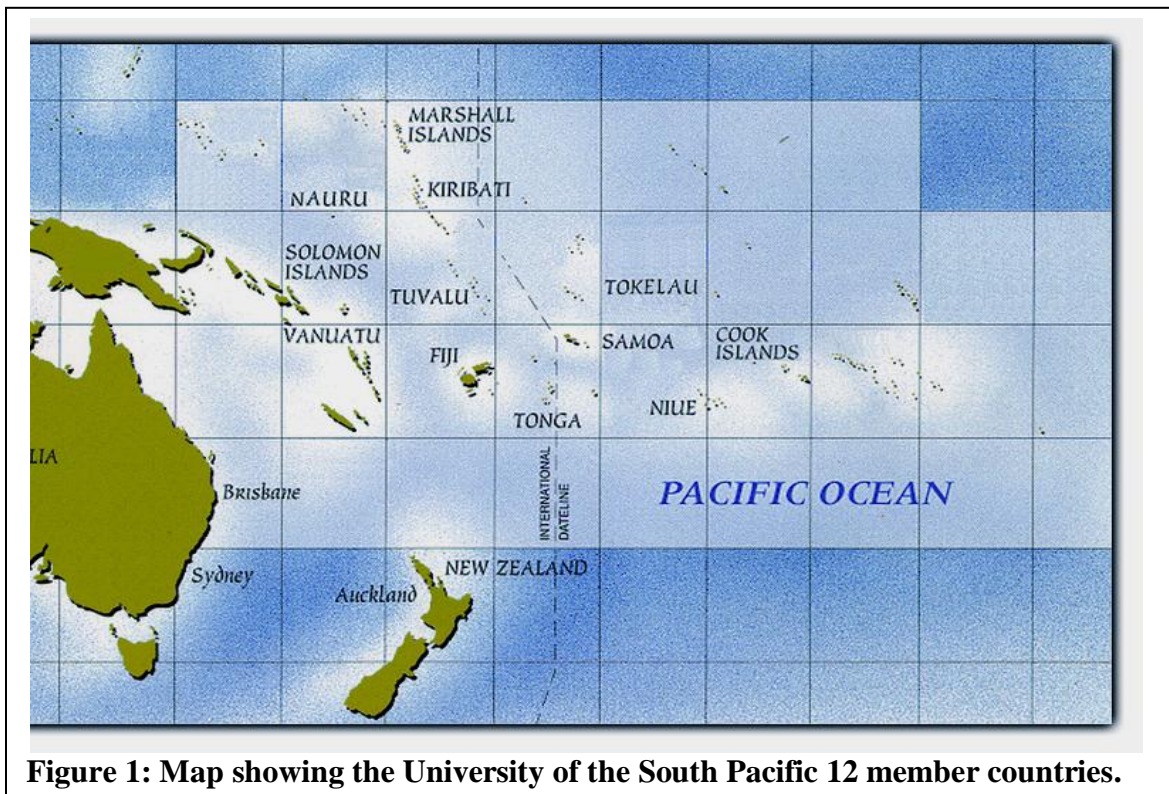
*This paper investigates the scope of a student learning support for learners who are geographically challenged. The means of available contact for USP distance and flexible learners (DFL) are audio and video conferencing, mobile and email communication, v-mailing, moodle and staff visits to the respective campuses. These means of support nevertheless have their limitations. For instance, internet facilities are dependent on bandwidth and connectivity. Visits from academic staff do not always address support issues. Furthermore audio and video conferencing are at times affected due to intermittent connectivity. Regional based learners do not have access to other facilities (face to face contact and drop in policy) and programs (mentoring schemes) that on campus students do. They are thus left to manage on their own and some contribute to attrition rates.*

*An adequate student support will provide necessary assistance, minimise retention and increase the probability of academic success. Thus this paper outlines a recently established program which expects to strengthen the student support system. Success@USP, an orientation program for DFL students exposes and prepares students for successful tertiary learning outcomes. The paper also identifies other methods that could enable effective assistance for the USP distance and flexible learners. These methods consider how best to capitalise on other mechanisms such as the Remote Education and Conferencing Tool (REACT), video conferencing facilities. Finally the need for a student support outreach policy will be discussed.*

## Introduction

This paper describes the current support available to the distance learner at the University of the South Pacific (USP) as well as outlining future initiatives. It thus serves to create awareness on how a small regionally based university attempts to provide its distance students with learning opportunities.

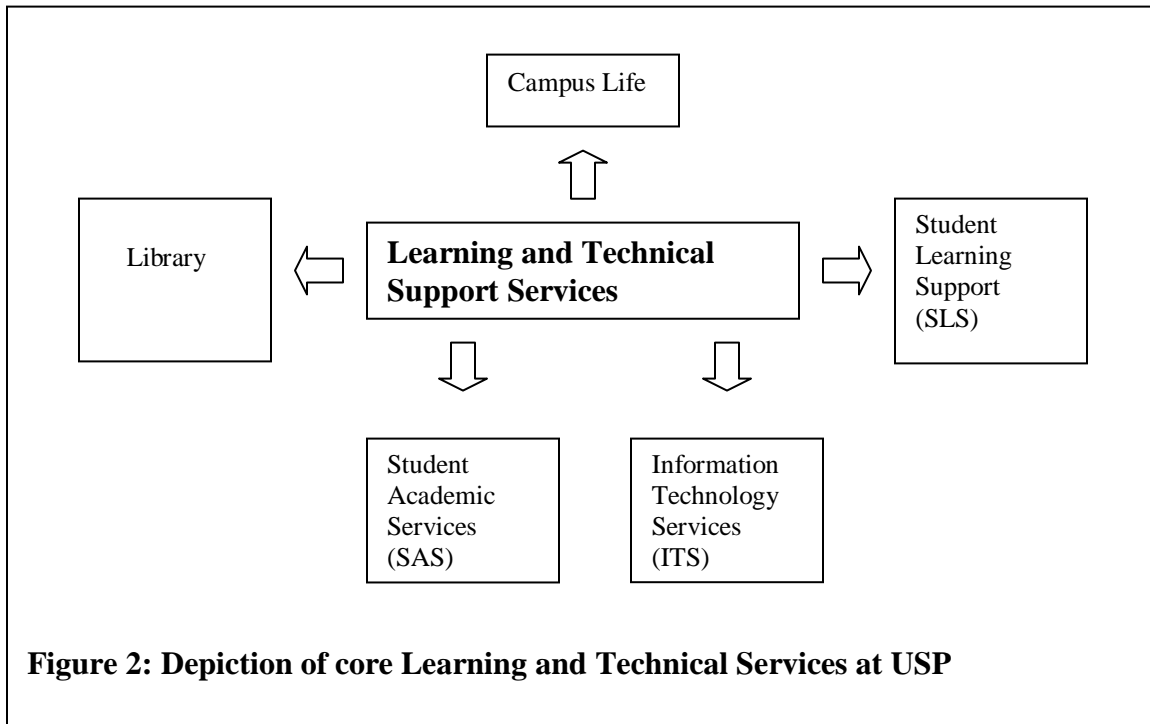
USP is a regional tertiary institution. Twelve island countries - Cook Islands, The Republic of the Fiji Islands, Kiribati, The Republic of Marshall Islands, The Republic of Nauru, Niue, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu - comprise its membership. This broad range of Pacific Island countries has implications for learner preferences; variances in cultural orientation, exposure to dual modes including internet based learning, approaches to learning and learner goals.



**Figure 1: Map showing the University of the South Pacific 12 member countries.**

In order to ensure that every student is able to capitalise on his or her learning opportunities, like most other universities, USP provides support in academic and administrative areas. The major strategies and objectives in the 2010 – 2012 USP Strategic Plan aim to provide quality, sustainable and relevant learning and teaching experiences for its students. As a result, student support features as one of its core priority areas.

Student Support Services at USP is encapsulated in the title *Learning and Technical Support Services*. Although there are several essential components that constitute the Learning and Technical Support Services at USP, the figure below illustrates the core services available to the academic student.



**Figure 2: Depiction of core Learning and Technical Services at USP**

The figure is important as it illustrates collaborative relationships between the respective units. The paper focuses on the student learning support constituent of this network of student support services.

### **Student Learning Support at USP**

Student support is a crucial component in the scholastic lifespan of the tertiary learner. It therefore needs to be operationalised with the start of the academic year. Literature (Keegan 1996, Thorpe 2003, Mills 2003 and Phillips 2003) describe learner support as the accessibility and employment of various assistance mechanisms in an educational institution that enable as well as facilitate the learning process. These mechanisms or systems range from orientations and inductions to study, academic support through availability of study skills, literacy and numeracy skills, online support as well as support through audio and video broadcasts and satellite conferences. In addition McLoughlin (2002) and Kuboni (2009) assert that learner support is instrumental in creating opportunities for active peer interaction both in face to face meetings and online discussions.

Student support has been in existence at the USP since the inception of the Center for the Enhancement of Teaching Learning (CELT) more than two decades ago. As a single roomed establishment, the unit availed academic skills assistance and proofreading services. With the exception of proofreading and editing services, this support for learners has expanded over the years in the provision of a mentoring program, online tutor support, regularly revised study guides (print and online resource on study skills) and the strong prevalence of student support during USP orientation, Open Day celebrations and other faculty designated requirements.

To date, support for USP students has targeted the face to face learner. A Drop In center operates from Mondays to Thursdays, 9am – 4pm. The center begins its operations with the start of the semester and ceases when the semester ends. The center is facilitated by English language skills tutors who guide the support seeker in academically related areas. These constitute addressing queries and assistance required in relation to assignments. The center disseminates, free-of-cost study guides. There are 27 study and language skills titles and a mathematical operations guide. These resources are useful for the self-directed learner. The guides are also available online. The other USP campuses and centers distribute print versions to students upon request. The Drop In facility accommodates eleven computers with language software that enable practice activities in language (English). The SLS webpage offers access to the resources mentioned above and to an essay writing with readings open educational resource. The list of support extends to approximately twelve to thirteen study skills workshops at the start and end of every semester, and an ever expanding mentoring program. Furthermore online tutor support remains a convenient mechanism for reaching out to distance learners.

At USP, distance and flexible learners fall into two main categories. The first category comprises students who are enrolled as distance learners but actually enjoy a blended mode of learning. The second group is the distance learner per se. These learners are either geographically challenged or due to work commitments are not able to utilise support staff services which are available predominantly during business hours. Distance learners from extremely remote areas may not have access to computers and likewise little or no access to electricity (Gold, Swann and Chief 2002). The challenge for SLS today is reaching out to the latter group of students and providing them with similar access to services as non-distance learners.

The place of SLS in distance learning at USP is now being given much emphasis. About 50% of USP's 20, 000 students are studying via the Distance and Flexible (DFL) mode (Quality and Planning Office, USP 2008). Nevertheless, many have not had access to adequate support. Access to print materials and other support mechanisms do not necessarily guarantee facilitation of learning. MacLoughlin (2002) mentions that distance learner support needs to reconceptualise the traditional scaffolding platforms. The learner needs social and peer support in addition to print based support.

In order to facilitate the desired levels of support, USP's support systems have been vigorously targeting all facets so as to bombard the learner with the learning prospects in the institution. There have been two upgrades to the USPNet, one in 2000 and another in 2006 to ensure that communication services are adequate and able to sustain distance learning (Duncan and McMaster 2008). There has also been the implementation of a Learning Management System (Moodle). The publication of the DFL handbook that serves to orientate the distance learner is

also a means of creating awareness for the distance learner. Apart from describing the distance and flexible learning environment, enrolment and admission procedures, the book informs the user about the various support facilities and how they could be utilised (*Distance and Flexible Learning Handbook 2010*).

Another initiative is the alignment of SLS to the respective faculties (the Faculty of Arts and Law, Faculty of Business and Economics, and Faculty of Science, Technology and Environment) at USP in mid-2010. This was undertaken to tailor generic study skills to the requirements of the faculty. For instance, all learners need report writing skills, however, the science student may not be writing the report in the same manner as a commerce/ business student. Furthermore, each faculty has outlined its own measures for assisting its distance learners and thus having its own support staff would enable meeting those objectives.

Two ongoing initiatives are the REMOTE videoconferencing platform and Success@USP, the orientation program specifically styled for the distance learner. These will be described later in the paper.

### **Meeting the challenges: Areas of support**

The distance learner needs support in several areas and the university's Strategic Plan 2010-2012 has expressly articulated six 'Priority Areas'. The first two Priority Areas, "Learning and Teaching" and "Student Support" place student-centered needs at the top of USP's priorities. McNickle (1999) listed several areas which characterize learning support challenges. Of these four are applicable to USP.

#### *1. Learning Styles*

Literature on the subject is abundant. They explain that individual differences and preferences tend to impact methods of learning. Likewise local studies (Deo and Phan 2006) show educators need to consider that learning styles are in alignment with course objectives and assessments when planning coursework. The distance learner is no exception but their situation is compounded with numerous challenges, one of which is isolation. Landbeck and Mugler (1999) argue that remote Pacific learners remain deprived of peer support and other means of interaction that could encourage discussion and critical thinking processes. While this situation remains critical for many and is under constant review, of interest is Landbeck and Mugler's (2000) distinction of the pragmatic and sequential learners at USP. They describe the pragmatic learner as someone who learns on a need basis. Thus relevant skills that pertain to assignment writing are sought when the assignment deadline is almost upon them. The sequential learner on the other hand perceives learning as a process to higher goal achievements. As a result, every step in the learning process is undertaken relative to the higher goal. The sequential learning style has implications for the distance learner who is expected to be self directed. Support is available for learners and it is usually the sequential learners who take advantage of the support services. It is thus evident that a change in the attitude and learning style of the USP learner could make much difference in learning outcomes.

## *2. Learning Skills*

SLS offers assistance in literacy skills only. This is evident in the range of language based resources that are available to the support seeker. Numeracy skills support is extended through the mentoring program as currently there is no support tutor at SLS.

Since USP is a regional university, language needs are wide and varied. English remains at second, or third position in relation to the vernacular languages. Although English serves as the medium of instruction for most of the USP member countries with Vanuatu as an exception where French also is employed in education domains (Crowley 2004), many regional students are not well equipped to cope with English language skills. This poses a real challenge for the distance learner who is already in need of social support.

