

Symbiosis International Research Journal on Online & Distance Learning



Peer-Reviewed | Refereed | International | Interdisciplinary | Bi-Annual

Sustaining and Enhancing the Quality of ODL

Symbiosis Centre for Distance Learning

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Symbiosis Centre for Distance Learning (SCDL), Pune, is one of the largest autonomous distance learning educational institution in India. In this day and age, distance learning looks beyond traditional reference books and course-end assessments. Online and Distance Learning (ODL) is the need of the hour in a young country such as India, as it makes higher education available to aspiring youth as well as adult learners, and reaches out to the unreached in the remotest corners of this vast nation. It is one of the best modes of increasing the GER in higher education at almost one fifth the cost. ODL institutions are in a sense great contributors to the national cause of making available higher education to the physically, socially, financially and locationally challenged youth of our country. Technology is a game-changer as it has brought about a paradigm shift in the teaching-learning and evaluation pedagogies and facilitated this process.

Although distance education is considered one of the most relevant options available to us, to improve the status of higher education, there are some critical quality-related issues which need to be addressed. Therefore, the central theme of the inaugural issue of the peer-reviewed, refereed, international, interdisciplinary, bi-annual research journal of Symbiosis Centre for Distance Learning is 'Sustaining and Enhancing the Quality of ODL'.

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Research Paper Title:

Guidelines for Addressing Challenges and Opportunities in Developing an Interactive Online Teaching-Learning Community in ODL

Theme of the Paper:

Developing an Interactive Online Teaching-Learning Community in ODL

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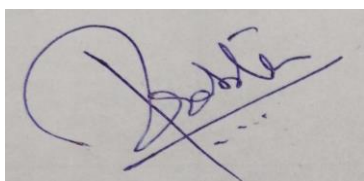
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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby would like to explicitly state that the research article titled “*Guidelines for Addressing Challenges and Opportunities in Developing an Interactive Online Teaching-Learning Community in ODL*” is original and has not been published earlier, or that it is not under consideration for possible publication elsewhere.

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Signature:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Dr. Irabatti', with a large circular flourish on the left side.

Date : 12/01/2022

Guidelines for Addressing Challenges and Opportunities in Developing an Interactive Online Teaching-Learning Community in ODL

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Abstract

For any country, education serves as most important element in its overall development. From last one decade Open and Distance Learning (ODL) is serving as key component of development process.

This paper highlights the guidelines for addressing challenges and opportunities in developing an 'Interactive Online Teaching-Learning Community in ODL'. The guidelines mentioned here are proposed for teacher and learners in online education.

This thematic research paper covers the teaching policies and strategies, application of technology devices, and solutions

supporting teaching-learning community issues in ODL.

The paper concludes that developing online teaching learning communities is an encouraging pedagogical approach particularly for higher and adult education. The paper suggest the framework for developing an online teaching learning community for higher education which facilitate the online learning experiences.

Key words:

Open and distance learning (ODL), online learning communities, teachers, student interaction, Content, teaching pedagogy.

Introduction:

Open and Distance Learning (ODL) offers the education most preferably the Higher education to the students who are not present physically in the premises, who may not be able to be present in the traditional setting like physical classrooms. ODL provides the opportunity to learn for the students who are away from the source of information by time, distance or both.

Through ODL, Distance education format is shifting from conventional education to the technology based open education. Due to this shift there is significant change in the ecosystem of teaching learning communities. The role of educators is changing significantly towards fulfilling the promises to provide universal education. The educators are facing lot of challenges. They have to make the content available to the millions of learners at very low cost.

The new format of technology based open and distance learning though have many advantages which is making it a highly preferred learning format, it has many challenges to be handled tactically. Not

only the educators but students who are new to this format may face many operational challenges while adopting this model of education.

ODL and online learning could be imparted either in synchronous or asynchronous way. But the precaution that educators need to take is that while imparting the online offering through any of these modes, the purpose should not be to re-create the online version of Face-to-Face model. Online learning has its own style which needs to be maintained. The delivery model should be so developed to help the learner to study independently yet effectively and in a healthy way. In online delivery, understanding the student psychology is very challenging. It is easier for the students to choose to not to participate in the sessions. The online education allows the learner to learn while earning and as it is more flexible in terms of time, location and pace of learning. But this does not make online learning easier than traditional face to face learning. It has got its own challenges which could be handled by adapting the following strategies.

Research Methodology:

Both authors of this paper have spent more than 18 years, in the capacity of teachers in

both Distance education as well as face-to-face format. This paper is based on the findings of the authors' observation and experience in academics. As both the authors have extensive experience in Face-to-face and Distance education, they could clearly comment on the guidelines for Addressing Challenges and Opportunities in ODL as against Face-to-face mode. The authors have guided more than 2 lacks students through distance and face-to-face mode. Therefore the guidelines suggested in this paper are outcome of their extensive experience and participative observation.

On the basis of hard-core experience and various research project undertaken, authors are proposing following strategies for learners to learn effectively through ODL mode.

1. Get Prepared: Student should get organised before the semester starts. All the technical set up and the know how to access the online study material and inputs should be ready before the sessions start. Practice how to book and attend the sessions to ensure that there is not technical issues at the time of the first session. Also keep your study material and pen and paper handy to take the notes. These preparations would help the student to concentrate on online

lecture peacefully. The student should also ensure that the internet connectivity is sufficient to access the study material and attend the online session. The place with minimum distractions should be chosen to attend these live sessions.

2. Make A Time-Table: Student should identify the time required to complete each task like attending live sessions, recording and eBooks / eLearning as per his/her pace or convenience and grasping capacity. He/ She should prepare the timetable by considering all his professional and personal obligations. The time table should be so framed to be in touch with studies on continuous basis. Generally the students take the breaks of months and thus loose interest in the studies. Similarly, the timetable for assignment and exam should be also prepared to complete the program in validity time.

3 Participate actively and connect with your classmates and professors: in Online earning the student learns better through active participation by taking initiatives in preparing from the material, by connecting with his/her professors and by simultaneously doing co-curricular assignments and activities suggested in the course material. The element of interaction with other classmates proves to an effective

tool for learning effectively. We will discuss in detail the role and importance of student interaction in ODL in the later part of this paper.

Active participation is also expected for getting your queries resolved. Therefore the student should not hesitate to ask questions either during live sessions, doubt clearing sessions, chat sessions or through various query handling platforms.

In ODL and online learning the accountability of learning remains more with the learners. Whether it is about booking the classes, completing the submissions and assignments in time or appearing for the exam, the professor may not be there to remind the deadlines to the learners. They should manage and complete all these tasks and ensure the compliances in time.

4. Take guidance for projects and submissions: Majority of the higher education programs include project reports, mini-projects and submissions. These project are not only academically important but also are very important for getting the practical experience of the concept learnt in the program. Therefore communicate regularly with your professors and other staff members of the institute for academic and operational help in preparing the

project report by following all the necessary project guidelines.

In case of group projects divide the various tasks of the project appropriately and communicate it to all the group members to avoid any type of confusion while getting evaluated for the project work.

Teachers and learners are two important pillars in online education. There are few guidelines for teachers also which may help them to deliver efficiently and effectively.

1. Collaborative Content development:

there are many sources for preparing the content for online learners. OERs (Open Educations Resources) are emerging as innovative tools and are creating new content and reference material for learners in ODL. The OERs are becoming increasing important in ODL format as it is removing all the limitations and creating the possibilities of wider participation in education process. There are many unprivileged learning communities where the education haven't reached. The OERs could be of great help to such student's communities who have very little access to education.

The multimedia tools like Google classrooms, zoho, Piktochart.com,

Beautiful.ai, Slides.com, allow the interactive presentation

2. Online Quizzes, surveys and polls:

Teachers can use the tools like SurveyMonkey, Typoform, and Easypolls for checking the progress of the students and collecting the data related for any task or feedback.

3. Games and Simulation:

Even the Teachers imparting Higher education programs can use the option of Games and simulation techniques for making classes interactive. These techniques could be used for teaching comparatively complex and generic concepts. Many free applications like Microsoft teams, Zoom, FaceTime are available for conducting games and simulation through group chats.

4. Customised learning management system.

Customised Learning management system designed by considering the program specific teaching learning pedagogy play very important role in online learning. Such LMS can use various evaluation and learning tools like quizzes, discussion forums, online activities, submissions...etc to ensure the complete learning and evaluation effectiveness. The Institutes

should also ensure that all these tools of the LMS are mobile responsive which makes learners to access the content any time any place and are convenient to handle.

5. Be flexible.

Online teaching-learning requires flexibility in course structure. The delivery of the content should use blended pattern to make it suitable for different students from different background. Also it demand the huge flexible mindset by both important stakeholder, i.e., by students as well as by teachers. Students and teachers should be able to adapt to the changing online learning tools without lagging behind. Whenever required, the teachers and students should be able to switch smoothly between various teaching learning pedagogies effectively.

Content protection and privacy policy:

The content is the life blood of any ODL institute. Content differentiates any ODL institute from the other similar institutes. Therefore protection of intellectual material and content is very important. Institute should have clearly defined privacy policy for protecting the content in the form of study material, question bank, eLearnings, lecture notes...etc. this privacy policy should be strictly following while dealing

with the outside vendors in the outsourced projects.