USP offers an English Language Skills course (EL001) that addresses relevant skills required for study support. To ensure that as many students are exposed to it, every new entrant sits a diagnostic exam - English Language Skills Assessment - where unsatisfactory results lead to taking the EL001 course. This program is presently available through dual modes: on campus and DFL. Moreover the program runs according to a 'scheme 2 method' where distance students meet twice or thrice during the semester to complete their tests and seminar presentations. All other aspects of the course are run by distance.

## *3. Learner Readiness*

Landbeck and Mugler (1995) and Mugler and Landbeck (1997) have shown that USP students report a preference for independent as well as cooperative learning strategies where there is opportunity for active and exploratory engagement. Nevertheless for many, pre-tertiary learning experiences were seldom directed independent of the teacher, moreover the role of the teacher was authoritarian. As a result, the transition to tertiary studies is overwhelming.

In addition the distance learner needs exposure to learning by means of education-driven technology (satellite conferencing, Moodle, mobile learning, multimedia components and so on). Despite the availability of these interactive mechanisms, USP distance learners are usually restricted to their print materials (Landbeck and Mugler 1999). Accessing multimedia is impeded by geographical remoteness, intermittent satellite connectivity, inadequate transport services, family or work commitments (Evans 2002) and time differences (Yusuf 2009). Thus enabling the distance learner to be educated through means that may be more comfortable and conducive is of considerable challenge.

## *4. Delivery*

USPNet which is a satellite communications network was set up in 1973 (Duncan and McMaster 2008, 3) but it was in year 2000 when USP was able to connect to all twelve of its member countries (Evans 2000, 454). Improvements to USPNet over the years have contributed to faster and reliable internet accessibility (Chandra 2010). The fact remains that there still are distance learners who employ multimedia components (CD and DVD) of their courses and these do not promote interactivity.

The scope of mobile phones as a means for directing short message system (SMS) or text messages to the distance learner has been described as inexpensive and convenient (Prasad 2009). The potential of this device as a support mechanism for USP is currently underway. The mLearn@USP working group formed in August 2009 and has been responsible for research, development and implementation of mobile learning at USP (T. Koroivulaono, personal communication, February 24, 2010) is illustrative of the intent to expand support services. Surveys involving staff and students have been undertaken and a proposal for funding purposes is soon to be presented to the university Vice-Chancellor (T. Koroivulaono, personal communication, February 24, 2010). The fact that mobile learning remains an option indicates technological awareness for a Pacific based tertiary institution.

Another recent move by USP's drive to support distance learning has been the installation and use of a new video conferencing platform called REACT (Remote Educational and Conferencing Tool). REACT offers several features that would allow people in remote areas to engage with interactive learning activities and discussions.

The implementation of this facility provides greater interactivity between learners and with course facilitators. As such, SLS has taken the initiative of using the tool for running its academic skills workshops. The semester 2, 2010 workshop titles and attendance is tabulated below.

**Table 1.** SLS workshops disseminated using REMOTE

<b>Workshop Title (Satellite)</b>	<b>No. of students</b>	<b>No. of hours</b>
Time Management and Study Skills	8	2
Critical Thinking	8	1
Referencing	5	2
Literature Review	5	1
Preparing for Exams	5	2
Taking Exams	0	2

Source: Faculty of Business and Economics/ SLS 2010 Report

While reasons for low turnout during satellite tutorials have been outlined by Evans (2000, 454), SLS has considered that in the new semester in 2011 the workshops would be scheduled as such to reach a wider group of attendants. The workshop times would be spread out both during morning and evenings unlike previous semesters when only evening sessions were conducted. This would permit students to attend at least one workshop during the semester. A total of 27 REACT mediated workshops by SLS have been identified for 2011 (13 in semester 1 and 14 in semester2).

In an effort to support distance and flexible learners at USP and subsequently curb early attrition, an early intervention program titled Success@USP, was identified as a resolution at the Regional Campuses Directors' Conference (RCDC) in April 2007. The meet in Alafua, Samoa highlighted premature drop out amongst DFL students at USP as a central issue.

Success@USP was henceforth designed to orientate distance learners to tertiary learning environments and nurture self-directed study. The program, which is to be conducted at the regional campuses, is designed to last four days and it outlines the following areas which are considered essential support aspects.

**Module 1:** Unlocking my Potential which focuses on identifying strengths, weaknesses, time management and study strategies

**Module 2:** Support which creates awareness on the various support available at USP.

**Module 3:** Learning about USP's expectations. This module addresses simple study skills such as Listening and notetaking, reading note making, planning and writing assignments and using feedback for improvements.

**Module 4:** Challenges and Opportunities. The DFL student learns about referencing, plagiarism, student rights and showing academic courtesy.

Source: Success@USP Student Workbook

The orientation program is facilitated in a manner to allow maximum interaction amongst the participants since interactivity features as an essential aspect of the learning atmosphere. To enable this, a student workbook with several corresponding interactive features has been prepared. Photographs of USP students as guides throughout the book, their testimonies, diagrams coordinating activities and facilitative icons complement the text. These features have been intentionally inserted to create verisimilitude to a face to face meeting for someone who is unable to attend the program. Radio stations broadcasting succinct messages on aspects of the Success@USP orientation has been an avenue for small USP campuses such as Tokelau. Nevertheless, those who do attend the orientation program are able to benefit from group based activities. The workbook accompanies a CD and selected study guides.

The program was piloted in mid 2008 with the initial orientation program starting prior to semester 1, 2009 and continuing into 2010. With implementation reports still in process, logistics are currently in a raw state. The respective campuses will implement banner fields which will enable the recording of participant completions of program. Facilitation of evaluations is also underway. Once complete, a clear understanding on the success rate of the program will be available. Nevertheless, anecdotal evidence indicate that the program has been successful. This has led to continuing the program in 2011.

### **Some proposals to address challenges of distance**

A future initiative which specifically focuses on learning support to assist the DFL student is outreach programmes. To date, only the Laucala campus in Fiji, the Emalus campus in Vanuatu, and the Alafua campus in Samoa have student support staff based at the respective campuses. Nevertheless, due to extremely remote locations, students continue to remain disadvantaged. Napwatt (2008) identifies distance in Vanuatu as the primary cause for inaccessibility to services and facilities. Students have to bear expensive transportation costs in order to access support from their campuses and centres. Student webmail, telephone and facsimile facilities if accessed outside of the campuses will again impose costs on students. Furthermore, regional centres do not always have qualified staff to address learning support queries. Thus outreach policies that ensure regular visitations by relevant support staff, usually accompanying academic staff, would prove useful. This way qualified support staff can address academic skills relative to the unit requirements. As a result a personal approach to student support will be available, as well as more credence to the need for such assistance will be created. This paper concurs with Napwatt (2008) that decentralizing support and establishing stronger networks amongst the campuses may contribute to minimising student learning issues in the outer campuses.

Another scheme would be allowing student support staff presence in Moodle pages for courses that are being run solely through DFL mode. This would help target academic support needs for distance students. It will allow communiqué between support staff and queries to remain recorded for the benefit of other students. In addition, the course lecturer will also be privy to the nature of assistance that is being sought as well as the nature and extent of assistance that is being availed.

It is evident from these initiatives that USP students in the DFL mode have access to ample support for their learning. In addition these mechanisms do provide affective support which is extremely necessary to sustain learners studying through this mode. To ensure that support of this nature is consistent and up to par, the Centre for Flexible and Distance learning (CFDL) at USP regularly facilitates training programs for staff. Currently, training for Moodle and REMOTE are in process.

Mills, Marchessou, Nonyongo and Tau (2005) have recommended that studies and evaluations should be undertaken to assess and improve the nature of student support systems as they help to determine the effectiveness of programs. It is essential to note that using REMOTE for student support and Success@USP are still in their embryonic stages. Semester 1, 2011 will serve as an indicator of the challenges that are likely to occur. The same applies for future schemes.

## Conclusion

Initiatives for student learning support at USP demonstrate the proactive attitude of its managers and their adherence to Education for All (EFA) targets for 2015. Efforts in reducing the gap between small island countries and their counterpart larger nations so as to offer equity in educational modes and subsequently permitting more distance learners access to interactive learning facilities are clearly visible in the mechanisms present at USP.

USP by comparison is a small institution which serves islands at the lower end of the developing continuum. Nevertheless, current facilities for its distance learners could be described as commendable considering the stature of the institution. No doubt more efforts in promoting the self directed and independent learner need encouragement. The onus is borne equally by staff and students. On the one hand staff are tasked with developing and maintaining quality, relevant and sustainable support programs. On the other hand, students are encouraged to take on the initiative and utilise support that is available.

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*Symbiosis International Conference on Open and Distance Learning, February, 2011*

***Sub-Theme: Governance***

***Utilization of Ideas Discovered in Academic Conference as a Key to Good Governance in Open and Distance Education in Nigeria.***

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**ABSTRACT OF THE PAPER**

*Open and distance education has become a veritable tool for provision of quality education and equity in educational opportunities aimed at meeting the needs of its participants. The instructors of open and distance education ensures that success is achieved through shared responsibility and close participation. Recognition of the value of open and distance education as a key growth driver for socio-economic development has increased the need for good governance. Addressing governance is critical to achieving the millennium Development Goals. It is fundamental to all poverty reduction efforts...it can yield a powerful development dividend, enhance people's rights - the right to security, to a decent life, to basic services such as education, health and clean water, the right to vote, to organize and freely express opinions, and the right to be treated with respect, to seek redress and to due process in law (Irish Aid, 2010). Thousand of conferences are organized each day all over the world to build capacity for good governance. Millions of academic conferences are organized each year to identify emerging issues that may hinder good governance, but national organizations often fails to utilize the ideas discovered in these Academic conferences. This has continued to be counterproductive in promoting sustainable development in programmes, especially in Open and Distance education where its mode and learners are unique. After analysis of data collected through questionnaire and in-depth interview from three tertiary institutions, the result indicate that little attention is paid to these ideas discovered and it is hardly utilized. The author therefore argued that utilization of ideas discovered and how it is being implemented or utilized by the society (Okeen, 1998) is a key to good governance in open and distance education.*

***KEYWORDS: Open learning, Distance Education, Academic conference, governance, socio-economic and development.***

## **INTRODUCTION**

For several decades, there has been an increasing use of conferences to bring academicians and intellectuals in a field to discourse theory, concepts, definitions, prepositions, and observations of facts organized in such a way as to describe the interrelationships among variables for the purpose of explaining and predicting the outcome of such relationships (Ndagi, 1999). Conferences are usually organized either by a scientific society or by a group of researchers with a common interest. Larger meetings may be handled on behalf of the scientific society by professional Conferences organizers (Aronowitz, 2010). Conferences are usually filled with various presentations. They tend to be short and concise, with time span of about 10 to 30minutes; they are usually followed by a discussion. The work may be bundled in written form as academic paper and published as conference proceedings. Usually a conference will include keynotes speakers (often, scholar of some standing, but sometimes individuals from outside academia) (Aronowitz, 2010). Conferences may or may not always be academics.

Academic conferences are for researches to present and discuss their work together ..., it provides an important channel for exchange of information between researchers (web definitions, 2010). Academic conferences fall into three categories: the themed conference, small conferences organized around a particular topic; the general conference, a conference with a wider focus, with sessions on a wide variety of topics. These conferences are often organized by regional, national, or international learned societies and held annually or on some other regular basis. The theme and sub-theme may be organized around identified challenges to find solutions or to enable sharing the success stories of other countries practices that worked. In academic conferences, position papers and research findings reports from scientific method of controlled inquiry involving a formal systematic and intensive process of verifying knowledge that will help educationists achieve their goal are presented. Such goals are the discovering of Laws or generalizations about behaviours which can be used to make prepositions and control events within educational situations (Traverse, 1964). The findings enable successively more comprehensive theoretical explanations to give mankind important key to understanding the universe (Van Daler, 1997).

Academic conferences are therefore for researchers whose paper presentations are to discourse the both (qualitative and quantitative ) systematic and intensive process utilized in carrying out their researches (Ehiametalor & Nwandiani,2002),directed toward discovery and development of an organized body of knowledge(Best,1989) and conditions under which a phenomenon can or cannot exist or occur( Ehiametalor & Nwandiani,2002).Academic conferences also present “activities of solving problems which leads to new knowledge using methods of inquiry which are currently accepted as adequate by scholars in the field(Hemstadters,1970) solving these problems may result in prediction and possibly ultimate control of events(Johnson,1997).It may therefore be right to postulate that academic conferences exposes participants to various ideas concerned with the developing generalizations and principles concerning teaching-learning processes, instructional material and its proper administration. It may also be right to state that participants seek greater explanatory power of generalization or conceptual framework for better value (Lovels &Lawson, 1970).

Academic conference helps in the generation of solutions to educational problem and research in education enables discovery of generalizations relating to the various aspects of education. These generalizations enable us to make decisions on what to do, how it should be done and what to avoid in the process... (Ehiamentalor & Nwandiani, 2002). Such tested knowledge which is obtained thus contributes to solving the problems of what should be done in education (Ehiamentalor & Nwandiani, 2002). Such was the outcome of the World conference on education held in 1990 in Jometien, Thailand, where the movement called Education For All (EFA) was Launched. In 1993, a group of nine high population countries, namely Bangladesh, Brazil, China, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Nigeria, and Pakistan gathered in New Delhi, India, under the sponsorship of UNESCO, UNICEF and United Nation's Population Fund (UNFPA). These nine countries accounted for a large percentage of the population of the world, more than 70% of the World's illiterates and more than 50% of its out-of-school children. Leaders of these countries reaffirmed their commitment to pursuing the goals set in 1990 by the World conference on Education. Through this way, conferences not only expose new problems but also generate tested knowledge and new knowledge that is vital for human existence and development (Kerlinger, 1966). In fact, it sheds light to educational development challenges in many ways.

It is also very essential for ensuring a meaningful, analysis of local needs and assets, capturing local knowledge, gathering and analyzing lessons learned by other countries, understanding the complex interplay of local and international factors pinning a society in poverty and generating knowledge and solutions tailored to a country's reality (UPCD, 2007). So, the research tool enables us to adapt, modify and domesticate truth and insights for local use. These have made it possible for most countries to tap the ideas, it also contributes expertise, build capacity to generate and adapt knowledge to development and education challenges. Universities worldwide are key agents in building strong economics and societies through knowledge and expertise (Morris, 2007). It has been identified that the key central elements of the university mission is teaching, research and community outreach, strengthening these pillars helps create the strong local institutions upon which developing countries can rely to solve their development problems (UPCD, 2007). Most governments have recognized that a highly educated workforce and investments in research and innovation are fundamental to economic growth. By the same token, higher education is essential for building vibrant economics and good governance in developing countries (Morris, 2007). Recognition of the value of education in promoting literacy and reducing poverty has led to the development of Open and distance education and developing governance capacity, all helps build the foundation for prosperity.