Online learning demands few infrastructural set up and non-availability of which can result into its failure. Every institute involved in the ODL format or online learning should ensure that student is not deprived from complete learning due to its online format. Therefore the ODL institute should be careful for below mentioned infrastructural requirements.

As online teaching is not same as traditional face to face teaching it require different set up and mindset. It should be ensured that the learners have the access to the appropriate tools and gazettes for attending the online sessions. All youngsters are having smart phones now a days. Therefore the content delivered should be mobile friendly.

Along with gazettes, the internet bandwidth and speed is equally important. Delivered content should be both in synchronous and asynchronous form to help the students from the region having low bandwidth.

In case of live session, schedule of the sessions is very important as student may be attending the session from different time zones. Also the duration of the session

should be shorter for effective delivery of the inputs. To increase the student attendance and participation the collaborative activities such as Group discussion, games, quizzes...etc. could be taken.

Session feedback is next important task to ensure the student satisfaction and address the student grievances in time. As far as possible the feedback mechanism should be automated and should be made mandatory before closing the session.

Need for Student interaction:

It is been proved that students learn easily through peer interactions. In online learning they are deprived of this interaction. Therefore the teacher engaging online session should create many such opportunities of interaction during and after the session. The students should get ample chances to connect virtually with each other and the feel of getting heard.

Literature Review

Researchers have long pointed out the importance of student interactions in the teaching and learning process. Vygotsky (1978) states collaborative learning is necessary in building one's own cognitive process. Among group members, if they

cannot share their knowledge effectively, it can lead to poor learning outcomes (Soller, 2004). To test the difference of collaborative learning and individual learning, Ellis et al. (1994) compares the problem-solving results between fifth graders who worked with a partner and those who worked alone. The result shows that 75% of the paired students solved the problem with new mathematical rules while only 32% of the students working individually came up with a solution.

Besides active communication, interaction, online presence, and moderated discussions, the formation of an online community is one of the key elements for high-quality online education. Fostering interactivity in an online community is the main indicator of success in online courses (Bender, 2003; Salmon, 2001). Swan (2003) points out that learners' interactions among classmates is one of the five areas of interactivity. Therefore, promoting student interactions in distance education courses is important for setting up an online learning community.

Of course, student interaction is not easy and possible everytime particularly in online learning and just one or two activities are not sufficient. Student interaction activities should be a continuous

and ongoing process. It is the responsibility of teachers or mentors to see that every student's point of view is heard and yet there is no chaos in the class.

Below are further justifications to understand the importance of students' interactions. When students are given chance to interact, they tend to think more critically are more careful while expressing their opinion. This helps them to think more on the concept and thus they remember the concept more easily than by reading or by listening the lecture. Infact for introvert students interacting in online sessions is less scary than speaking before entire class. In general students feel comfortable to share their rebellious ideas in online sessions. Online classes also give the opportunity to post anonymously of course under teacher's monitoring if students are conscious about public judgement.

Validation of the student engagement remotely:

Teacher using face to face mode for long time may advocate F2F mode for effective student control and higher student engagement. But believe us after working in online teaching for more than eight years, we can conclude that, with little upskilling

and understanding the online teaching tools, it is easier to authenticate the students work remotely. However, it requires change in designing the assignments and changing the way the assignments are presented and submitted for review. The teacher's role here is to closely monitor the online activities of the students. For this teacher can use more formative assessments where students working in group could keep that indirect control on each other and they should be allowed to use more online resources which could be tracked by the teacher online. Teachers should communicate and use the plagiarism check for individual submissions to put the control on quality of submissions. There could be some assignments based on additional reference material. The teacher can make it mandatory to mention the references from the given reference material while replying the questions in the assignments. If possible any form of online interview can also help the teacher to authenticate the student's preparations because student can only reply spontaneously in online interviews if he/she is thoroughly prepared. Simultaneously further check on login time and time given by students to submit the online assignment could be evaluated to authenticate his

contribution and involvement in the submission.

Conclusion

This is thematic paper which discusses and suggests the requirement and guidelines Addressing Challenges and Opportunities in developing an interactive online teaching-learning community in ODL. To get the effective and expected output from the ODL both learner as well as teachers need to follow certain guidelines and discipline.

Ideally online learner should always be prepared with his time table by keeping his other professional and personal obligations. He/she should participate actively and take the regular guidance from his/her mentors or teachers for academic elements.

Teachers imparting online education is expected to be more alert and innovative in their teaching pedagogy. They should continuously develop the relevant content collaboratively. They should make use of online quizzes, surveys and polls and other games and simulation techniques to make the teaching-learning more interesting the effective. Customised learning is one such innovative approach which ensures the complete learning and evaluation effectiveness. The teachers need to be

extra-flexible while dealing with their ODL students. Teachers dealing in ODL should be very efficient in allowing student interactions as student interactions are one of the most important elements responsible for the fruitful learning by the students.

Content protection and privacy is the collective responsibility of the entire institution imparting the online education. It could be concluded that the student interaction is one of the complicated issue that needs more research to increase its understanding and importance, as it applies to significantly in ODL.

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COVER PAGE

Research Paper Title:

The Educators Perspective on Student's Participation in ODL Systems

Theme of the Paper:

Facilitating Students to Achieve Learning Outcomes in ODL

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DECLARATION

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The Educators Perspective on Student's Participation in ODL Systems

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In world of 2021, where pandemic played havoc in our lives, a sector that was affected the most was education which has a direct relationship with the social weave of every country. Education should not be a privilege, hence we have the online and distance learning system which has taken its new position as one of the most popular ways of receiving knowledge.

It has been seen in the history of online distance learning that innovation in technology brought more students the opportunity to educate themselves. It has brought a life transforming change in the lives of people. Our modern world demands latest know-how's which can be disseminated through larger mediums such as online education. Our educational institution are gated the entry as well as if required continuation of education is a

difficult task. However, the opening up of online education due to Covid-19 situation has brought about new possibilities. If utilised in the right way, it can bring a revolution in the world of literacy and knowledge.

It was seen in 1950 that online distance education was a possibility through slide projectors and television based classes. This was the first setting stone in imbibing technology with education and training. One of the first instances of online learning in the world can be traced back to The University of Illinois USA in year 1960 where students began learning from computer terminals that were interlinked to form a network. The first-ever completely online course was offered in 1984 by the University of Toronto. In 1986, the Electronic University Network was

established for being used in DOS and Commodore 64 computers. In 1990, the Open University in Britain started their

rather ambitious project of online distance learning. The following Figure 1 shows a brief history of online education.

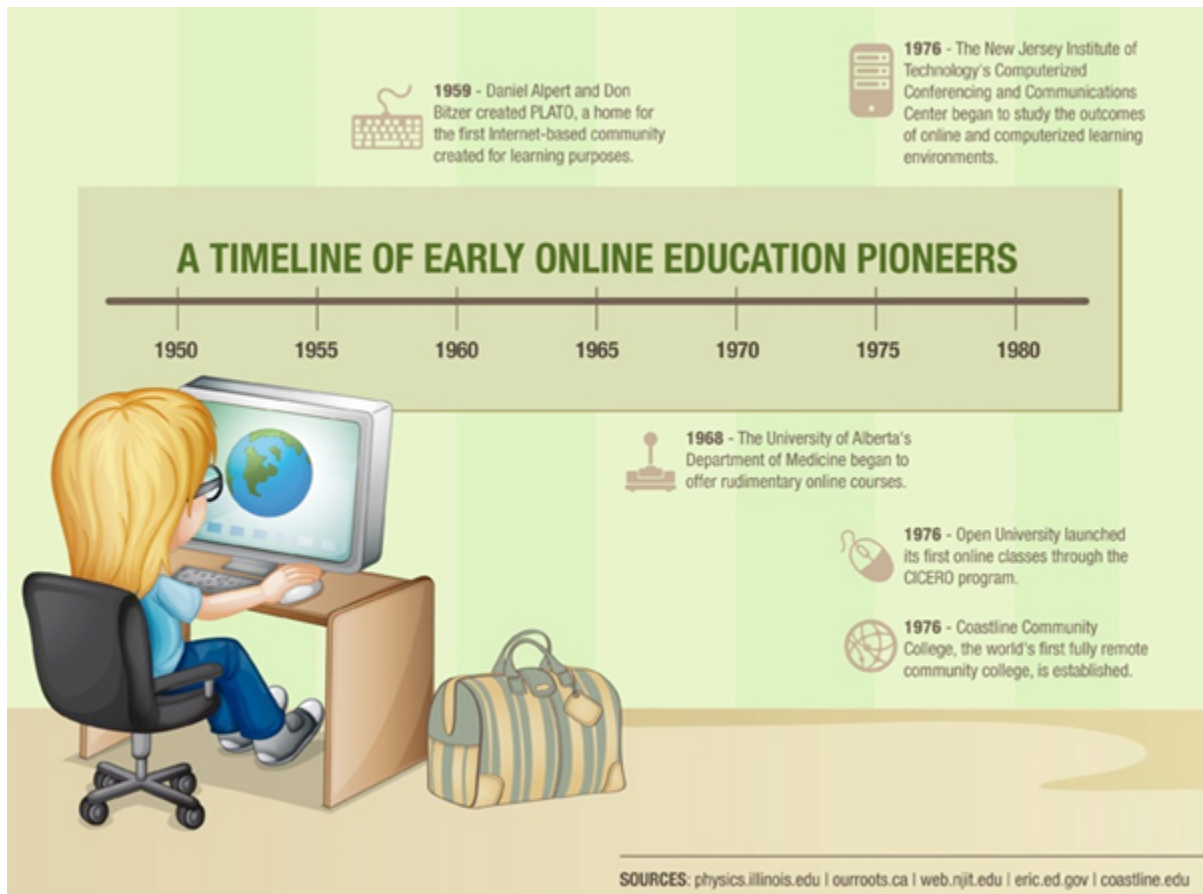


Fig. 1: A brief history of online education (<https://adamasuniversity.ac.in/a-brief-history-of-online-education/>)

Currently, the Indira Gandhi National Open University in India is the largest university in the world with around 4 million students enrolled, most of whom currently receive education via online methods.