Like conventional school, open and distance education offer skills and knowledge to develop all sectors of society and manage development effectively (UPCD, 2007). It is the training ground for future political and business leaders, policy makers and professional, and continuing professional development. It fosters the intellectual leadership and good governance skills necessary to drive development (UPCD, 2007). Through this mode, there has been an increase in socio-economic and cultural power of people who can work either part-time or full-time and still attend school. Open and distance learning has transformed the use of technology (from e-learning to m-learning and gradually to u-learning), thereby increasing the socio-economic assess of its learners. Open and distance education in many countries have recorded massive results and this has led to its diversification to many other areas, thereby creating more need for struggle to

meet up with competitive environment. But, to some institutions progress is hampered by lack of good governance to coordinate the constant changes in the world.

For a society to be able to survive and prosper, it must be able to adapt to continuing changes in its environment. The global environment has changed dramatically in the last ten years. Yet, the adaptability of societies to change is different from one to another. In societies where there is an effective government (governments that govern) within a democratic system, the government is better equipped in adapting to new situations. However, others may be less prepared. Basically, what is required by societies at present time is: Effective government (good governance), Meaningful public participation (democratic system) and, Adherence to sustainable development principles (World Bank and UNDP, 2002). Some societies have the capability and means to assist others because of their experience, working knowledge, as well as available resources. Therefore, a proactive effort to achieve such conditions should become prime vehicle for global cooperation (World Bank and UNDP, 2002). As developed countries move towards increased trade liberalization and knowledge-based economies, developing countries must be ready with their own advocates in international trade liberalization. To develop such knowledge-based economies has made open and distance education an important channel through which nations can achieve their objectives.

The success of Open and distance education has been the concern of many organization, for several decades now, especially those that perceive education as a key to the achievement of socio-economic development in a sustainable way. COL and its international partners (COL's partners include other Commonwealth agencies, members of the UN System (UNESCO, UNICEF, UNIFEM, UNDP and the World Bank), national and regional distance education associations and industry), have helped advance Open and Distance Learning into the mainstream of education and training throughout the Commonwealth. COL has helped developing nations increase their capacity to meet growing demand for access to quality education and training; in the learning community, COL has heightened awareness to, and increased acceptance of, alternative methods of educational delivery and ICT use. COL has worked to optimize the efficient transfer of information, ideas, innovations and resources supporting Open and Distance Learning (COL, 2008). Since COL began operations in 1989, it has: helped introduce, or enhance, hundreds of teaching/training programmes in more than 40 countries; influenced the conception and development of open schools and universities; conducted training, seminars and studies on specific educational needs; established an extensive network of education and technology specialists around the world; and facilitated systemic changes in the delivery of education and influenced government policy (COL, 2008). COL has also supported and funded conferences, seminars, and workshops, of which Nigeria as a nation has benefited a lot from COL's initiatives and good governance.

Despite all these, according to official records, Nigeria remains the only E-9 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) facing serious challenges of turning around the illiteracy rate among its youths and adults by the 2015 timeline set to achieve education for all (EFA) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The link between literacy rate and the level of economic development in any society has long been established. While societies with high literacy rate are

likely to boast of developed economies, countries with poor literacy rate as found in Sub Saharan Africa are likely to be among the least developed economies. Therefore, the need to fast track economic development appears to be behind efforts made to raise the literacy rate in the country. According to experts, once illiteracy is successfully eradicated, other development challenges including poverty, disease and ignorance would be easily addressed (Udonquak, 2010). Realising that it is likely to be a difficult task to achieve 100 percent enrolment in the formal education sector and at the same time tackling the challenge of making over 70 million adult illiterates to be literate.

In the search for solution, Rufai, the minister for education in Nigeria, asserts “If we plan to get our people out of poverty, to join the global information super highway and hope to be counted among countries with developed systems in science and technology and a force to be reckoned with in the world’s socio economic and political arena, we must empower our people through acquisition of literacy and numeracy.”(Abubakar, 2010). Recognition of these ought to make Nigerian government to radically improve open and distance education but instead its problems are relegated to the background. There are recommendations and suggestions from various conferences in regional, national and international level but there is little or no implementation yet. Presently, there is a growing debate that Nigeria’s poor progress is due to lack of good governance. Governance is a continuous and dynamic process, expanding and contracting as people, groups of people, or nations, are expanding and contracting their areas of common interests and objectives, activities, and interactions. Governance gets progressively more complex as the activities and objectives and the means by which they are achieved-technological inventions and innovations, organizational principles and methodologies change, and become more sophisticated. Governance has to adapt and adjust to changes, needs, demands and challenges from both within the countries and at the international level, responding to the fears, challenges and possibilities of the global markets (UNDP, 2010). Governance can also be seen as both processes and arrangements that ensure orderliness, acceptable standard of allocation of resources (both human and material) and a legal framework within which national behaviours are shaped and controlled.

Good governance on its own refers to “broad reform strategy and a particular set of initiatives to strengthen the institutions of civil society with the objective of making government more accountable, more open and transparent and more democratic” (Minogue, 1997). Governance becomes good when it responds to the basic needs, wishes and aspirations of the people, when it is based on sound efficient organizational and operational, principles, when the entire process is transparent and accountable, whose consequences are understood and predictable, leadership, competence, political will, integrity and capacity are critical to the promotion of good governance (UNDESA, 2010). Bad governance occurs when accountability and transparency are lacking, appropriate organizational and operational principles are not applied, and the leaders are greedy, rapacious, corrupt, incompetent, and insensitive to the needs, wishes and aspirations of the people (UNDESA, 2010).

Good governance deals with competency, efficiency and effective application of both human and material resource to achieve organizational goals. Competency entails the capacity to formulate policies and strategies; to make timely and strategic decisions with regard to the immediate issues and the long-term policy options that are likely to emerge to implement policy decisions

including the management of the delivery of services competence entails the overall analytical capacity to identify the salient issues and formulate the appropriate policies, and to manage the governance processes in response to the needs, wishes, and aspirations of the people in a world that is rapidly changing (UNDESA, 2010). Efficiency entails, continuously upgrade of the various aspects of its institutional capacity making sure that they are effective and adaptable to change and new demands. This calls for continuous training and exposure to the demands of domestic changes and needs as well as the global challenges and opportunity (UNDESA, 2010). Effectiveness will depend partly on individual capabilities, education, training, skills and experiences and partly on their legitimacy to produce an intended result through good leadership.

Conferences has been used to search for solutions to bad governance, this was practicalized in Liberia. The country utilized conferences, seminars and workshop as a means of achieving good governance. Liberia conducted a study emerging from all the readings of the reports of the symposia, conferences and workshops conducted since the inauguration of the new government shows that Liberia has experienced bad governance for a long time (UNDP, 1999). The findings has helped them to plan a new way for good governance. Good governance is obviously a very desirable thing, in-fact, it essential for the promotion of sustainable human development, peace, security, stability and prosperity. Good governance will have to be struggled for; and very hard at that, sincerely, consistently and for a very long time (UNDESA, 2010). Borrowing from four conditions put in place for good governance in Liberia, the Nigerian context in open and distance education may be as follows: **A.** There has to be a thorough understanding of governance in ODL. **B.** A sound and objective comprehension of the problems and causes that led to the occurrence of bad governance, **C.** Assessment should be made to determine what is realistically needed to create condition for governance to take place. **D.** The establishment of a clear understanding of the kind of leadership need and the political will to bring about good governance. Appropriate and extensive information to help found the solution and make decision to the achievement of the above can be gathered from conferences.

Although, successful governance is influenced by several factors which include socio-economic and political commitment; quality of leadership, character and form of government enlightenment and engaged civil society and government's administrative capacity (Adesida, 2001). Knowledge has now emerged as the crucial link for development. In an era of dwindling resources,... there is need to strategically utilize knowledge as a tool for development (CHEA, undated). On this basis academic conferences generate new knowledge and the utilization these ideas discovered will enhance decision-making process. This is because these ideas, when arranged ensure orderliness, acceptable standard of allocation of resource (human and material), management of a country's economic and social resources for development, (Minoque, 1997, Cheema Maquire, 2004). Since good governance promotes sustainability, efficiency, effectiveness, participation in decision-making, the paper therefore argue that the utilization of ideas discovered in academic conferences to improve open and distance education in Nigeria, is key to good governance. .

### **Rationale for the study**

The success of open and distance education depends on good governance. Good governance will involve a comprehensive coordination of well designed delivery strategies to increase response to changes and programme implementation. This in turn is linked to how individuals in the organization are able to harness information available in decision making process. Academic conference provides varieties of relevant information to enable rational decision-making process. This information is produced through utilizing quantitative and qualitative data collection process. Institutions, learners and communities must recognize the importance of academic conferences and utilize the ideas discovered as key to good governance. Open and distance education are confronted with lots of issues and challenges. These have hindered its development. Improving access, delivery and quality is critical to eliminate its perception as a second alternative. Furthermore, building its esteem is essential to increase management results to unsupportive environment. Academic conferences can be used to generate new knowledge and ideas to improve governance.

### **Problem of the study**

There are millions of academic conferences organized each year all over the world (Aronowitz, 2010), in these conferences, marketable ideas, creative innovations that ought to promote good governance and sustainable economic development stops at the laboratory doors of the researchers, consequently the recommendations and report findings dies without proper implementation(Okeen,1998). Good governance is a product of knowledge, information, education, training, culture, traditions, experiences, natural endowments, motivations and commitment to goals (UNDESA, 2010).Academic conferences leads to the production of educative information, it trains participants directly or indirectly on how to adapt the acquired knowledge, skills and attitude to fit the socio-cultural environment bearing in mind the traditions and experiences of the people that may limit the success of its implementation. The utilization of these ideas enables placing the right people at the right position which increases their motivation and commitment to the achievement of the set goals. When these are achieved, administrative governance which is concerned with the implementation of the decision, the institutional framework, knowledge, skills and experience of the personnel involved and the resources needed to ensure efficient and effective implementation of public policies, the supply of public services and the manner in which they are delivered becomes easily achievable (UNDESA, 2010). But these ideas are not always utilized; the implication is too slow pace of progress in open and distance learning, making sustainable development in socio-economic life of the people difficult to achieve.

### **Purpose of the study**

The main purpose of the study was to find out if the ideas discovered in academic conference are utilized in the institutions as a key to good governance. The objectives of the study therefore include the following:

To determine the impact of academic conferences to good governance.

To increase application of ideas discovered in these academic conference so as to improve Open and distance learning.

To explore the reason for poor implementation of ideas discovered in academic conferences.

To determine the inhibiting factors towards the implementation of these ideas.

### **Methodology.**

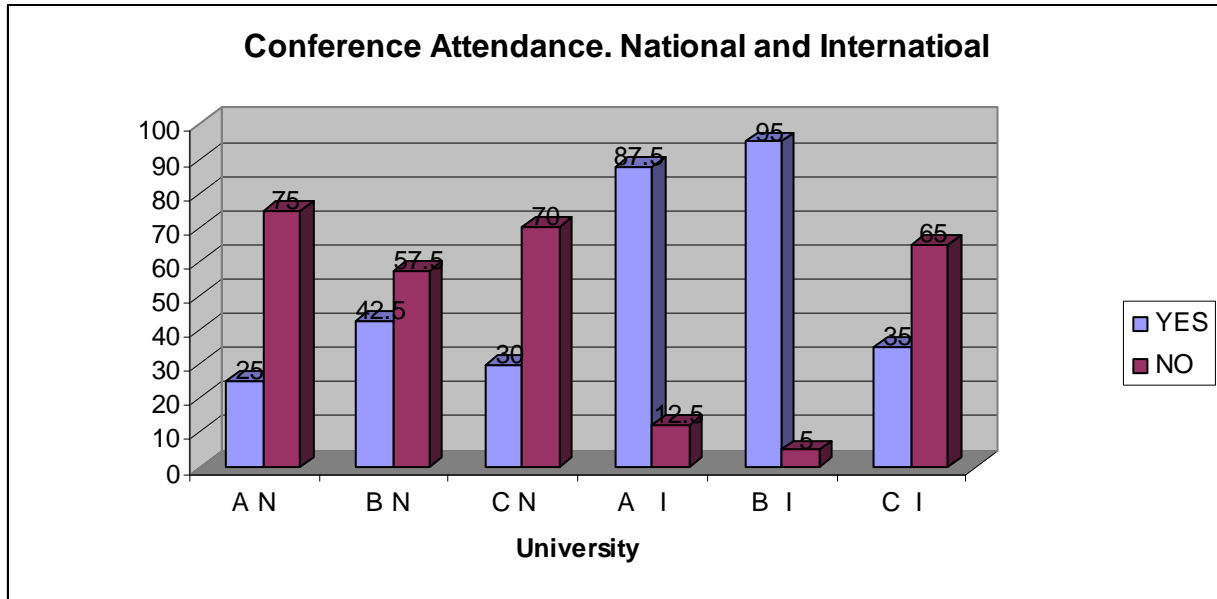
This was a Descriptive study carried out in Benin City between the month of September and November 2010. The study population was 180, made up of lecturers and administrative staffs selected from three universities in south-south, Nigeria. The three Universities are represented by letters A, B and C. The simple random sampling technique was used to select 160 participants from the population. The Descriptive survey research design used to obtain data for the study ,is a useful means for fact finding and as an acknowledged means of obtaining social facts and opinions and will help collection of accurate information on a short period of time (Borg & Gall, 1996). The main instrument for data collection was through the use of in-depth interview and a 10 items questionnaire. The in-depth interview was used to match their responses and check the reliability of the responses provide in the questionnaire. Out of the 160 questionnaire, only 120 were completed by participants. Data was analyzed using simple frequency distribution.