During 2020, we all witnessed the catastrophe that was borne by Covid. It was a beginning of new learning through bad examples of death and suffering, we lost the control of our lives and our learner's future.

Literature review:

1. **As per Forbes'** Mila Semeshkina, who is Founder and CEO @ Lectera.com,

Expert in Fast Education, the future of online learning may include artificial intelligence, cloud based solution, virtual reality technology, internet of things.

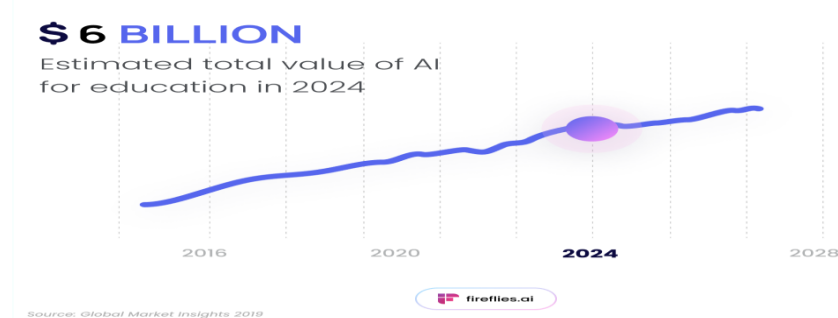


Fig. 2 Estimated total value of artificial intelligence for education in 2024

As evident from the above graph, there is going to be a steady progress in the value of AI for education in 2024. The online teaching learning system is going through change, hence technology will play a major role in lecture delivery and evaluation.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbesbusinesscouncil/2021/02/02/five-major-trends-in-online-education-to-watch-out-for-in-2021/?sh=709942bf21eb>

2. Research conducted by Shih, T. K. et al. of the Tamkang University, Taiwan; Northern Taiwan Institute of Science and Technology, Taiwan; Hosei

University, Japan; University of Aizu, Japan: They submitted a research paper - A Survey of Distance Education Challenges and Technologies. The authors have mentioned in the summary that there is still a gap where great success in distance learning and the virtual university is talked about. Though people have accepted to embed technology, there is a shortcoming in sociological and methodical ways of using the technology. They believe that distance learning is a lifelong education as a mission based instruction.

3. Research conducted by Musingafi, M.C. et al. from Zimbabwe Open University: In a research paper 'Challenges for Open and Distance learning (ODL) Students: Experiences from Students of the Zimbabwe Open University,' challenges faced by the students such as instructional related

are discussed. The research exhibits that resource deficiency about internet and tools for their use, the motivational support issues for adult or distance learning are reasons for less interest in online learning system.

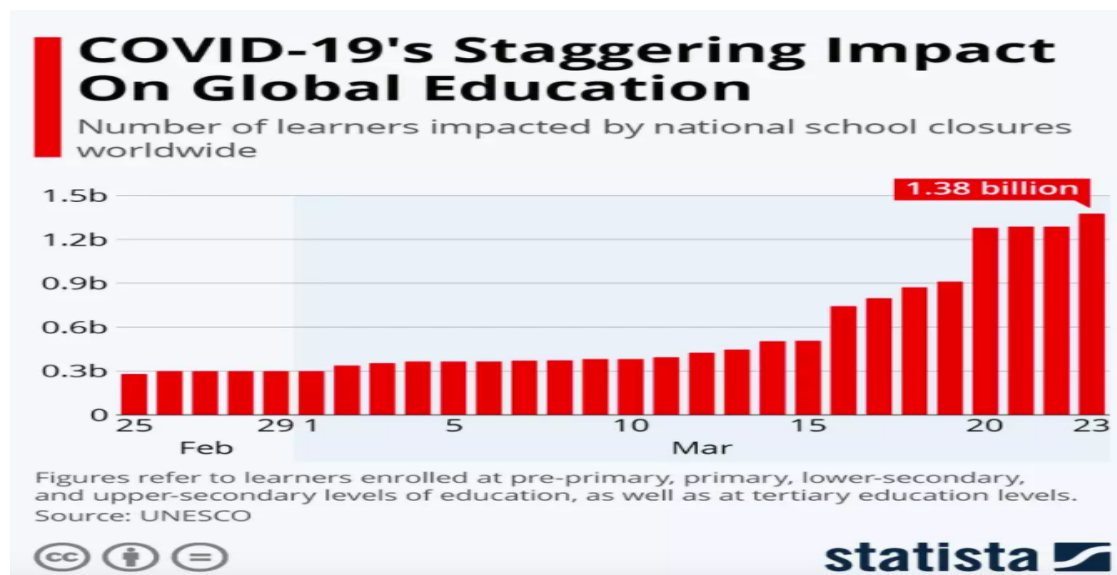


Fig. 3 Covid-19's staggering impact on global education

As we can see, huge number of learners got impacted by national school closures worldwide. This created a panic situation. However, our resourceful teachers and the technology were resilient. The Covid -19 happenings in the education system started getting technology into the system to counteract the impairment of being in our own houses had brought about. The whole

chaos was silenced by adaptation of the digital ways of teaching. The teaching fraternity was forced to add innovative ways to bridge the gap of education. All efforts were taken but the learning outcomes may differ as the problems faced by teachers were somewhat not shown that seriously. The teacher was in a different environment than his student, hence the

control was minimum. Even though the medium has changed, the way of teaching did not change the technique to a large extent and so it led to more dropouts.

We were forced to realise that online education was an option wherein the gated education system came to standstill. ODL gives the benefit of cost. It may not be seen at par as people were not aware of the system the distance learning works, and not everyone can afford the price of education which is available through traditional institutions. Students need knowledge or certification of having the right level of expertise of a subject due to many reasons such as lack of money, and because they are earners so the time, as well as the remoteness of the institution with reference to distance away from the student.

Education is not readily available in all institutions for all. Here the distance learning comes into action wherein all strata of society are given an equal opportunity to educate themselves, rather than being left out of the prospects of being educated. Online distance education make learning affordable and achievable. The best part of the courses is that they are now blended wherein quality education is provided at low cost. Online Education is good for students because it considers the

student's level as per his last educational qualification and a student can continue education from anywhere at any time. If the course is pursued sincerely, a student gets knowledge and guidance and the student can do all his study as per his convenience. The range of courses and their availability is the niche that ODL gives to the world of education. It brings education literally in the hands of the students, rather on their fingertips with use of mobile or laptop supported by internet. The student can complete as many courses and gain as much knowledge as he desires to have. It can act as a catalyst to progress in jobs, change of profession or upgradation. Students become aware of other allied courses when they are online, they may learn from leaders of the field, content that can be compared and taken from the best in the sense that education is actually globalised. Foreign universities also have opened their doors to the students to achieve their dreams of studying a different curriculum. The fact that students are achieving their academic goals through online distance learning is because of the flexibility and the hands on availability of courses.

The courses provided online are in line with institutions with many criterion for admission. However, this balance of

convenience and quality in education has brought success to the online educators. In response to requirement from the society towards education, this agile system of ODL had been invented.

The flipped classroom is a simple strategy for providing learning resources such as articles, pre-recorded videos and YouTube links before the class. The online classroom time is then used to deepen understanding through discussion with faculty and peers (Doucet et al., 2020). This is a very effective way of encouraging skills such as problem-solving, critical thinking and self-directed learning. The virtual classroom platforms such as videoconferencing (Google Hangouts Meet, Zoom, Slack,

Cisco, WebEx) and customizable cloud-based learning management platforms such as Elias, Moodle, BigBlueButton and Skype are increasingly being used.

Trends in online education show that this flexibility is the primary reason for more people preferring to learn over the internet. As per EducationData.org, *'between 25-50% of instructions, assignments, and discussion takes place online.'*

Further, students study course material outside class and utilize classroom time to reinforce learning, clear doubts, and engage in discussion with their instructor. This hybrid model of e-learning brings the best of two worlds: classroom and virtual room.