**Findings: the three Universities are represented by letters A, B and C.**

**Values in the table below are in Percentage.**

		A		B		C	
		Total 100		Total 100		Total 100	
	Questionnaire	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO
1	Conference Attendance; National	87.5	12.5	95.0	5.0	35	65
2	Conference Attendance International.	25.0	75.0	42.5	57.5	30	70
3	Discovering ideas	97.5	2.5	100	0	94	6
4	Utilization of ideas	17.5	82.5	32.5	67.5	47.5	52.5
5	Application to governance	7.5	92.5	22.5	77.5	21.0	79
6	Consulting with others to implement ideas discovered	2.7	97.3	2.0	98.0	28.0	72.0
7							

**Figure 1**



There is a low attendance of national conference by the three universities 25% UA, 42.5% UB, AND 30% UC respectively compared with high attendance of international conferences 87.5% UA, 95% UB and 35% UC. This is clearly shown by universities A and B. (25%N, 87.5% I); University A (42.5% N, 95.1% I); University B. The figure showed generally that majority of the respondents prefers to attend international conference than national conferences.

**Figure 2**

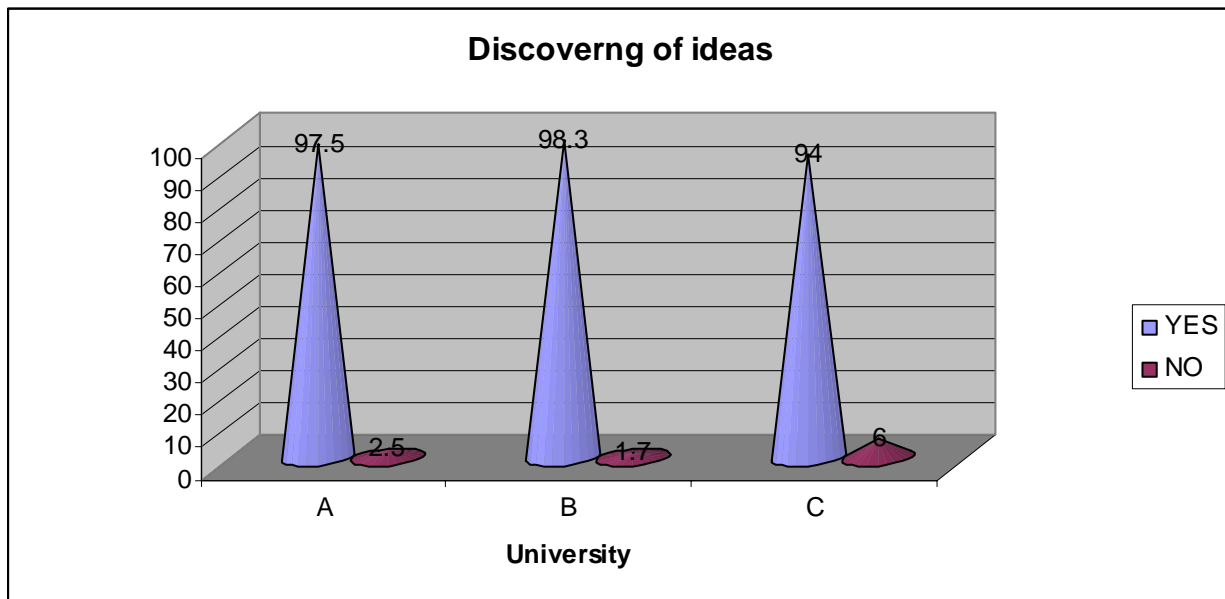


Figure 2 above clearly showed that there is high discovering of ideas by the respondents in all the three universities A,B,C. Majority of them discovered ideas in academic conferences UA (97.5%); UB (98.3%); UC (94%) respectively.

Figure 3

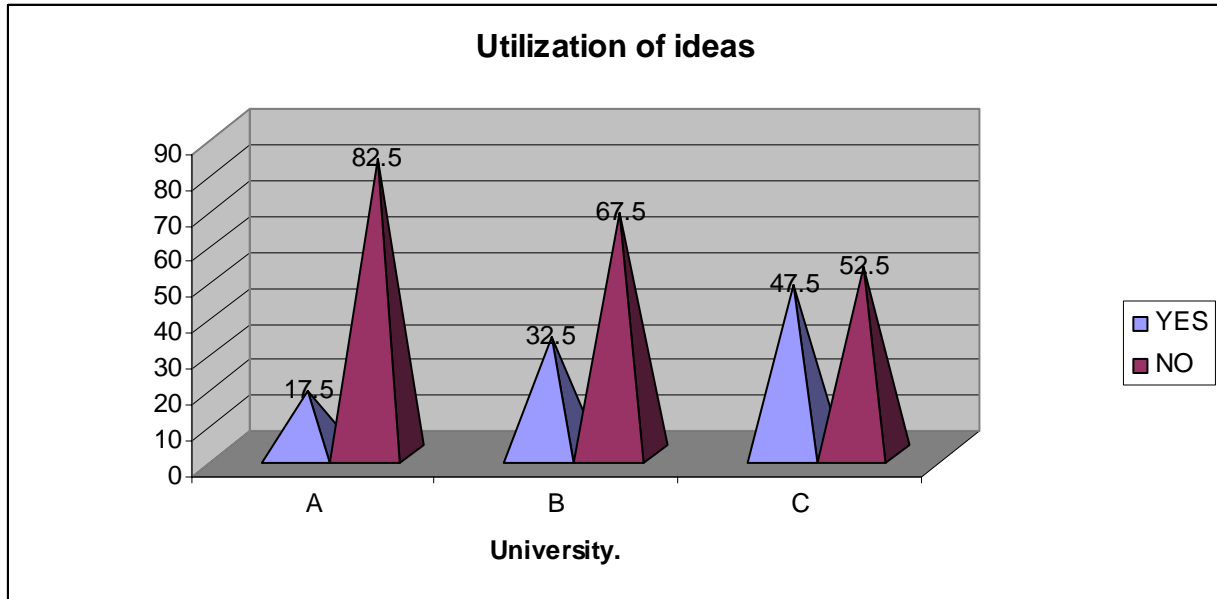
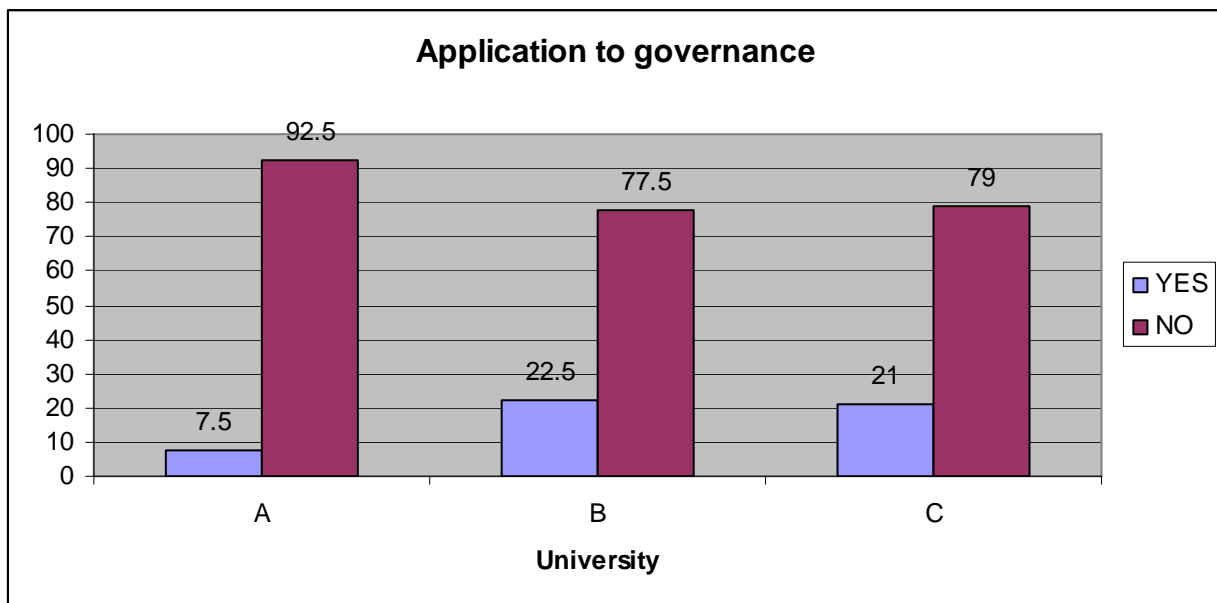


Figure 3 above shows poor utilization of ideas discovered during academic conferences by respondents in the three universities, especially universities A and B. 17.5%, University A; 33.5% university B and 47.5 % University C.

Figure 4



**Figure 4** showed that there is very poor application of ideas discovered during academic conferences to governance by the entire respondents. 7.5% UA, 22.5% UB, and 21% UC.

**Figure 5**

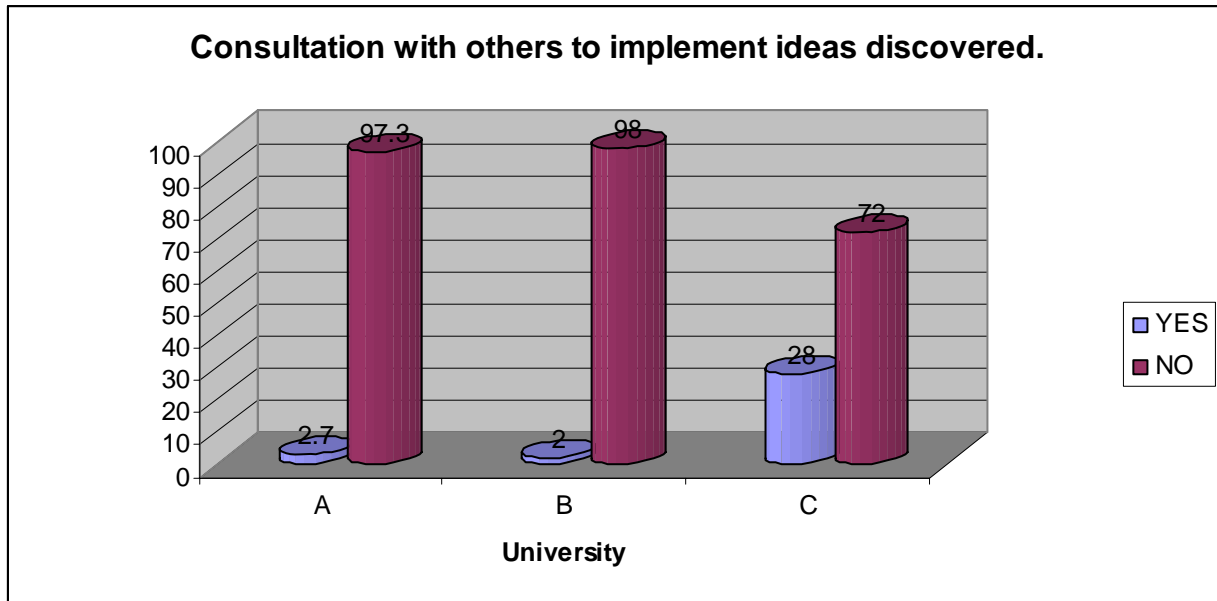


Figure 5 showed poor consultation with others to increase implantation of ideas discovered during academic conferences. UA (2.7%), 2% UB, 28% UC respectively.

## **Discussion**

The findings from the study as shown in figure I, 2, 3, 4, and 5 revealed that the respondents in the three universities attended both national and international academic conferences, a high percentage of new ideas and knowledge are discovered but little attention is paid to implementation of these ideas. It is also evident that consultation with others to promote the implementation of the ideas is very low in three universities. This could be the reason behind poor application of ideas to promote good governance in open and distance education in Nigeria. These seems to agree with Okeen, (1998), assertion, who argued that a major weakness of the conferences by academics is that they end up with mere presentation of papers for which the academics would pat themselves at the back for a 'wonderful' paper, full stop. There are no follow through to know what has become of the ideas discovered and how it is being implemented or utilized by the society. The respondents also agreed that ideas are discovered in academic conferences, although it was poorly utilized, which make it insignificant. This is in line with the views of Minoque, 1997, Cheema Maquire, 2004, these ideas, when arranged ensure orderliness, acceptable standard of allocation of resource (human and material), management of a

country's economic and social resources for development. Moreover, It is also possible that the motive for conference attendance could play an important role in its implementation (For instance, if the motive is to cause a change in the social and educational life of the people) implementation can be achieved, but if the motive is for publication of papers for professional upgrading and growth, then implementation will be very low. This in turn will underscore the benefits of academic conferences which are to enhance universities objectives which is teaching, research and community outreach.

### **Recommendation**

The researcher therefore, intends to explore extensively the reasons behind poor utilization of ideas discovered in academic conference as a key to good governance across several universities in the countries and among conferences participants from others countries. Furthermore, an additional research is needed to explore delegate's intentions towards academic conferences, purposes and objectives, attitudes of delegates towards non- utilizations of ideas and recommendations by significant others. This will help in refocusing the objectives of conferences, on how the ideas and new knowledge discovered can be implemented to help develop the socio-economic life of the institutions and the people who were used as guinea pig for the research.

### **Conclusion**

The study discovered that many academicians from these institutions attend conferences, discover new ideas but hardly implement it to achieve good governance. The promotion of socio-economic and sustainable development cannot be achieved without good governance. Good governance is a product of good leadership and good decision making process. Conferences generate new ideas through its extensive exposure to information based on research findings and position papers; this is expected to aid decision making process, leadership style and governance. Good governance encourages member commitment to the decision and improvement of the quality of atmospheres, such creates a conducive atmosphere which ensures sustainable socio-economic development of the people and institutions. The author therefore argued that utilization of ideas discovered and how it is being implemented or utilized by the society (Okean, 1998) is a key to good governance in open and distance education.

*Symbiosis International Conference on Open and Distance Learning, February, 2011*

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# ***LEARNING TO KNOW FOR A PEACEFUL AND SUSTAINABLE FUTURE: AN ESD SOURCEBOOK FOR EDUCATORS AND LEARNERS***

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## **Introduction**

We need a new concept of Sustainable Development, one that is holistic, appropriate, balanced, harmonious and human-centered, one that will improve the quality of life for all. Sustainable development is for all. It requires the efforts of all to save the Earth for present and future generations.

The UNESCO-Asia Pacific Network for International Education and Values Education (APNIEVE) APNIEVE is a UNESCO-affiliated non-profit organization of individuals and institutions, both government and non-government, committed to and involved in the promotion of peace, human rights, democracy, sustainable development and intercultural understanding in the Asia Pacific Region. Recognizing the crucial role of teachers, APNIEVE focuses on the preparation of teaching-learning materials and the training of teachers from all levels to use these materials and adapt them to their own classes, particularly for sustainable development.