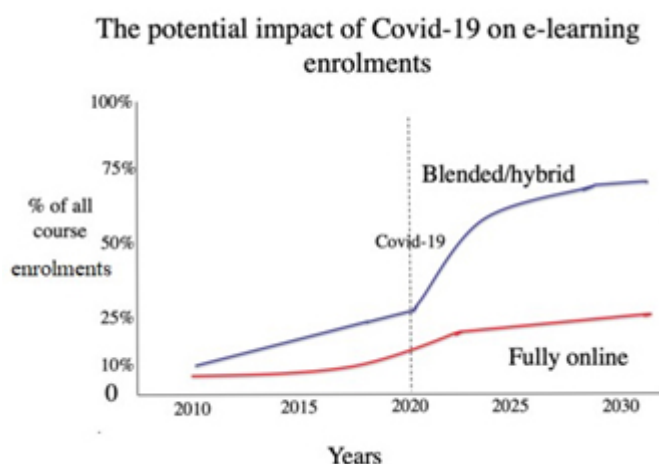
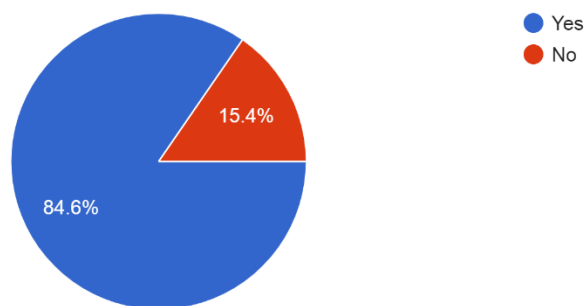


Fig. 4 The potential impact of Covid-19 on e-learning enrolments (Source: University Affairs Magazine)

Data Analysis:

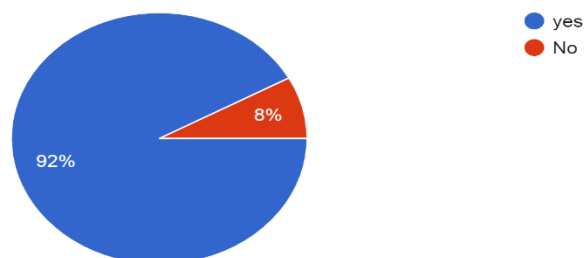
The researcher asked the ODL faculties about the difficulties and problems they face during online teaching. A questionnaire was designed to understand the effect of online teaching and to suggest some improvements. The analysis is as follows:

1. Are you an educator teaching on ODL platform?



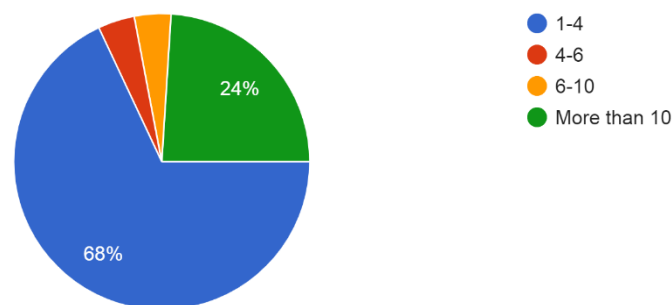
85 percent of the faculties from ODL gave their opinion about their experience with online learning and the student's behaviour online and its impact on learning.

2. Do you think the faculty interaction is beneficial in the online mode of learning where recorded session is available?



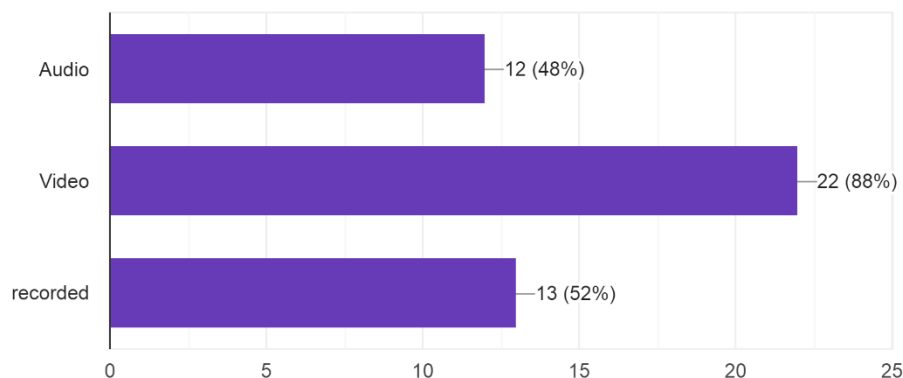
It was observed that the faculty felt that even when the recorded sessions are available for the students, it is also seen that students want to have live sessions. The reason being that concept can be discussed as per the difficulty faced by the student.

3. How many subjects do you teach online in a semester?



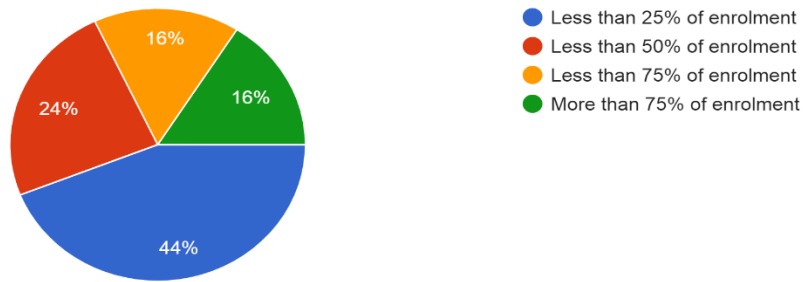
As per the graph 68% faculties teach one to four subjects, 24% faculties teach more than 10 subjects. This reveals the teaching load and the responsibility of the faculty towards variety of subject with respect to virtual classes, developing learning material, and evaluation.

4. Which medium of instruction do you use for teaching?



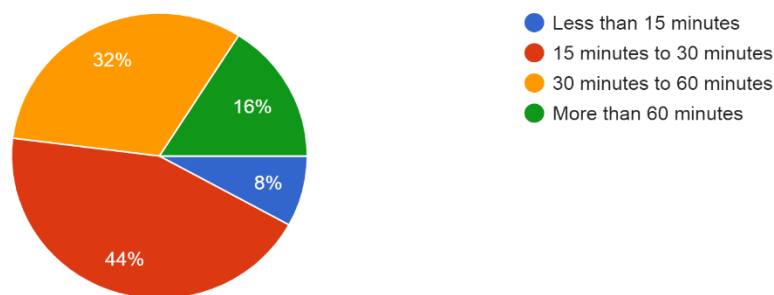
Mostly faculties are using video lectures than recorded because it the faculties feel an interactive class is more preferred for learning by faculties, so that the student can understand and apply concept rather than just hear them in the recorded sessions.

5. How many students attend your live class?



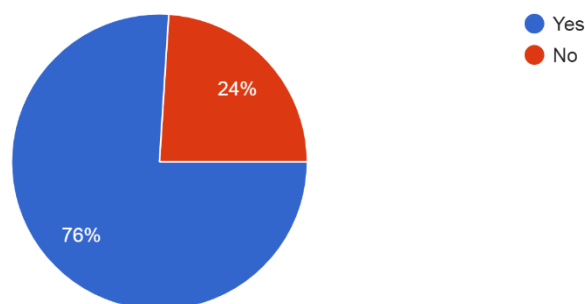
As seen in the graph most faculties felt that less than 25% of the enrolment were attending live class for which faculties though the faculties do their best in reach the students.

6. How is the student's response (attention span/participation in class)?



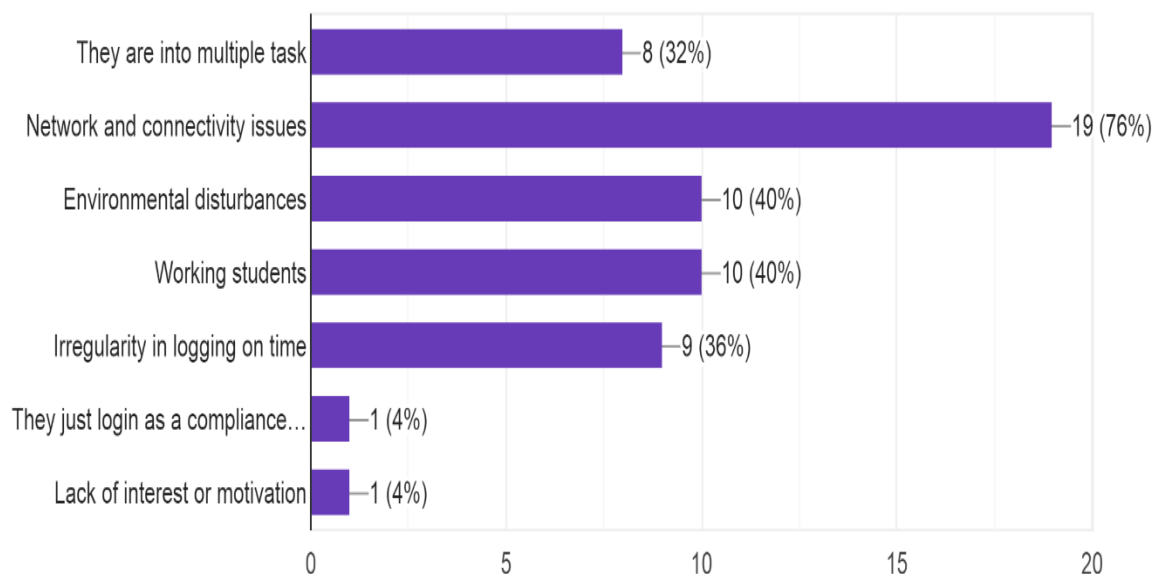
As per the graph, 44% of students of the students have attention span of 15 to 30 minutes and 32% have attention span of 30 of 60 minutes. This shows student's attention span for each session.