## **Education for Sustainable Development**

APNIEVE's humble contribution to sustainable is in the area of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) which is the education which addresses the four pillars of SD as interdependent and interconnected dimensions—society, culture, environment and economy—to bring about the improvement of the quality of life for all.

APNIEVE has identified content areas and core values under each of the four interrelated dimensions of sustainable development which can guide us to re-orient, reform and re-package our curriculum. For the social dimension, the core areas are human rights, peace and human security, gender equity, holistic health, and good governance. The core value is peace and non-violence. For the cultural dimension, the content areas are cultural and linguistic diversity, intercultural and interfaith understanding, cultural heritage, tangible and intangible, cultural goods and services, and indigenous knowledge. The core value under the cultural dimension is tolerance of diversity. Under the environmental dimension are the content areas of natural heritage and resources—water, energy, agriculture, biodiversity, climate change, rural development, sustainable urbanization, and disaster prevention and mitigation. the core

value is care and protection of the environment. The content areas of the economic dimension are poverty reduction, corporate responsibility and accountability, and market economy. Equitable sharing of resources is the core value.

### **Holistic and Integrated Approach to Quality ESD**

Educating for peace and sustainable future societies requires a new approach, moving away from traditional, rigid, content-oriented methodologies to more holistic, integrated, innovative and creative strategies. There is a need for a human-centered, future-oriented paradigm and a holistic approach to teaching and learning.

Such a holistic concept requires a holistic approach to quality education which aims to develop the faculties of the human person: cognitive, affective, active. Knowledge alone has not and cannot solve the problems of humanity.

A holistic approach to teaching and learning challenges individuals to go beyond gathering and mastering facts, concepts and theories about sustainable development. It calls for values integration across disciplines, into each subject in the curriculum, into our daily life and behavior. Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) which employs the integrated approach to education prepares learners to become advocates for a sustainable future.

UNESCO-APNIEVE proposes a model of holistic and integrated learning. It is a **four-step process** (Figure 2) which does not necessarily follow a prescribed sequence, but may be modified according to the situation, the needs of the learner and the creativity of the facilitator (UNESCO-APNIEVE, 2004).

**Step One: Cognitive Level – KNOWING.** This first step addresses and nurtures the intellectual faculties of the learner. It introduces specific facts and concepts, information on social issues and problems, background data on culture, history, geography, new technologies, economy, government, religion, and the natural environment of one's own country and those of others that are to be looked into and examined. How these affect the self and others, our values and behaviors, are suggested for the learners to consider. It develops the person to think critically and creatively. Knowing, however, is still within the parameters of facts and concepts. This level should therefore move into deeper understanding and insight.

**Step Two: Conceptual Level – UNDERSTANDING.** In the cycle, distinction is made between knowledge and wisdom. Knowledge without understanding may lead to insult, but knowledge with understanding leads to insight. This is why the conceptual level is divided as two separate steps. Knowledge could be easily explained by the educator and in turn quickly memorized by the learners. For the learners however to understand and thereby gain insight requires wisdom. Concepts that are made concrete for the learners could be grasped more fully and easily by them. These steps are expected to result in social awareness and consciousness, and social insight.

**Step Three: Affective Level – VALUING.** The third step allows the educators to enter into the affective realm of the learner. Educators must not underestimate the importance of the emotional and psychological dimension of the learners. Seldom, however, do educators ask the learners what they feel. Often, the questions are limited to what they should know.

How a learner reacts affectively to experiences is an essential dimension to examine and from which to learn. Oftentimes, the affective part provides the motivation which leads to the actualization of a value in behavior and daily life.

This third step ensures that knowledge and understanding are filtered through one's experiences and reflections and are eventually affirmed affectively, cherished and appreciated and embraced as motivations for behavior and as life goals and ideals, resulting to social concern and commitment.

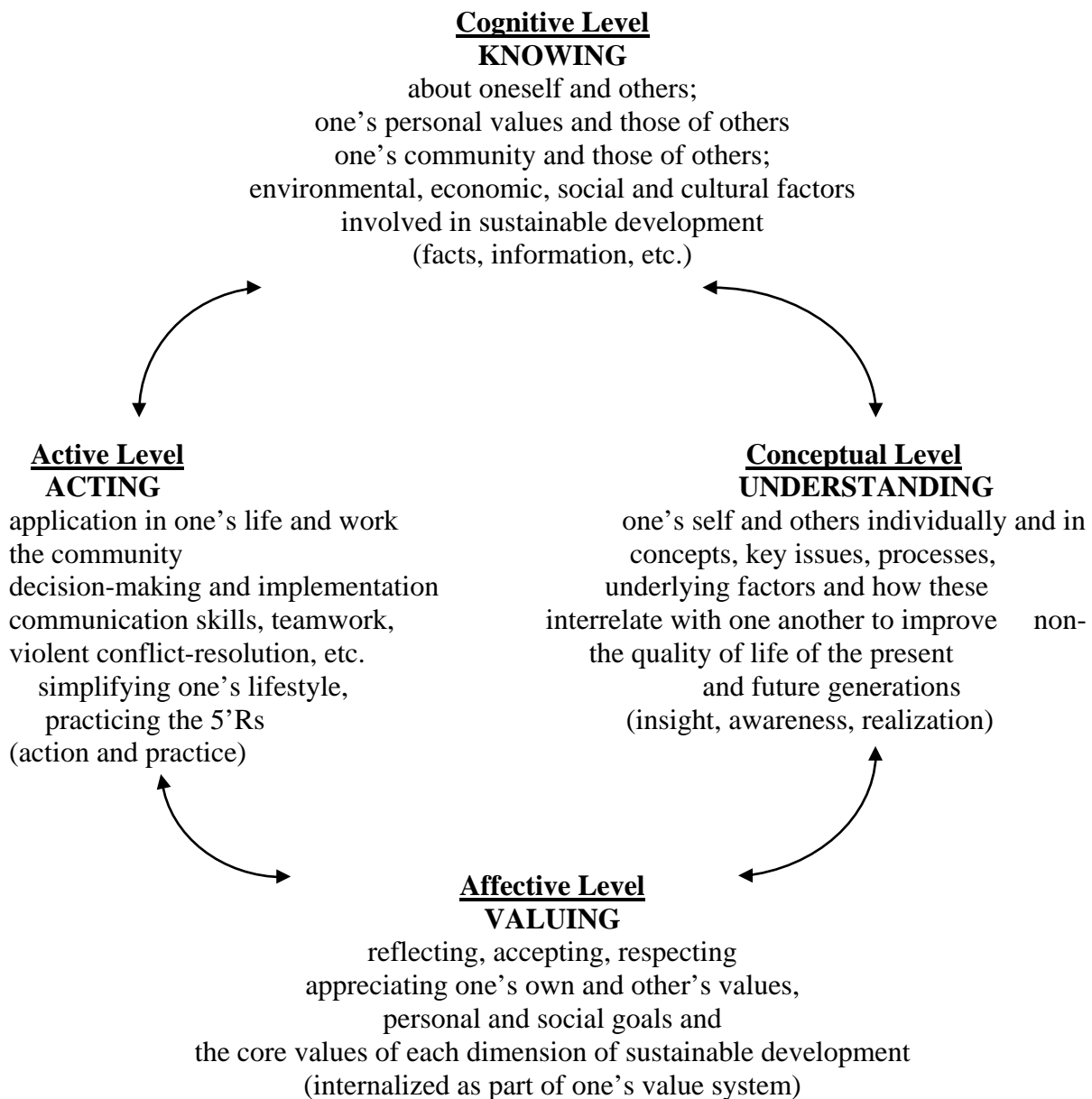


Figure 1 The Teaching-Learning Cycle

**Step Four: Active Level – ACTING.** The concepts and values that are internalized ultimately lead to action. Whether the action is expressed in improved communication skills, better decision-making, non-violent conflict resolution, etc., the value concepts find their way into our behaviors. The learners are thereby challenged to see through the spontaneous flow of the concept and affective dimension into behavioral manifestations. Sometimes, this flows

naturally. Other times, it involves further skills enhancement in the particular area. This develops the ability to practice one's values in daily life.

The holistic and integrated approach to the teaching-learning process can develop the cognitive, affective and active powers of the learner towards the attainment of more integrated learning outcomes: knowledge and understanding, insights and realizations, values, attitudes, and convictions; skills, competencies and patterns of behavior. Learning outcomes cannot be compartmentalized. In fact, they are closely interrelated and interconnected; hence, the need for a well-rounded educator who can use innovative, holistic and integrated approaches to develop the powers and faculties of the learner to the fullest (Quisumbing, 2005, p.42).

### Sources and Strategies

The holistic approach necessitates a shift from the traditional mode of teaching, which focuses on the teacher as sole purveyor of knowledge or as a perfect example, to learning which is student-centered. It calls for sources aside from the textbook and uses such teaching-learning materials as references on the social, cultural, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development, Universal Declarations, official documents and reports, multimedia, the Internet, current issues, TV and newspaper clips, etc. It selects strategies which are more evocative, experiential, reflective, interactive and participative.

The use of the following techniques, among others, are suggested:

1. **Music**, lyrics and melody, as a powerful medium can elicit insights and values on ESD.
2. **Poetry and quotations** from famous authors are effective motivators.
3. **Cartoons and newspaper clippings** allow learners to keep in touch with relevant matters and issues.
4. **Evaluative techniques** like rating scales can motivate learners to assess their feelings, values and actions.
5. **Expressing agreement or disagreement** helps learners examine the strength of their feelings about a given value or issue.
6. **Visualization and meditation exercises** lead learners to get in touch their thoughts, feelings and insights.
7. **Values ranking** challenges learners to thoughtfully consider decisions among alternatives and clarify priorities.
8. The **values continuum** provides learners with a greater range of choices on ESD issues.
9. **Unfinished sentences** surface some indicators of learners' values as manifested in their attitudes, plans, interests, goals.
10. **Poster and slogan making** allows learners to creatively and concretely express their ideas, feelings and plans.
11. **Role playing** allows learners to experience putting themselves into the situation of others.
12. **Story telling** may be favored by younger learners.

The holistic and integrated approach to teaching and learning challenges individuals to go beyond gathering and mastering facts, concepts and theories about sustainable development. It envisions developing persons who have a genuine care and deep concern for nature and the environment, for the social institutions and the cultural legacy of a people—their physical,

economic, moral and spiritual well-being; in order to improve the quality of life of the present and future generations, thus contributing to the building of a peaceful and sustainable future.

APNIEVE has conducted training workshops using a holistic approach through the 4-step teaching-learning cycle for more than 150 teachers from more than 30 countries in the Asia Pacific and for the ASEAN countries of Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines.

### **The APNIEVE Sourcebook**

UNESCO-APNIEVE with the assistance of UNESCO-Asia Pacific Centre of Education for International Understanding (APCEIU), presents a sourcebook for educators and learners, *Learning To Know for A Peaceful and Sustainable Future*.

The Sourcebook is inspired by the philosophy of lifelong learning, founded on the "four pillars of education," Learning to Know, Learning to Do, Learning to Be and Learning to Live Together, described in *Learning: The Treasure Within* (Delors, 1996, pp. 22-24). The International Commission on Education for the Twenty First Century clearly supports a holistic approach to teaching and learning when it stresses the fundamental principle that education "must contribute to the all-round development of each individual—mind and body, intelligence, sensitivity, aesthetic sense, personal responsibility and spiritual values" (Delors, 1996, p. 94).

The Sourcebook contains the main issues and concepts, content areas and values, aims and strategies of ESD, plus 30 modules using the 4-step teaching-learning cycle in integrating ESD into the curriculum, particularly the secondary school. A companion APNIEVE Music Book, *The Rainbow of Peace: Learning to Sing for a Peaceful and Sustainable Future* utilizes music as an innovative and powerful tool to teach values, especially to the youth of today.

From 2006 to 2009, in collaboration with Department of Education (DepEd) and Fund for Assistance to Private Education (FAPE), APNIEVE-Philippines has successfully conducted ESD and values integration workshops for more than 3,500 secondary school principals throughout the country, using the two mentioned publications. In 2010, APNIEVE conducted similar workshops to educational associations, universities and colleges.

### **Modules in Learning to Know for a Peaceful and Sustainable Future**

The modules serve as prototype lessons to help the educator gain competence and confidence in facilitating the valuing process. Each module consists of a listing of the core value and the related value, with the module title, objectives, content and a step-by-step presentation of learning activities involved in the teaching-learning cycle.

These modules are intended as examples and as guides, to be adapted to local needs and specific conditions. Each module takes approximately 90 to 100 minutes to conduct. The educator should feel free to introduce modifications and variations, such as indigenous content and alternative learning modes, in diverse cultural settings, as the need may arise. Once competent in using the valuing process, the educator will be able to apply it to any content and in any area of education and training.

## **Module on Creation Spirituality, “Sometimes I Wonder Why”**

This module relates to the core value of Care and Protection of the Environment which involves adopting behaviors to protect the world’s natural resources which are essential for human development and survival. The module is also concerned with the **related value of Creation Spirituality which** celebrates life as sacred and interconnected. It aims to deepen awareness of the destruction caused by irresponsible human action on urban and rural environments.

### **Objectives**

- To enable one to recognize the divine presence in nature and in culture
- To arouse awe and reverence for the sacredness of creation, and for cultural heritage
- To deepen awareness of the destruction caused by irresponsible human action on rural and urban environments

### **Content**

- The State of the Environment in Asia and the Pacific. ESCAP Report 2005
- “Sometimes I Wonder Why,” a meditative song

### **Procedure/Learning Activities**

*Conceptual Level: Knowing and Understanding*

1. The facilitator (F) presents a brief lecturette on the state of the environment in the Asia-Pacific Region, and in the country, calling attention to the growing threats to environmental, economic, social and cultural survival.

OR

- 1a. F invites Ps to share their views about the state of the environment in the Asia Pacific Region and the country; the dangers and threats posed by human action. F elicits responses and writes them on the board.

*Affective Level: Valuing*

2. F leads Ps to a reflection of the above state of the environment in the rural areas and in big cities; the problems and dangers, the challenges and possible solutions, through a visualization exercise.
3. F invites Ps to go through the visualization exercise by playing the music, “Sometimes I Wonder Why” and showing its lyrics.

Sometimes I Wonder Why

I found You  
In the wonders of the world  
In the splendor of the city  
In the monuments of history.