7. Do you experience student's active participation?



The faculties observed that those students who attend the sessions online are actively participating and learn more if are regular.

8. What are the distractions from students that you face during the session?



The major problem in conducting an online class is network and connectivity issues, followed by environmental disturbances and students being in work situations. Therefore, it is seen that students need to focus on the class with such dire situations.

Findings:

85% of the faculties from ODL gave opinion about their experience with online learning and the student's behaviour online and its impact on learning.

It was observed that the faculty felt that even when the recorded sessions are

available for the students, it is also seen that students want to have live sessions. The reason being that concept can be discussed as per the difficulty faced by the student.

As per the graph, 68% faculties teach one to four subjects, 24% faculties teach more than 10 subjects. This shows the teaching load and the responsibility of the faculty

towards variety of subject with respect to virtual classes, developing learning material, and evaluation.

Faculties are mostly using video lectures than recorded because the faculties feel an interactive class is more preferred for learning by the students because the students can understand and apply concept rather than just hear the faculties in the recorded sessions.

As seen in the graph, most faculties felt that less than 25% of the enrolled students were attending live class and that the faculties do their best in reaching the students.

As per the graph, 44% of students have attention span of 15 to 30 minutes and 32% have attention span of 30 to 60 minutes.

The faculties observed that those students who attend the sessions online are actively participating and learning more if they are regular.

The major problem in conducting an online class is network and connectivity issues, followed by environmental disturbances and students being in work situations. Therefore, it is seen that students need to focus on the class with such dire situations.

Conclusion:

From the above discussion, it can be inferred that the faculties are enthusiastic about online sessions and also ready to adapt to technology. The perception that online education is very easy and interesting for students is questionable because, if given a choice to select between recorded sessions and virtual class, the students prefer virtual classes; however, they are not attending as much, and those who attend tend to be active and do interact in the class. The major challenge is the attention span, most faculties felt the attention span was less than half an hour. The next major challenge is the distractions in the session when the environment around the student during the session may not be conducive for the student to focus on studies. The students have access to recorded session if they miss the live interactive class; such recorded session supports learning largely. It would benefit students if they are given the reading notes that could help them to understand the recorded session better, otherwise mostly they are not able to connect to the content. Evaluation should be session wise, so as to assess the learning from the teachings. As seen from the secondary data, availability of network and an attention-grabbing

environment are the biggest challenges for Online Distance learning. The researcher has observed that unless there is a learning objective plus discussion on the concept and a comprehensive test on the concept, the students will not be able to give the required outcome or the understanding of the knowledge shared with them. The author suggests that online teaching will be more beneficial when the lecture will be for less than 45 minutes. The student must be briefed about the concept beforehand and lastly the student must be solemnly testing his knowledge through a quiz or a multiple choice question. With these suggestions, the entire idea of getting the outcome of education at all ages in life can be achieved.

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COVER PAGE

Research Paper Title: Sustaining and Enhancing the Quality of ODL

Theme of the Paper: Developing an Interactive Online Teaching-Learning Community in ODL

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Sustaining and Enhancing the Quality of ODL

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Abstract

Open and Distance Learning (ODL) is an arrangement of training wherein instructors and students need not to be available either at same spot or same time and is adaptable as to modalities and timing of educating and learning as additionally the confirmation standards: without trading off important quality contemplations. ODL arrangement of the nation comprises of Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), State Open Universities (SOUS), Institutions and Universities incorporates offering training Correspondence and Course Institutes (CCIS) in customary double mode colleges.

Keywords: Multi-media, classroom, E-learning, Curriculum Digital Development,

Teaching and learning Strategies, Open Education Resources, Open and distance learning.

Introduction

One imperative object in distance education is to boost distance learner's stimulation through applicable learning experiences which are related to their real-life circumstances. Activities and projects of distance education course should be designed in such a way that can substitute their learning goals as well they are relevant to their life experiences. This method content presentation can make learning fascinating and meaningful for students. The next thing that can motivate distance education learners

is that they should be make familiar with the goals and expected outcomes of the programs they are going to pursuit. Although acquisition of knowledge is essential for distance students but that only acquisition of knowledge is not sufficient for learners at present. There are important skills that are necessary for living a successful life. Schools/colleges of distance education should design their courses to promote distance education and at least some important life skills:

Every School or College offers its instructive development through regular channel through distance education. Open and distance learning has skilled outstanding development international and its accomplishment depends on quality declaration Advances in the distance education. The contemporary article was formed with the persistence of signifying strategies for conveying eminence in distance education agendas at sophisticated teaching level. Devoted distance learning Schools/colleges confirm development prospects in acceptances and a vast longing for e-Learning programmes of numerous forms and scopes often presented through online merged form. Distance education

policy at numerous organizations is working through process with a need to present and tolerate high quality programmes.

They retain very beneficial and effective educational activities through courses binding them in the programmes of distance education. Providing quality in their syllabus and effectiveness of distance education, they prove themselves that they are giving the things that are very useful for the wellbeing of all-round development of students and in the end development of society. Those institutes arrange quality training for the faculty members through the different methods of distance education and also for the increase in the research civilization surging through the technical help or assistance and also give them the helping hands of motivation. They are finding and utilizing various channels of evaluation of the far away students with ethical development of students and faculty members through distance education, erecting the best infrastructure, establishing technology and is related courses through distance education and also applying measures of inspection through the sanctions of national accreditation council for distance education. Every system of distance education

prepared/launched is checked carefully in order to give quality distance education and for that the agencies which are famous/well known in imparting quality distance education are deployed.

Course conniving of distance education should not be a duplication of outdated classroom, rather in terms of supreme improvement of distance learners' skills through medium best suited for that course. In recent times distance education is becoming a requisite share of education system globally.

Distance education is a system of education that in which teacher and students have no any physical interactions Distance education nevertheless they interact themselves through distance ways of learning like communication through e-mail, online video or audio conferencing, electronic mail, radio, television, Internet, mobile phones etc.

There are so many impediments in running distance education due to want of National Online Distance Learning policy, absence of home-grown quality assurance framework, want of proper and reliable ICT infrastructure to support the open and distance learning

system and non-existence of sufficient connoisseurs in open and distance learning.

There is an increase in communal responsibility for higher education forcing schools/colleges to prove quality in their online distance education programmes and developments. The policy for enormous registrations and e-learning is established and comprises a mobile plan and network. focus groups were used as research projects in the case study of open University and peer review was used to test the soundness of the data. Planned directions were developed to inform the new key outcome areas, goals, objectives, approaches and importance for the distance education in university.

The persistence of distance education is to achieve deep passion of students' awareness of online education, their sense of commitment in the distance education. When experimental case study with limited sources was led, findings were composed using online communication comments, interviews, e mail follow up, interrogations and online survey. It was concluded that the most students were gratified with their online understanding. However, the absences of community linking may reduce the levels of gratification of the learning experience of the

students, impression their longing to search for assistance from their colleagues and lead to a feeble logic of being allied in a learning society. Online learning was recommended based on the results, using skill to boost linking in society.

Distance education is a planned teaching/learning experience in which teacher and students are separated by physical distance. In distance education courses and programs, student teacher interaction may occur. Ground-breaking methods sponsor continuous learning both indoor and outdoor premises which support the utilization of technology seen during a wider variety of pedagogical understandings in order to provide educational facilities to maximum population in cost effective mean for the India.

By leaps and bounds, technological growth is taking place every day and it should be adapted speedily in order to make progress of both the young student and the adult student increasing reputation of Online Distance Learning in present community. The Online Distance Learning has been familiar as a key zone of expansion approach in universe.

Objectives

The strategies for quality distance higher education have been developed to achieve following objectives:

- To highlight the concept of distance education in current era.
- To develop strategies for introducing quality distance higher education.

Followings are some suggested strategies for quality-based distance higher education programs in universities/institutions:

Mission Statement and Commitment of Institution

The institutions/ universities initiating distance education (DE) programs must have a clear and written mission statement for the programs they are going to launched. Not merely they have a documented mission statement of DE, rather they should be committed to achieve that mission. The programs offered by the university/ institution should reflect their mission statement.

**Curriculum and Instruction of Distance
Education (DE)**

One of best practice in DE is to enhance distance learner's motivation through relevant learning experiences which are related to their real-life situations. There are important skills that are necessary for living a successful life. Their universities/institutions of distance education should design their courses to promote at least following some important life skills:

- Patriotism to sacrifice for the country
- Scientific outlook towards matters of life Use of ICT use
- Communication skills
- Leadership skills
- Awareness about environment
- Courage to take challenges and initiative
- Think about life matters rationally and reasonably Tolerance
- Problem solving skills
- Interpersonal and intrapersonal skills
- Decision-making skills Technical skills

Suggestions

- To acquire information and ability and the fitness to deal with Decision-making skills in many situations is nothing but learning to do.
- Taking an education to accompany each other, by developing an understanding of other people and an appreciation of interdependence, carrying out joint projects and learning to manage conflicts, in a respect of mutual values, mutual understanding and peace.
- Taking education so as to develop the good personality among the students and can be able to behave with just and personal accountability.
- Recipient's reciprocal action with division and other recipient as a necessary character that could be promoted through a various technologies including voice mail and/or email. advancement of delving civilization in Distance Education. It is teaching learning sanction in distance education

- For accomplishment of research projects in distance higher education programs at regional level and online guidance and supervision, training workshops can be conducted
- Universities/ institutions can organize educational sessions and meeting in order to help research culture and to deliver research training to graduates, where senior teachers and guest speakers can train graduate students in the skills of doing research projects.
- In order to grow life skills in distant students, educational conferences and seminars can be conducted at regional/local level where distant students should be provided a chance to present an article and it should be made necessary part of the distance course.
- In Distance Education learning courses, need for training of faculty involved is special
- Additional assistances should be arranged to teachers for their widespread struggle in making distance education program fruitful.
- Training on exact methods of instruction for teaching students of distance education should be given to the teachers working with distance education.
- Capable and knowledgeable older teachers and assessors must be employed to assess presentation of distance education teachers.
- Distance Education schools/universities should confirm that they have rich practical physical as well as digital libraries available for all its students with approach to latest study material worldwide obtainable.
- To grant accreditation / approval of programs run by a university of institution, national level accreditation councils for Distance Education should be recognized.
- For dealing with distance education programs, trainer Support: Institution/ university should have adequate and capable

teachers, and they have sufficient sources and amenities.

- Facility should be provided to the students like psychoanalysis services, equipment facilities, and training in use of web-based learning.
- Student Learning Consequences: Institution/ university should have well defined system to appraise the quality of distance learning through students' consequences.
- Noteworthy feature of effective Distance Education is related with students support facilities including guidance for admission in various trainings, monetary provision, care during studying of Distance Education courses, easily approach to teachers, program manager. They need guidance counselling of some senior in experience and qualification. Sometimes it is very tough for students to make decisions about selection of course for which they have potential.

- The institution should have a complete valuation system for evaluation of course offered through online or correspondence in order to evaluate the effectiveness of programs.
- It has been observed that students registered in distance education course is not him/herself submitting assignments, rather their assignments are being prepared by some other person who may have got this level of education. It has been observed that sometime some other person is taking examination instead of original candidate. In the age of information communication and technology (ICT) institutions/universities offering distance higher education courses should introduced latest technology-based system that can detect any type of mal practices either in submission of assignments or in taking examination. Institutions/universities should introduce and monitor

confidential identification and password for enrolled students through identity verification technologies.

Recommendations

- The shift to remote learning has intensified issues relating to justice. Not all students have equal access to technology or to dependable, high speed Internet networks or to a distraction-free study space. Be mindful of the challenges the students face, recognizing that students vary noticeably in their comfort level with online learning and some are located in different time zones. Many worries, not without reason, that their classmates are cheating. Be elastic about how students participate in the class, for example, by including both asynchronous and synchronous learning opportunities. Allow students to access course resources in multiple ways -- allowing them to download PowerPoint presentations or view videos at a time of their convenience or take quizzes on their cellphones. Provide chances for students to earn extra-credit points. Shift your assessment plans to include truer and project-based assessments.
- An unspecified survey can provide many intuitions into your students' existing conditions, and their thoughts about how online education can be upgraded. It can also help you recognize students' motivation for taking your class, their expectations for their special areas of interest, and the kind of support they'd find helpful. Instead of simply introducing yourself, consider conducting a student survey. Then share the results with your students, while inserting your own answers to the questions.
- Help students get to know one another. Divide a large class into smaller units. Within the smaller breakout groups, have the students participate in icebreaker activities. The breakout sessions share also provide chances for students to share their thoughts, knowledge, and experience. Be available before and after simultaneous class sessions. Students are far more likely to reach out to you

if you are easy to reach. Stay online after a “live” session end. Solicit questions and comments and other forms of feedback.

- Inspiration is a key to learning. Help your students understand the ways that your course provides an essential foundation for more advanced courses, how it will help them attain particular skills, or how it addresses issues that the students find particularly interesting.
- A major contributor to student failure in online classes is an inability to motivation, a challenge that the existing health problem has worsened. The problem of concentration exists on multiple scopes. Wanting the structure of a traditional school day, many students find it difficult to concentrate, arrange, organize their time, and stay on track. Thus, it's essential to provide them with the structure that they need. For each week, spell out the tasks that students must complete. Make sure your directions are easy to follow. Prompt students repeatedly to remind them of

activities, assignments, assessments, and due dates. Other students find it hard to maintain their attention during an online class session. After all, attention spans are limited and distractions and interruptions abound, interfering with their ability to concentrate or think clearly. Help your students. Make sure each class session is purposeful. Let students know each session's goals and structure and your expectations for them. Also, organize each class session around shorter sequences and activities (polls, breakout sessions, questions). Interrupt the class frequently to pose or solicit questions.

- During the existing disaster, our students are struggling in many ways. Some need academic support; others, technology assistance. Many, perhaps most, need non-academic support. Many mental health needs are going unaddressed. Still others need help in balancing their responsibilities and priorities. You can monitor their engagement. You can undertake regular check-ins and checkups. You can reach out

proactively or send warnings whenever there are signs that a student is falling behind. You can send out alerts. Empathy has rarely been as important. Encourage your students. Provide them with platform: rubrics, check lists, sample responses to test questions, background information, glossaries. Offer some flexibility on deadlines and opportunities to re-do assignments.

- Since motivation works effectively, it is needed to endure student passion and interest. During individual sessions, check on student knowledge; conduct polls; and raise questions. Give students opportunities to actively participate during the class session, for example, by asking them to pose a question in the chat, or respond to a question. Provide active learning opportunities. Have students research the answer to a question; have them analyze a case study; ask them to analyze a text, a document, a video clip, or some other form of evidence. Even in our socially-

distanced environment, project-based learning is not impossible. Students might, for example, contribute to a class blog, create a podcast, a video story, or a poster or infographic, research and respond to a controversy, undertake hereditary research, or conduct a study of something in their instant locality.

- Whether a conversation takes place orally, within a breakout session, or by text, either through chat or a conversation forum, make sure that the discussion genuinely shares to students' learning. Here are some strategies that work: Brainstorming sessions, where students present a variety of ways of approaching a topic or a problem; comprehension exercises, where students help one another understand a complex topic; assessments, where students challenge a particular argument or explanation; analyses, where students review a problem; and sharing activities, where students reveal their own experiences.
- Institution/University should conduct E-Proctored Exams to ensure quality

education. A web proctored exam, involves a proctor supervising an exam and monitoring the students online by using a webcam-and-microphone-compatible computer and a nonstop internet connection. A host of advanced anti-cheating technology at the proctor's clearance denies examples of any unnecessary movement during a web proctored exam.

Conclusion

Study can be completed through attractive quality syllabus and training of distance education programs, providing students quality support services, training faculty members in innovative methods of instruction of distance education, provision of technical support for promotion of research culture, adopting multiple ways of assessment of distance students, developing code of ethics for distance education faculty members and students, provision of quality infrastructure and technology, launching courses of distance education only through

approval of national accreditation council for distance education and taking events of check at every delivery system of distance education courses through quality control agencies." As a supposition, this study can be paraphrased on" there is need to present quality distance education programs.

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Research Paper Title: **e – Proctored Exam in ODL**

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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby would like to explicitly state the research article titled

“e- Proctored Exams in ODL” is original and has not been published earlier, or that it is not under consideration for possible publication elsewhere.

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Date: 15th November, 2021.

e- Proctored Exams in ODL

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Abstract:

With the sudden increase in online distance learning and the need to ensure academic integrity universities have adopted different e-proctoring technologies to monitor online exams. During the COVID-19 pandemic, in particular, the rapid digital transformation has been astounding. Colleges have been racing to obtain a good online proctored tool to maintain the integrity of their education system. This paper will contribute to an understanding of the holistic experience of using e-proctoring tools, especially during a crisis. This paper

will give educational bodies insights into how to use these tools to enhance the richness of assessments and foster their integrity.

Key words: e- proctoring, online distance learning, holistic, assessment, integrity.

Introduction:

The development of information and communication technology has reshaped our education system. Schools and universities are challenged to

introduce e- learning innovation in their teaching, learning and administrative processes. The transitional shift to online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic has occurred on an unproven, uncorroborated and unprecedented scale. However, this shift has its own challenges. As online learning surfaces as the new model of contemporary education across the globe, it gives conventional higher education institutions an opportunity for growth and the ability to expand their course offerings, but ensuring exam integrity in the online environment is becoming a major challenge to many higher educational institutions. The pandemic also created a surge in demand for exam proctoring tools. Examinations are vital and indispensable for any educational program, where well designed, reliable, secured proctoring and unprejudiced, non-deceptive graded exams are an essential part in the education

process, and online educational programs are no exception.

e- proctored Examination:**Its Meaning: What is an e – proctored exam?**

The online proctor can watch students during online exams by accessing their webcams, screens and microphones to ensure that students are complying with the rules. Usually, the online proctor is associated with an artificial intelligence system that analyses students' movements and their environment to decide whether to mark up the potential cheating behaviour. Online proctoring services help to curb student cheating by including restricted browser modes, video/screen monitoring, local network traffic analysis and eye tracking. Also, students are required to maintain both an audio and visual connection to the proctor throughout the exam duration and must first verify their identity too.