I saw You smile

At the glory of Your sunsets  
At the majesty of the sea  
At the infinity of the sky.

I felt you  
In the freshness of the dawn  
In the magic of the moonlight  
In the power of the wind.

But now, I see Your cry  
At the violence and oppression  
At the planet's exploitation  
At the sufferings of the poor.

*Refrain 1:*

Sometimes I wonder why  
We want to conquer all the world  
When we have not even learned  
To gain conquest of ourselves.

Let's banish pride and prejudice  
Cast out fears and injustices  
Give up greed and selfishness

Let hatreds go!  
Let hatreds go!

*Refrain 2:*

Sometimes I wonder why  
We want to conquer outer space  
When we have not even found  
The inner spaces of our souls.

Oh, let us look within our hearts  
Learn to love and to understand  
To respect and lend a hand  
Let peace prevail!  
Let peace prevail

4. F requests Ps to share their experience by answering the following questions:
  - a. What images, thoughts or ideas came to your mind?
  - b. What struck you most?
  - c. What feelings were evoked? or What feelings came to you?
  - d. What messages did the song convey to you?
  - e. What insights did you gain?
5. After a few minutes, F allows Ps to share their answers with a partner.

6. F invites dyads to share with the big group.
7. F summarizes responses and makes a brief synthesis of salient points and learnings.

*Active Level: Acting*

8. F asks Ps to write a paragraph or two with regards to how the module has influenced or touched them, especially in their view of nature and spirituality.
9. F leads the Ps to complete the following unfinished sentences:
  - a. Now that I realize more deeply the sacredness of nature, I will . . .
  - b. To improve my relationship with others, I will. . . .
  - c. To grow in my spirituality, I will . . .
  - d. To show my respect and reverence for nature, I will. . .
10. To close the module, F may play again the song and show a Powerpoint presentation with images based on the lyrics of the song.

## **Conclusion**

APNIEVE will persevere in its advocacy and training to assist teachers in their crucial role of developing the whole human person, the responsible worker, the committed citizen, and the creator of a peaceful and sustainable society.

However, APNIEVE needs the support of everyone interested in promoting education for sustainable development in the Asia-Pacific Region and in the world.

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**Open and Distance Learning as a Key Growth Driver for  
Socio Economic Development**

**‘M’ Powerment**

***A student to student learning with Mobile Technology***

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## Abstract

Telecommunication is now universally acknowledged as one of the prime movers of a modern day economy. This sector has undergone a total transformation throughout the world over the last 2 decades. Development in the fields of IT, Satellite based TV broadcasting, new forms of communication are transforming the way people communicate and conduct business. According to the Approach Paper on the XIth plan released in November 2006, 'India has witnessed an impressive telecom revolution during the last decade and is proposed to reach a target of 575 million subscribers by the end of the the XIth plan. This revolution can be effectively utilized to bring about change in the ways to educate and learn.

This paper highlights a case in which Mobile technology and ICT can be used to educate and empower the students.

The researchers have conducted an experiment to comprehend how a simple student to student learning with the help of the mobile technology helps the students, specially in the higher education, not just become aware of the current news and events around them but actually leads to interest generation, development of their analytical and reasoning skills and eventually empowerment in the real sense. The message conveyed through this experiment is that the educators need to understand that they cannot keep blaming the system or the methodologies, but must innovate and use their creativity in developing new systems at an individual level to channelize the energies of the youth in the right direction. This can be most effectively done using the tools of learning most seemingly familiar or popular to the youth. The paper throws light on how a simple 3% of the commerce faculty student population who read the business news on a daily basis got transformed to a whopping 86% who became interested in not just reading business news but business articles and journals as well through a simple device of their interest The MOBILE.

Present day education system no doubt over emphasizes technique but why can't we educators exploit technology which is most passionate to our students. As Rousseau says, Human Knowledge will not develop freely if the very passionate nature of man does not flourish"

*Keywords: Telecommunication, mobile technology, experiment, educators*

## **‘M’ Powerment**

### ***A student to student learning with Mobile Technology***

#### **Introduction**

Education is the engine of economic growth. If we want to prosper in this age we must have innovative and transformative education policies and practices. Education is the skill of learning to learn. The new world demands new thinking, new solutions and new institutions. The use of modern technology can revolutionize the way education is delivered resulting in more and better learning opportunities.

We, Educators are often held captive to the traditional way of doing things and many crave the knowledge of better and more efficient ways to teach. Educators need to understand that they cannot keep blaming the system or the methodologies but must innovate and use their creativity in developing new systems at an individual level to channelize the energies of the youth in the right direction using the tools of learning most seemingly familiar or popular to the youth.

According to a statement made by , Sam Pitroda, advisor to the Prime Minister on public information infrastructure and innovations ‘The old model of education has to be replaced by a new model through which teachers can be mentors, and children can learn from each other and not only through teachers’

And it is the moral responsibility of us educators today to change our roles and face the challenges of the education system more effectively.

#### **Use of ICT in education**

We cannot forget that education is the backbone of the knowledge society and in the global knowledge economy, ICT form the basis of most learning.

ICT has become an integral part of today’s teaching learning process. Most of the nations today are using ICT in facilitating information dissemination and communication in all areas of education and training.

UNESCO has long been advocating the use of new technologies in education. Within the last years, UNESCO has embraced the use of the new information and communication technologies(ICT).ICT is seen as having a great potential in the ongoing attempts to increase to accessibility to knowledge.

Technology is neither an end in itself nor an add on. It’s a tool for improving and ultimately transforming teaching and learning. But having technology does not automatically translate into better instructional outcomes. The promise of educational

technology is in the hands of the teachers and how effective we can use it to the benefit of our students depending on the class and subject we teach.

One of the advantages of using ICT in the classroom has been to better prepare the current generation of students for a workplace where ICT is omnipresent.

If we were to design and define and implement ICT properly, it can promote the acquisition of the knowledge and skills that will empower students for life long learning. It thus becomes imperative to understand how to make it the most effective for our students. While technological change and online environment is one of the drivers of change in higher education, it is also one of the responses to other changes. It offers opportunities to improve the quality of the learner's experience



[Drivers to online learning,Source: Online learning and Teaching in Higher Education;Shirley Bach,Philip Haynes, Jennifer Lewis Smith, McGraw Hill publication 2007]

## **Telecommunication sector**

Telecommunication is now universally acknowledged as one of the prime movers of a modern day economy. This sector has undergone a total transformation throughout the world over the last two decades. Development in the fields of IT, Satellite based TV broadcasting, new forms of communication are transforming the way people communicate and conduct business.

According to the Approach Paper on the XIth plan released in November 2006, 'India has witnessed an impressive telecom revolution during the last decade and is proposed to reach a target of 575 million subscribers by the end of the XIth plan.

Even the World Bank released a report saying that Mobile Phones and Internet Services are the key aspects to the economic growth of a country.

A recent International Telecommunication Union (ITU) report suggests that the steady increase in the number of people using mobile phones by the year 2010 will continue. In fact, the number of mobile subscribers will exceed 5 billion marks sometime this year if the current growth continues!

This means that by the end in 2010, 400 million mobile subscribers, more than in 2009. Last year, the ITU reports the number of subscriptions that 4.6 billion upward. Most of this growth is from developing and transition countries – the largest portion, probably from China and India. In developed countries, the penetration rate of mobile phones is already well over 100 percent. ([www.itu.int](http://www.itu.int))

THE MOBILE PHONE SUBSCRIBER BASE IN INDIA WAS OVER 65 CRORES AS OF END OF JULY 2010 AND IT IS GROWING EXPONENTIALLY AT AN AVERAGE OF 5 LAKHS PER DAY ( Source : Dalal Street Investment Journal, October 2010)

There have been a number of success stories of empowerment through mobiles as indicated by Reuters Market Light which shared its success story at a seminar on Rural Telecom organized by the Rural Marketing Association of India in Delhi in 2009 July.

Amit Mehra MD shared the progress of how information to the rural workforce comprising of farmers, middlemen and traders on their mobile phones in three states were reaping benefits of this information service through the SMS facility.

Microsoft are working on a mobile electronic tablet product that they claim will make paper redundant in the educational environment, with all paper based writing being digitalized and viewable through an electronic reader. Bill Gates has outlined a vision that small tablet PCs and much more sophisticated mobile phones will transform education and young people's ability to access educational content by 2015(Gibson 2005).Several companies are working on related ideas.

We are living in a dynamic world where today's news becomes obsolete tomorrow. Then how can the student empower themselves in this competitive world with his sensibilities and understandings of the current news and happenings not just at the local level but at the global scenario.

**This paper tries to understand how a simple experiment of student to student learning with the help of the mobile technology helps in the students not just becoming aware of the current news and events around them but actually leads to interest generation, development of analytical and reasoning skills and eventually empowerment in the real sense.**

### **Rationale of the paper (experiment)**

Students today are growing up with a culture that associates technology with communication, content and learning.

Our observation of the students over the years as educators, revealed the intensive use of mobile technology by the students for different purposes but hardly any for educational purposes.

The pre questionnaire revealed that though the commerce students had Business Practices as a core subject only 3% read business news on a daily basis. A handful of students did manage to catch up business news through news channels as well. But all the students owned a cell phone and were interested in receiving the business news on a daily basis, as they did believe that they needed to keep update of the current business news.

### **Objectives of the experiment**

1. To understand if commerce and management students read business news
2. To understand use of ICT in daily teaching learning activities
3. To understand if student to student learning can be promoted with ICT
4. To understand if students are empowered with M learning

### **Methodology of the study**

The group of 100 Commerce undergraduate students were chosen for the experiment . They were administered structured close ended questionnaires, one before the experiment and one post experiment to compare and evaluate the difference in learning outcomes

One student willingly volunteered for preparation of the daily news.

The student prepared a group 'Join GetBizzy' and this group received the news through the SMS facility daily, free of cost for a period of two months. At the end of the experimental period another questionnaire was administered using the internet technology [ Kwik Survey]to record the responses of the 100 students and a personal interview of the student news feeder was also taken.

## **Findings of the study**

Part I of the study [ Pre Questionnaire]

1. From the experimental group nearly all [95 percent] read the newspapers on a daily basis but only 3percent read the relevant business news.
2. Since our study focused on business news updates we tried to find out the other sources of the students acquiring business news and the study revealed that television dominated the print and internet media.
3. It was interesting as educators to observe from the responses that an overwhelming majority of the commerce students understood the importance of reading business news.
4. It was not surprising to know that each student respondent owned a cell phone.
5. Nearly two third of the students responded that they were keen to receive the business news update through the sms facility.

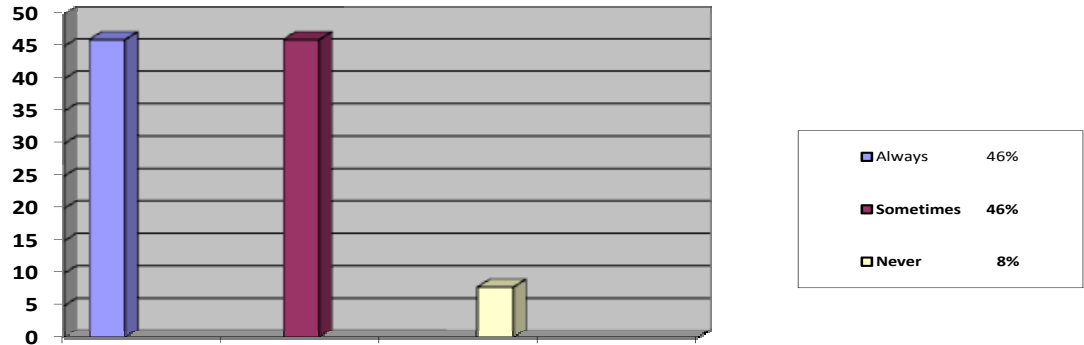
The pre questionnaire responses were encouraging enough to take forward the experiment of using mobile technology in disseminating business news updates.

The student volunteer was briefed about the experiment and given guidelines to select, and forward the news to the experimental group on a daily basis for a period of two months.

Part II of the study [Post. Questionnaire]

1. All the hundred students successfully received the sms update by subscribing to the Getbizzy service initiated by the student volunteer. There was no technical hindrance in the experiment.
2. Nearly all the student respondents were satisfied with the news content received through the sms(short message service) facility and looked forward to receiving the business news [ 92%]
3. When asked whether the respondents were enthused to read further to get more information related to the sms update , the responses were satisfactory

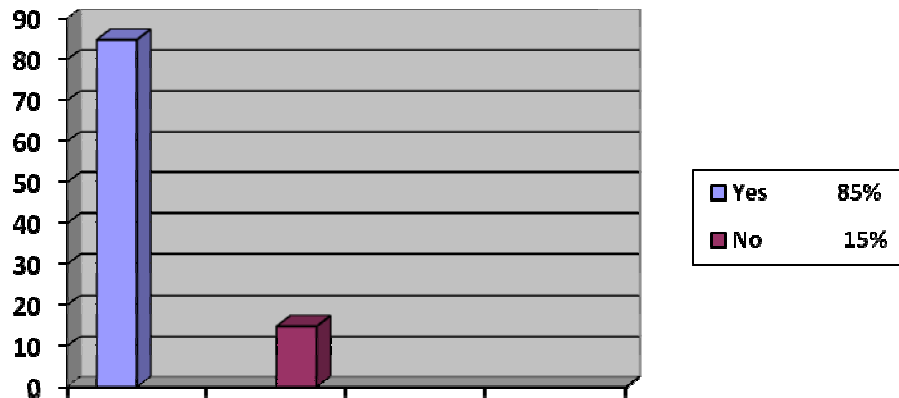
SYMBIOSIS INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING



GRAPH TO QUESTION 3

As is revealed by the above graph an equal percentage of students namely 46% were enthused to read the news always or minimally sometimes and a negligible 8% were not enthused at all.

- 4. An overwhelming majority[ 85%] of the students felt empowered after reading the business sms update



The graph(Q. No 4) shows that majority(85percent) of the students felt empowered after reading the business update.

- 5. All the students of the experiment group[100%] felt that learning through Getbizzy was interesting and enjoyable.
- 6. Nearly half of the respondents seemed interested in contributing to the news content development to be sent through the sms update.

7. Almost all the students were interested in receiving the business updates through the sms facility and 83 percent said it increased their business knowledge
8. We were curious to know if the students from the experiment group shared the business update with their peers or parents and it was heartening to know that 67 percent and 62 percent shared this news updates 'sometimes' with their peers and their parents respectively .

## Discussions

This experiment gives an insight into how we as educators can effectively go beyond the traditional classroom pedagogy

**Part I of the study using the pre questionnaire gave us some interesting findings** from which we can analyze that students in the commerce stream do read newspapers and are aware of the political sports or film news but are apathetic to reading business news. This further widens the gap between what is taught in theory in the classroom and what actually is the current scenario.

The students were aware of the need and importance of reading business news but were not enthused of updating their knowledge of the same.

It did not come as a surprise to know that all the students owned atleast one cell phone and even more encouraging to know that they were keen to be updated on the business news front through the sms facility of their cell phones.

SMSing[Sending and Reading] has become a way of life for Gen X and thus they were very receptive to the experiment.

**Part II of the Study[Post Questionnaire] revealed some interesting facts.**

The experiment proved to be successful in implementation of sms during the experimental period. The respondent group was satisfied with the news content which included the sensex news, M&As, economy status, global business news etc.

The success of the experiment can be measured with the statistics which showed that students looked forward to receiving the business news ardently on daily basis. The purpose of the experiment was to encourage students to read further news of their interest and this purpose was served with majority of the students showing keen interest in further reading newspapers and business magazines.

There is a realization amongst the commerce students about the need to be updated on current business issues at all levels as they are aware of its usefulness in their future career. Receiving this sms has proved to be the first step towards empowering our students for their prospects. Another crucial finding was the receptiveness of the experimental group towards student to student learning. Since the news updates were

assimilated and sent by their peer, students took a greater interest in reading the news content and they found it 'interesting' and 'enjoyable'

Most of the respondents agreed that this kind of service helped in increasing their knowledge which could further enhance their potential.

Since more than fifty percent of the respondents shared this news with their peers, it helped to widen the learning network.

### **Getbizzy student facilitator- experiences**

We would also like to state some of the experiences shared by Swanand Jadhav our student facilitator in the whole experiment.

Swanand , who reads papers religiously volunteered willingly for the experiment and was very motivated about it. He created a group Join GetBizzy on the net and added the numbers of all the students who were part of the experiment

Swanand sent daily, without a break one or two messages covering the sensex, new mergers, new agreements, GDP, some economic data to name a few to all the students.

He was happy to do it and commented, "The whole process was very exciting and enriching for me. I used to read the Times of India, Economic Times and sometimes even surfed the net to get the right news. I wanted my peers to benefit from the news which I communicated."

He wants to continue the activity and not once did he regret taking it up, as he says," The process helped to sharpen my own analytical deductive and reasoning skills. I have learnt so many new things too and the most useful one has been the filtering of the important news which I think will help me in the long run as well"

### **Post Experiment Observations**

We as educators have observed some remarkable changes in the experimental group which we would like to share

1. The students seem more enthused on reading the current business news from papers and also taking keen interest in reading some of the business journals.
2. The classes seem more dynamic, interesting and interactive on the whole.
3. There seems more reciprocity and cooperation amongst the students paving the way to reaping more benefits of peer learning.
4. Transformation of students from mere passive learners to more interested active learners.
5. Now, there is more contribution of inputs from students not part of the experimental group as well.
6. This experiment has helped in bridging the gap between industry and academia by keeping the students well informed of the current industry news and not restricting their learning to outdated text books or syllabi.

7. Increased parental inputs especially from those involved in the different industries shared by their wards in the classrooms. Thus involvement of another important stakeholder in the education field is encouraged.'
8. Most importantly, the use of the mobile for educational usage and not just the normal Gen X use.

### **Conclusions and suggestions**

Learning content and technology-based learning processes must be designed to be available to the majority of students, not to an elite and well resourced minority. Many students enter in the Higher Education with good level of IT experience and skills and are ready to adapt this to the demands of self directed learning. As educators we need to realize this and change our course of action accordingly, thus transforming the way learning happens.

M learning has the potential to weave itself into the fabric of learner and a little creativity and initiative on part of the educators can go a long way in enhancing the quality of learning in students. We should move on and not remain confined to the constraints or limitations of the educational system but harness and exploit the advantages of technology in the best possible manner for our students.

The educational institutes could well chalk out a technology plan and can implement successful experiments carried out at individual levels to the whole student population to encourage student to student learning.

Though, this experiment was conducted specifically for spread of business news, it could be customized to suit the needs of other subjects. M learning has proved successful in the teaching of languages and can equally prove so for subjects of commerce as well. In fact in the ever dynamic business environment, it can serve as the most assured and simple device of learning and empowering.

This innovative learning can be extended to the rural students as well. According to TRAI there has been a rise of 18% in use of the mobiles by rural subscribers. Rising from 93.2 million users at the end of last year, India today has a total of a massive 109.7 million rural mobile subscribers. With mobile penetration in rural areas being very encouraging the experiment can well be extended and made successful even there.

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**SYMBOISIS INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON OPEN AND DISTANCE  
LEARNING, FEBRUARY, 2011**

**Sub Theme:**

**ICT**

Title of the Paper

**“TECHNOLOGIES FOR DEVELOPING RETENTION AND SUCCESS RATES OF  
STUDENTS”**

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# “TECHNOLOGIES FOR DEVELOPING RETENTION AND SUCCESS RATES OF STUDENTS”

**Mr. Ganesh Chavan**

**Mr. Rajendra Kumar Patil**

**Mr. Dattatray Thorat.**

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## **Abstract:**

*Educational Communication Technologies in ODL Education system creates the positive impact on Students Retention and on Student`s Success Rate. Mobile technologies are commonplace in our society. No doubt that we are becoming a much more mobile society. In this Mobile Society Electronic Learning & Mobile Learning is the pathway to fulfil the expectations of the student`s from ODL system. ‘Mobile Learning is an E-Learning that uses mobile devices and wireless transmission’. But M-Learning is not only wireless or Internet based learning but also it includes the ability to learn everywhere at every time without permanent physical connection to cable networks. This technology is the emerging technology, for the developing Enrolment, Retention and Success Rate of Students. If we use various technologies of Mobile Learning, we can maintain the quantitative as well as qualitative progress of ODL system. Through this paper, we have discussed the Positive Transformation in Open and Distance Learning by using current available technology of Mobile Learning. This technology is useful from Admission to Evaluation Process. Mobile Learning approach will be able to make learning process of ODL system more efficient, easy, socialized, well-organized and professional. Through this approach we can bring the dream of time relevant, quality assured, student centered Open and Distance Learning Education for the new millennium in reality. This paper discusses the existing devices and technologies appropriate to realise mobile learning. Mobile learning as new stage of distance and e-learning is also examined.*

# **“TECHNOLOGIES FOR DEVELOPING RETENTION AND SUCCESS RATES OF STUDENTS”**

**Mr. Ganesh Chavan**

**Mr. Rajendra Kumar Patil**

**Mr. Dattatray Thorat.**

---

## **Introduction:**

More urgently than ever in its long history, the world of Distance Education – and more especially the university community – feels the need to engage in a process of change, adaptation and modernization. Open and Distance Learning is both growing and becoming increasingly interconnected with conventional and face to face education. Now a day's, we find that ODL Education system tries to enhance the Gross Enrolment Ratio, Retention and Success Rate of Learners, by using various methodologies, alternative modes of education. To enhance all these aspects of the ODL Education system, Educational Communication Technologies plays very vital role. Education is a very socially oriented activity and quality education has traditionally been associated with strong teachers having high degrees of personal contact with learners. The use of ICT in education lends itself to more student-centred learning settings and often this creates some tensions for some teachers and students. But with the world moving rapidly into digital media and information, the role of ICT in ODL Education system is becoming more and more important and this importance will continue to grow and develop in the 21st century. If we use the various Educational Communication Technologies in ODL Education system, then we will find the positive impact on Students Retention and on students success rate.

## **Expectations of Students from Open and Distance Learning ?**

In today`s globalised world, the number of institutions offering education through ODL mode and the number of students enrolling in ODL are growing very rapidly. The stagnantly high attrition and drop-out rates and the consistently low retention and success rates of students are causing distress on ODL system. To overcome this distress, we must find

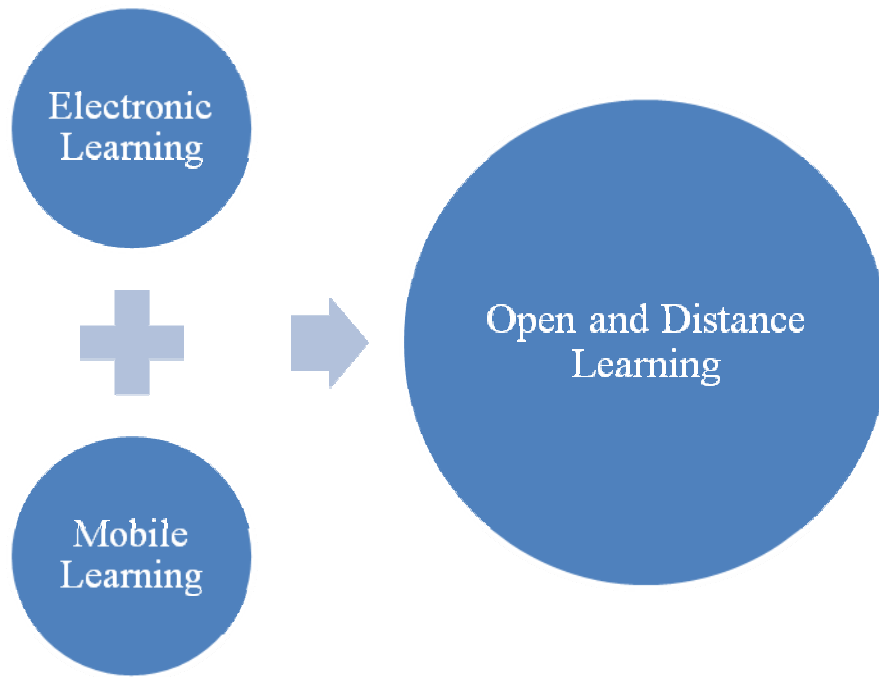
out what are the student`s expectations from ODL system? Following are the some expectations of students from ODL system.

- ✚ Sustainable Learning
- ✚ Resourceful Learning
- ✚ Quality Assurance from ODL
- ✚ E- Communication Centre
- ✚ Dedicated Students Call Centre
- ✚ Student Grievance Redressal Forum
- ✚ Placement Assistance
- ✚ 24/7 Learning Centres
- ✚ Interaction with various technological tools
- ✚ learning with Edutainment
- ✚ Immediate Feedback
- ✚ Learning with Collaboration
- ✚ Learning with self-pace
- ✚ Constructivist Learning, etc.

Above are the some expectations of students from ODL mode. To fulfil the above expectations, ODL mode of education must use the various Educational Communication Technologies. These technologies are the pathway to satisfy the above expectations of the students.

### **Currently available Technologies for Developing Retention and Success Rate:**

Today`s world is known as Information Communication Technology`s world. We find that ICT has touched all the aspects of human life, and Education aspect is no exceptional for it. Information and Communications Technology or `ICT` has been recognized as a potential instrument for promoting life-long education, distant and adult education for national development and for building competitiveness of the country. Today, the numbers of students enrolling in ODL are growing very rapidly, but we need to maintain this growth and develop the success rate of the students. For this purpose, following Educational Communication Technologies are very useful.



**Technologies for Developing Retention and Success Rate**

**Use of Electronic Learning Approach to develop Student`s Retention:**

E- Learning first emerged in the late 80s and in the 90s, it moved from heavy desktops to laptops. Since then we have seen the processing power of handheld devices grow exponentially while becoming more affordable and even ubiquitous due to the demand of games, business communications, and in general the connected lifestyle of the 'wireless society'. This approach is very familiar to majority of faculties from education field. Through this approach by providing following services to the students, we can maintain students' attrition and retention in ODL mode of education.

- By establishing On-line Universities
- By using Virtual Classrooms
- By using EDUSAT
- By using Internet for Teaching-Learning Process
- By developing On-line course design
- By providing On-line feedback
- By providing various sources of Learning
- Through presenting the content in various structure
- By providing up-to-date information

Above are some examples of using Electronic Learning Approach for developing Student's Retention in ODL mode of education.

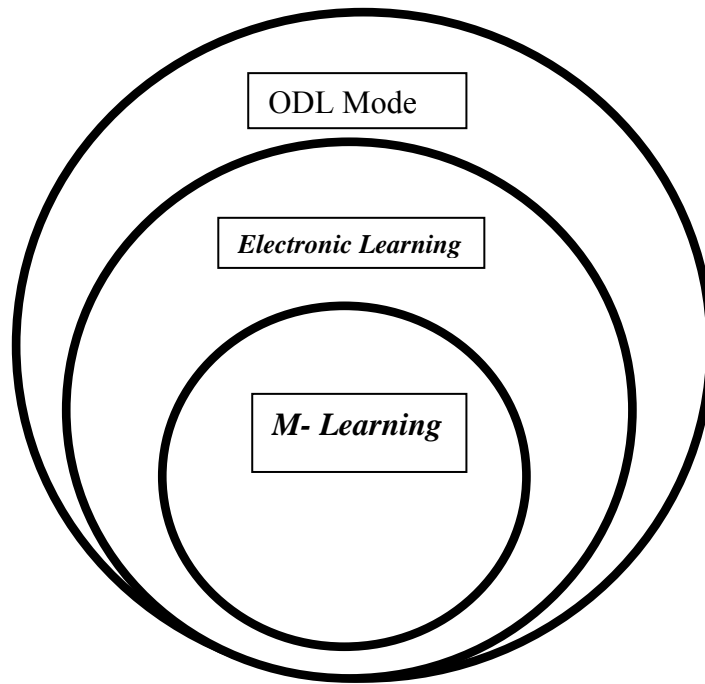
### **Use of Mobile Learning Approach to develop Student's Retention:**

Mobile technologies are commonplace in our society. No doubt that we are becoming a much more mobile society. Their availability at relatively low cost has contributed to social change, particularly with college students who use their mobile phones to maintain relationships unbounded by proximity. Widespread availability of mobile devices and wireless networks offer enormous opportunities for knowledge acquisition both in terms of interaction with sources of information and in terms of collaboration. Development in microelectronics and telecommunication technologies provide continuing increase of processing power, improved interfaces, extended functionality, fast and diverse wireless Connectivity for mobile terminals. Combined with tendency to go down in price per unit and having advantage of being truly personal mobile devices have a potential to become a valuable learning and information acquisition tool for everyone. These things have opened a new door of learning to which we call M- Learning. M- Learning is the key issue for ODL mode of education.