Online Proctored Exam Process:

During the online proctored exam, the technological devices and equipments replace various human interventions and mediation. The student will be informed electronically about the date and time of the online exam. The student is required to setup and check the proctoring devices. Students' information and exam questions are already available in the system. The server side stores the identification data of all students and their important behaviour change status including facial expression, eye and mouth movement and speech. The browser side collects and analyses multimodal data of the student who is writing the online test and transfers the student's most important data to the server. Real time face recognition and voice detection are implemented with the support of the software. When the exam starts, student has to log into the system and the timer starts. The students start to answer and the proctor (artificial

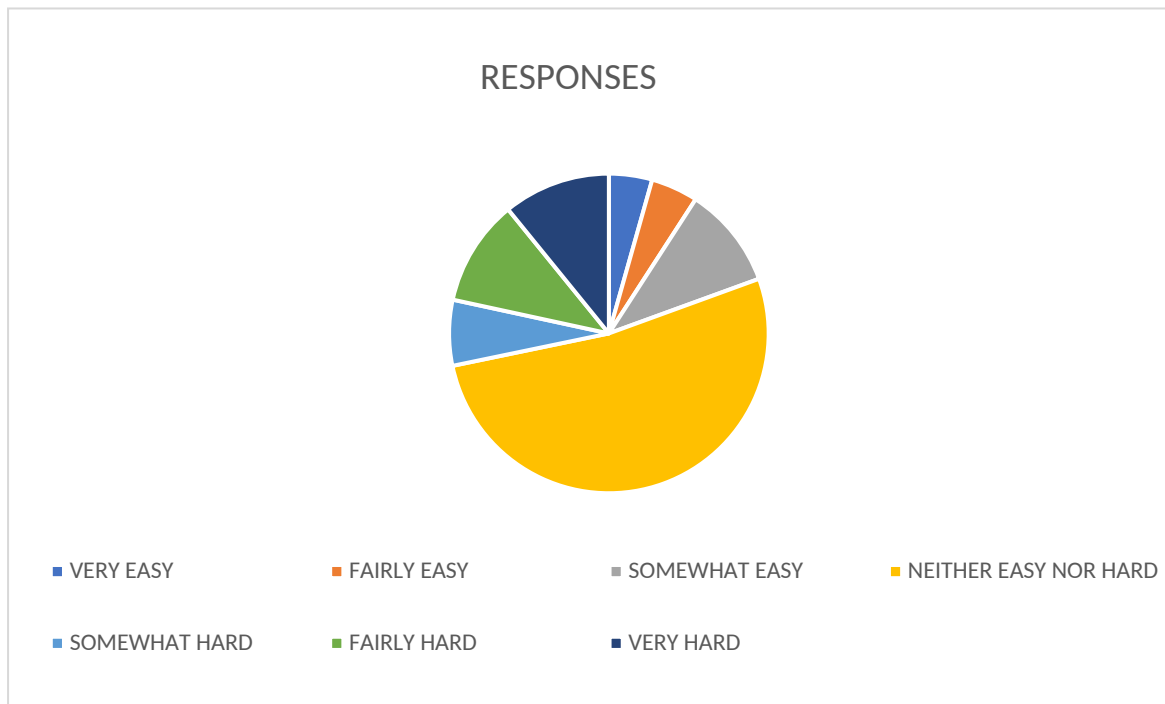
intelligence) keeps monitoring them. In the absence of cheating attempt, the exam goes on until the time is up. Otherwise, the system will add the cheating attempt to the log file, which is reviewed by the exam committee. At times, the system may automatically log off the student if some suspicious moves are detected. The system corrects the answers submitted automatically and the result is then displayed by the evaluation system.

Related literature on online proctored exams:

According to a research paper in 'International Journal for Educational Integrity' by A. Reedy, D. Pfitzner, L. Rook, L. Ellis, titled - Responding to the COVID – 19 emergency: Student and academic staff perceptions of academic integrity in the transition to online exams at three Australian universities, students' responses were noted on a 7 – point Likert scale, about their perception of ease of

cheating in online proctored exam in comparison to traditional invigilated exams. More than half of the students perceived that there was no difference in

the ease of cheating between a traditional invigilated exam and an online proctored exam. The responses of the students are as shown in the diagram.



Traditional vs Online Proctoring

examination features:

- While the traditional examination system involves more human intervention, online system relies more on technology which essentially

requires high speed internet connection.

- Traditional examination system is more time consuming while evaluation by online exam systems is quite rapid.
- Online proctored exams require proctoring devices that need to be tested before the exam

which is not required in
traditional exam practices.

- Traditional exam systems demand a lot of manual work and more human resources for its administration while proctored online exams require IT experts and software engineers for its preparation.
- Compared to traditional exam system, online exams reduce time and paper work and minimizes errors in evaluation. Also in online proctored exams, there is no risk of loss of answer scripts or chances of mis-evaluation.
- Traditional exam practices require physical presence of students at the examination centre, while using the online proctored exam mode students can appear for the exam from any corner of the world.

Challenges faced in e- proctored exams:

Since online proctoring relies heavily on the usage of advanced technologies, it becomes essential that these tools are made available everywhere. In remote areas where there is very less technological development, administering exams via online mode becomes difficult. Students suffer if they belong to areas where internet connection is unstable. Students and teachers in rural areas are not well-versed with technology handling and have limited access to e-gadgets.

Development and installation of examination access tools, proctoring devices and evaluation software is expensive and needs IT experts. Moreover, use of technological tools and access devices like computers, laptop, Android mobile phones, webcam, internet connection, etc. adds to the cost of conducting these online exams.

At a certain point, proctoring still requires human intervention in order to review cheating logs. It also needs security software and backup plans.

Conclusion:

As more students enroll in e-learning courses, the need for exam proctoring to provide a quality educational experience and maintain academic rigor rises in importance. This technology validates students' identities and flag suspicious activities during the exam to discourage cheating. The government officials in the education field should utilize educational funds in digital transformation of education system which has become the need of today. Academicians, education policymakers should use multiple strategies like live proctoring, 360° camera, etc. to support online proctored examination system to overcome the

difficulties and establish reliability and credibility of such exams.

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Research Paper Title: Importance of ODL as an Alternative Mode of Education: An Exposition

Theme of the Paper: Distance Education Models and Best Practices

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Importance of ODL as an Alternative Mode of Education: An Exposition

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Abstract

Open and distance learning is a revolutionary concept in the modern education system. Conventional education system has faced some critical questions in the present context. As a result, people have felt a need for an alternative mode of education. This has led to the emergence of open and distance learning (ODL) system of education. From the present perspective, ODL is the most convenient mode of learning irrespective of factors such as age, educational background, and geographical boundaries.

This paper explores the distinction between conventional education system (CES) and open and distance learning (ODL) system. The

distinction is made between the two prevalent systems from the angle of its importance as far as innovation, quality and employability are concerned. This paper has not attempted to suspend or bracket any of these two systems. It is an exploration of an alternative mode of learning, which can help learners not only in the acquiring quality learning but also in actualizing the potentialities of learners.

I

Introduction

ODL is a renaissance in the modern education system. It imparts education not only to able or affording learners but has also opened a new or open

education arena that is free for all categories of learners. Thus, it has placed a new challenge before conventional education system. Apart from this, it can play a vital role in spreading education to the unreached transcending the barriers of age and geographical boundary.

Today, the need for an alternative mode of learning is increasingly felt and as a result, plenty of prospective questions have emerged in the field of open learning. However, in keeping the gravity of the questions, some are given importance with the view of searching the causes of choosing the alternative mode of learning.

The cardinal questions in this context are- can education provide bread and butter? Can education preserve the values in society? These two questions are considered important in the present scenario of education. The second question is significant, because it is the crux of education system. It can be considered that a good or educated man may not earn bread and butter if the selected programme / course is not viable or practically provided by any of the systems.

Now, the crucial question is, what type of education do we impart or receive to make our life fit for survival? Of course, both are equally pertinent but the essential point is that only one particular effect of education has become a threat to education itself. To explain the concept of double effect in education, we can take a hypothesis; student 'x' has passed matriculation, H.S. B.A. degree, M.A. degree etc. 'X' has easily passed his/her education days, but now time has come to 'X' that he/she needs to earn money or make his/her life self dependent. If he/she can manage, it can be viewed without any hesitation that education has double effect, but if he/she is unable, the question will be complex or serious. Because, it can be a threat to our society, which is palpable. Therefore, we search such type of education in the present context, which is viable or has double effect or benefit. Now, time has come to explore and examine the alternative possibility of education, which can help learners not only in the acquisition of learning but also in the practical field to become self-dependent by engaging different kinds of self-employed activities.