### **Meaning of Mobile - Learning:**

Many authors view m-learning as a further development of e-learning. Some experts clearly states that, 'M- Learning is nothing but a learning that takes place with help of mobile devices'. Traxler (2005) has defined M-Learning as 'any educational provision where the sole or dominant technologies are handheld or palmtop devices.' Pinkwert (2003) states that 'Mobile Learning is an E-Learning that uses mobile devices and wireless transmission'.

By nature the M-Learning is a form of existing D-Learning {Distance Learning} and E-Learning. Historically the distance education has more than one hundred years of experience and traditions. Its main characteristic is the distance and time separation between teacher and students. The E-Learning offers new methods for distance education based on computer and net technologies. Following figure shows that M-Learning is part of E-Learning and therefore the part of D- Learning i.e. Distance Learning.



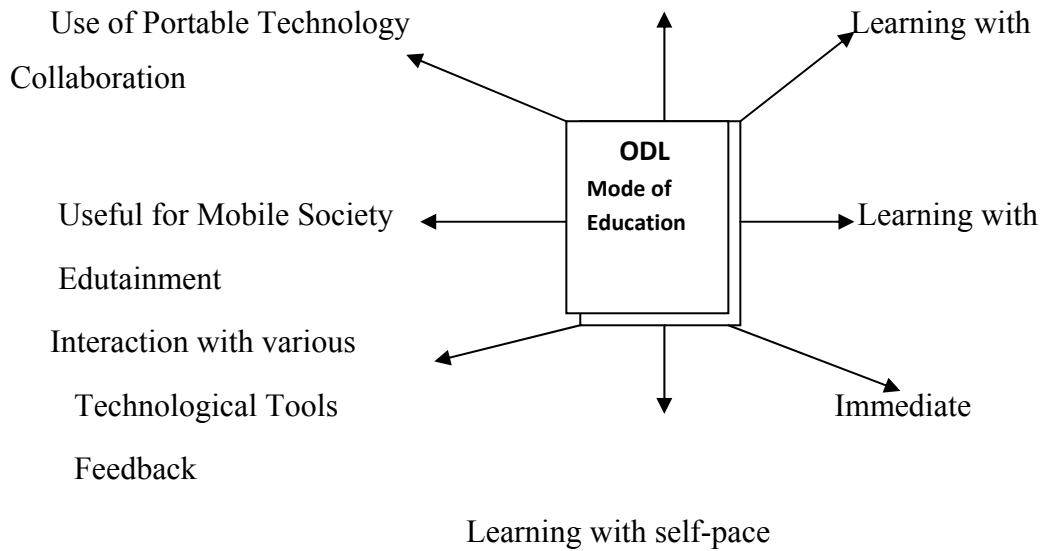
### **The place of M-Learning**

#### **New Vision to ODL Mode of Education through M-Learning:**

Some expert thinks that M-Learning is only wireless or Internet based learning. But M-Learning is not only wireless or Internet based learning but also it includes the ability to learn everywhere at every time without permanent physical connection to cable networks. This can be achieved by the use of mobile and portable devices such as PDA, cell phones, portable computers and Tablet PC. They must have the ability to connect to other computer devices, to present educational information and to realise bilateral information exchange between the students and the teacher.

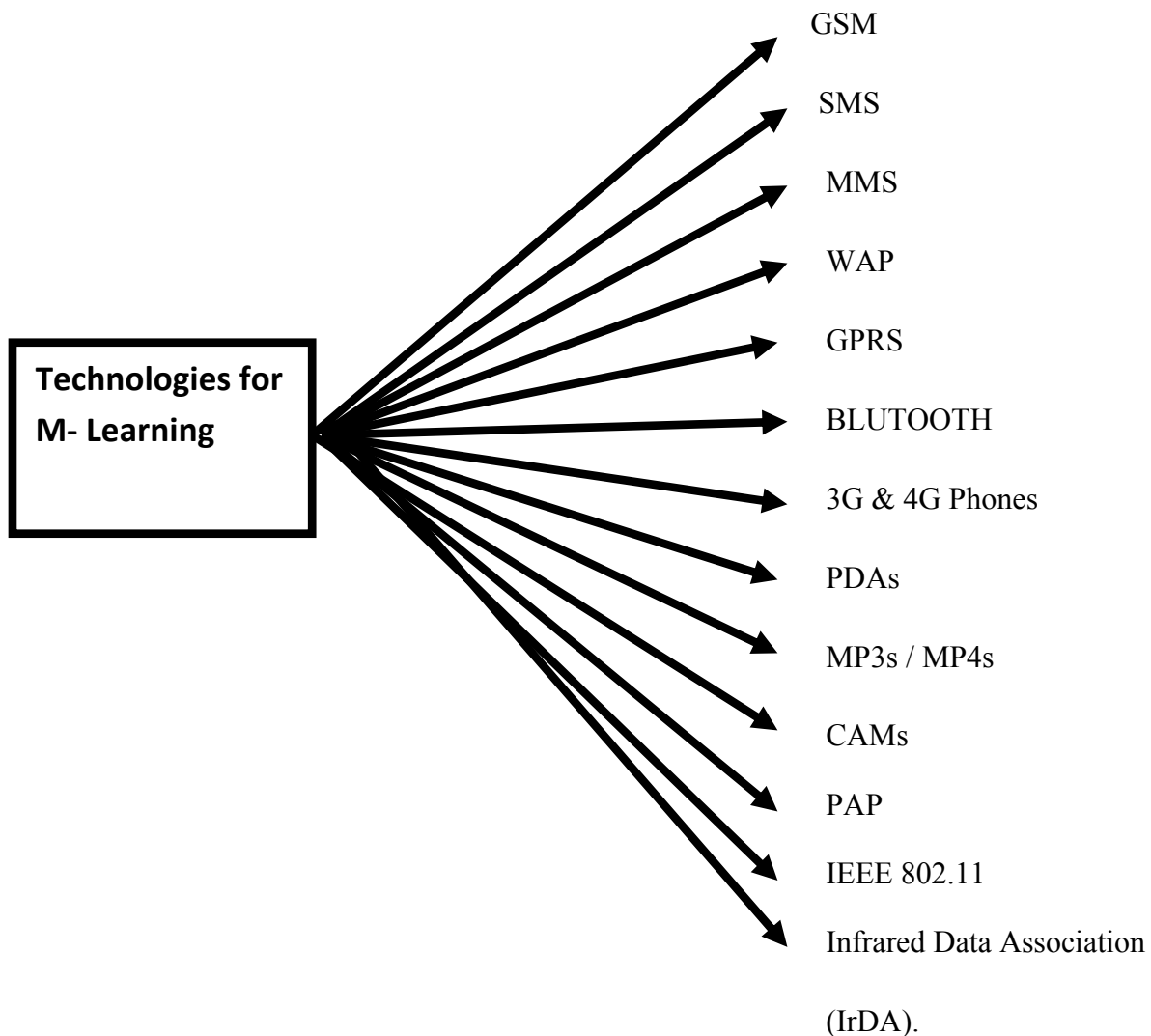
In short, the following diagram clearly shows us the importance of M- Learning in ODL mode of education.

No limitation of Time & Place {D- Learning}



In this way, by using above mentioned characteristics of M-Learning, we can overcome on the problems like drop-out, low retention of the students etc. For this purpose we can use the following technologies of the M-Learning.

## Currently available Technologies of M- Learning for providing services to Students:



**1. GSM:** Global System for Mobile Communications (GSM) is one of the leading digital cellular systems. It uses narrow band TDMA (Time Division Multiple Access). Originally a European standard for digital mobile telephony, GSM has become the world's most widely used mobile system in use in over 100 countries.

**2. SMS:** Short Message Service allows users to send or receives messages of up to 160 characters between mobile phones (text messaging)

Use of SMS in Open and Distance Learning: Through this technology we can give the instructions to the students very effectively. We can also send the students the Timetable of Exam, Contact sessions etc. very fast. There are various websites available on internet, which

provides free of cost SMS services. e.g. [www.way2sms.com](http://www.way2sms.com) ,[www.160by2.com](http://www.160by2.com) ,[www.fullonsms.com](http://www.fullonsms.com).

**3. MMS:** Multimedia Messaging Service is a way to send not only text, but media such as audio, images, and video, from mobile devices (specifically, phones)

Use of MMS in Open and Distance Learning: This technology is advanced technology compare to SMS. Through this technology we can send the students the audio instructions. It is also possible to send some video clips. This helps to give guidance about how to conduct any experiment or practical.

**4. WAP:** Wireless Application Protocol is an International protocol that allows users to access the internet via their WAP enabled mobile phones.

Use of WAP in Open and Distance Learning: This technology helps to use internet for getting various sources of references. By using this technology students can send the e-mail about their curries and also they will get the answers of it immediately.

**5. GPRS:** General Packet Radio Service is an internet connection for mobile devices that provides greater speed of connection (171kb/s). GPRS provides about four times greater speed than conventional GSM systems.

Use of GPRS in Open and Distance Learning: This technology is advanced technology compare to WAP technology. GPRS works faster than WAP. Students can access the website of that particular University or College through this technology. Students also get study material by using this technology.

**6. BLUETOOTH:** Bluetooth is a short range wireless connection, which enables Personal Digital Assistants to pass information to and from other mobile devices. Bluetooth makes it possible to transmit signals over short distances between telephones, computers and other devices and thereby simplify communication and synchronization between devices.

Use of BLUETOOTH in Open and Distance Learning: Whenever the students from same course will meet anywhere, they will share their study material through this technology. This also creates Co-operative learning atmosphere among the students.

**7. 3G & 4G Phones:** 3G and 4G mobile phones are very useful technologies for learning purposes. 4<sup>th</sup> Generation mobile phones will provide up to 100 megabits per second transmissions adequate for multimedia.

Use of 3G & 4G Phones in Open and Distance Learning: Students can use various multimedia packages for teaching-learning purposes through this technology. This technology provides faster speed of internet.

**8. PDAs:** Personal Digital Assistants have evolved to mini PCs able to carry out many of the basic functions of a larger PC using the Palm OS or MS Pocket PC operating system.

**9. MP3s / MP4s:** MP3s or MP4s is the audio file format that efficiently compresses files and enables them to be shared.

Use of MP3s / MP4s in Open and Distance Learning: Suppose teacher records his/her lectures in MP3s / MP4s format and if he/she gives the files of that lectures to students, then students can listen the lectures anytime and anywhere. Student also listen it more than one time. If there are any difficult content, then students listen that particular lecture till he/she does not understand that content. This is the one of the best benefit of M-Learning in today's globalised era.

**10. CAMs:** Now a day, video cameras embedded into mobile phones and PDAs.

Use of CAMs in Open and Distance Learning: Through this technology students can shoot the required lecture by using his/her cell phone. This data also help for self directed learning.

**11. PAP:** Personal Audio Player plays very vital role in mobile learning because of its audio function.

Use of PAP in Open and Distance Learning: This kind of technology is useful for developing language skills among the students.

**12. IEEE 802.11:** IEEE 802.11 is a type of radio technology used for wireless local area networks (WLANs). It is a standard that has been developed by the IEEE (Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers).

**13. Infrared Data Association (IrDA):** This association defined a suite of protocols for infrared (IR) exchange of data between two devices, up to 1 or 2 meters apart (20 to 30 cm

for low-power devices). IrDA devices typically have throughput of up to 115.2Kbps or 4Mbps. Smart phones, many PDAs, printers and laptop computers use IrDA protocols.

In short, the above technologies of M-Learning help in following ways to Open and Distance Learning.

- ✚ For accessing documents
- ✚ For accessing quizzes and for self-assessment
- ✚ For participating in lessons and tutorials
- ✚ For receiving various lectures archived or broadcasted live
- ✚ For participating in virtual learning communities
- ✚ For accessing video clips or audio libraries

### **Possible Transformation in Open and Distance Learning by Using M- Learning:**

- i. Researchers have proved that attainment of learning goals is done more successfully through Mobile learning approach. Interactions among teachers, students, experts and society get increased to a great deal.
- ii. Students become more alert and active in their learning. Commitment, reflective thinking, intellectual maturity, cooperation, critical attitude and divergent thinking are enhanced among students.
- iii. Students will take the initiative, without remaining passive listeners they themselves will construct knowledge in the atmosphere of freedom, motivation & commitment.
- iv. Teacher will be able to create constructive realistic outlook among the students by inculcating social & moral values with the help of regular orientation, guidance & discussions with relevance to the content.
- v. It will be possible to involve maximum students in the educational process. Therefore, quantitative as well as qualitative development of Open and Distance Learning will occur.
- vi. Learning will become more & more individualized. Two major transformations will occur regarding learning.
- vii. Improvement in learning strategy (Flexibility regarding place, time & style of learning)

- viii. Improvement in learning process (Instead of being receiver students will be researchers & creators of knowledge, availability of options, change according to students & content)
- ix. Smooth inclusion of technology in education will occur to make learning experiences more & more enriched
- x. Students learning will be sustainable & ultimately natural development of lifelong learning skills will occur among the students.
- xi. Student can interact with teacher and with each other any time ( Not official time limit)
- xii. Learning without heavy study material. Portability of Learning.
- xiii. The new generation likes a mobile device, that's why students are engaged into their learning.
- xiv. Ownership of the handheld devices seems to increase commitment to using and learning from it.
- xv. Since handhelds are more affordable than larger systems they are accessible to a larger percentage of the population.

## **Epilogue:**

The orthodox & inefficient Indian Open and Distance Learning system needs a smooth but sustainable transformation. But, this transformation must occur taking our society, culture & economy into consideration. Mobile learning approach can become the pathway of success in that direction. Mobile learning means the comprehensive instructional approach for providing socialized, constructivist, sustainable learning experiences through the various technologies of M-Learning & E-Learning. This approach will be able to make learning process more efficient, easy, socialized, well-organized and professional. Through this approach we can bring the dream of time relevant, quality assured, student centered higher education for the new millennium in reality. This will be the first step of education towards making India a superpower.

This approach will also help to decrease the drop- out percentage of the students as well as to develop the retention and success rates of the students. From above merits of M-Learning we can say that, Mobile Learning is the one of the common and best technology, which will help in developing Enrolment, Retention and Success Rate of Learners in Open and Distance Learning.

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