II**Emergence of Open and Distance Learning**

According to Perraton, 'Open learning' as an "Organised educational activity, based on the use of teaching materials, in which constraints on study are minimised either in terms of access or of time and place, methods of study or any combination of these." (Perraton, 1997)

Mackenzie, Postgate and Scupham define open learning thus,

1. Such systems are designed to offer opportunities for part-time study, for learning at a distance and for innovations in the curriculum. They are intended to allow access to wider section of adult population, to enable students to compensate for lost opportunities in the past or to acquire new skills and qualifications for the future. Open learning systems aim to redress social or educational inequality and to offer opportunities not provided by conventional colleges or

universities. (Mackenzie, Postgate, & Scupham, 1975)

The first Open University in the world was established in England in the year 1969. This university in a real sense brought about a revolution to education age giving education a new dimension, launching different programmes based on information technology. In India, the first Open University started in Andhra Pradesh in 1982. It was renamed as Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University in 1992. This was established by an Act of State Legislature on August 26, 1982. At present, there are fourteen open universities in India including one National Open University, i.e., Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU). In Assam, the Krishna Kanta Handiqui State Open University was established under the provision of the Act, 2005 enacted by the Govt. of Assam & published in the Assam Gazette (extraordinary) dt 29/9/05. The university started functioning with the joining as its first vice-chancellor with w.e.f. 11th December, 2006. The motto of the university is '*Education Beyond Barriers*' of age, academic background and geographical boundaries.

Presently, there are two types of distance learning institutes in India, a) Open universities and b) Institutes or directorates of correspondence course/ Distance Education.

The names of the Open University in India can be presented in a tabular form:

S.No	Name of the Open University	Year of establishment	Place
1.	Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University	1982	Hyderabad, AP
2.	Indira Gandhi National Open University	1985	New Delhi
3.	Kota Open University	1987	Kota, Rajasthan
4.	Nalanda Open University	1987	Patna, Bihar
5.	Yashwantrao Chawan Maharashtra Open University	1989	Nasik, Maharashtra
6.	Madhya Pradesh Bhoj Open University	1992	Bhopal, MP
7.	Dr. Baba Saheb Ambedkar Open University	1994	Ahmedabad, Gujarat
8.	Tamil Nadu Open University	2002	Chennai, Tamilnadu
9.	Karnataka State Open University	1996	Mysore, Karnataka
10.	Netaji Subhas Open University	1997	Kolkata, west Bengal
11.	Uttar Pradesh Rajarshi Tandon Open University	1999	Allahabad, UP
12.	Pt. Sundarlal Sharma Open University	2005	Bilaspur, Chattisgarh
13.	Uttaranchal State Open University	2006	Haldwani, Uttaranchal

14	Krishna Kanta Handiqui State Open University	2005	Guwahati, Assam
15	Odisha State Open University	2015	Sambalpur, Odisha

The Open Universities in India had launched several technical and professional programmes /courses that include Computer Science, Management, Medical Science, Engineering, Tourism, Library Science, General and Applied Electronics, Horticulture among others.

The Open Universities use self-learning materials for learners. And some open universities use radio and audio-video programmes as well as regular counseling facilities for the learners at the study centers. Almost all open universities use assignments, and a few have strong student support services. Here, IGNOU has been playing an important role using communication technology in diverse ways. The use of media and technology includes audio-video, radio-television and teleconferencing, radio phone-in interactive counseling,

Gyan Darshan, Gyan Vani, and virtual campus initiative.

The main objective of these Open Universities is to provide educational opportunities to adult learners who do not receive or miss out on the opportunities of higher education.

Characteristics of Distance Education

Four characteristics of Distance and open learning as visualised by Rowntree (Rowntree, 1992) are as mentioned below:

- Depending on one's interest, a learner has the opportunity of finding a programme tailored to his or her needs at a reasonable price.
- The learner receives the opportunity whenever he/she wants it, wherever he/she wants it, and at his/her pace.
- The learner would be able to set his/her own objectives,

choose the content and sequence of programme as well as decide when and how he or she would be assessed.

- The learner would also be able to decide how he/she wants to learn –e.g., with others or on one's own, from books or from videos, with the emphasis on theory or practice and also who would help him/her in a suitable manner.

Besides these characteristics mentioned above, we can explore more:

- Non-restrictive admissions
- Multipoint entry
- No age and qualification restrictions
- No attendance restriction
- Teaching at a distance in a non-contiguous manner
- No restrictions on subject combinations for a particular degree
- Credit accumulation
- Learner autonomy

The various Models of Distance Education can also be mentioned such as:

- **Correspondence model:** Print is the only medium in this system of education. In some cases typed or xerox materials are also used. In this system, teachers and learners have no face-to-face contact. Here, there is very little scope for interaction between the teacher and the learner.
- **Multi-media model:** Here also print, audio type, video type, computer-based learning and interactive videodisk are used for learners.
- **Tele-learning model:** In this model, audio-video teleconferencing and audio graphic communication are used for learners.
- **The flexible learning model:** In this model, interactive multimedia, internet based access to e-resources and computer mediated communication (CMM) are used as media for learners.

III

Conventional Education System versus Open and Distance Learning system

Here, we can see the possibility of becoming more viable and flexible between Conventional Education System (CES) and Open and Distance Learning System. (OES). Besides, we find out the drawbacks of the two from the angle of its importance in the present context. In conventional education system, we often talk of qualitative education rather than quantitative. Conventional education system always gives utmost emphasis on 'quality'. However, the significant point is that we cannot easily assess education in this system. Education is not free for all in this system. While in the open and distance learning system, we see a contrasting picture. None is deprived of education if he or she is qualified up to a minimum standard. However, it is not the case that quality is compromised. ODL system not only places importance on quantity of learners but also equally lays emphasis upon quality of learning. Therefore, the main objective of education, education is for all, is not maintained in the conventional education system.

Now, the present burning problem around the globe is unemployment. Classroom teaching alone cannot be

the sole way to uproot the problem. Although, it is a well-defined thought or saying that education is the panacea of all problems, still we see its dark sides. The palpable question among youth is: what shall we do after successful completion of education? Here, education itself is a barrier of education. Now, we can compare both the systems.

Conventional education system ought to introduce such type of courses so that students after the successful completion of the respective programmes can begin their professional life. Therefore, it is the need of the hour for the education system. Moreover, syllabus should be made 'interdisciplinary' so that students can easily avail optional courses in order to choose their way of life. Otherwise, if the interdisciplinary approach is ignored the on-going education system will be irrelevant or impractical in the long run. Therefore, ODL system has become the chief contender of CES.

The ODL system has introduced many professional courses in order to enable all types of learners to choose their interest. In keeping this positive side of ODL system in the present

context, it can be said that in comparison to CES, learners in ODL system can easily access the courses. Even service holders also can take admission in the programme of ODL either to fulfil the desire towards learning or to upgrade the career. Therefore, it is an exception in case of learning.

In the real sense, it has brought out a revolutionary change in the field of education, embracing all categories of learners irrespective of age, educational background, and geographical boundaries. Thus, this kind of advantage is not available in CES. In this context, we can take example of IGNOU. IGNOU has at present eleven lakh students and eighteen hundred study centers. It gives us an idea that ODL has a dominant role to play not only with regard to spreading education far and wide but in case of discovering multifarious doors of education, showing immense possibilities of engagements in different fields for prospective learners.

- Can we think of quality education in ODL? This question can be analysed from two directions. In terms of the

positive aspect, it can be viewed that ODL has undoubtedly opened new dimension to education system discovering the multidimensional aspects of education and providing the opportunity of learning for all categories of learners, which is not plausible for CES. While in terms of its negative aspect, it is important to ask ourselves whether we are truly acquiring proper education through ODL.

Education is the center of gravity of human life. We want such type of education, which not only provides livelihood but also gives us the essence of education. The essence of education is nothing but the all-round development of human beings, which helps us to run our life smoothly. Now, the important question is, can distance education cover the main objectives of education? The answer can be negative from one standpoint that is, if the entry of learners is not restricted, can it be possible to maintain quality education?

Here, an example can be cited from an experience. Once, I was an invigilator of IGNOU, Guwahati University Centre (Assam), there I saw that some examinee possessing higher ranks in service had used unfair means. Therefore, I had personally questioned them, if they were really enjoying exam as a learner or appearing exam just for its sake. If such situations prevail, then can we think of a quality or value education in ODL? Again, it leads to another serious question: can distance education be the model of society for the welfare of humankind?

Therefore, it can be maintained that professional programme alone cannot satisfy human curiosity although we are unknowingly entering into a consumerist world. Although, great philosophers like Plato and Aristotle advocated different camps with regard to education their main attempt to assess education was only for the well-being of man. It is

indeed true that whatever be the education system, it must be for the betterment of society or human kind. Here, I am not exclusively commenting on this type of education. I am simply mentioning the shortcomings of the two systems. Thus, our aim should be, how can we innovate the systems for the benefit of learners? According to UNESCO (2002) "DE (Distance Education) has the potential to generate new patterns of teaching and learning and there is evidence that it can lead to innovation in mainstream education, and may even have effects beyond the realm of education itself. It is also believed that DE, therefore, plays a particularly decisive role in the creation of the global knowledge based society and will be an important element of future education and training systems that have significant pedagogical, economic and organizational implications."

IV**Conclusion**

ODL system can play a vital role bringing out the potentialities of learners in different areas. Just as clay can be easily shaped and moulded into different forms, similarly distance and open learning can shape and also be a torchbearer or guiding spirit for bringing into fore the dormant desires of learning in distant learners. Here, two success stories can be mentioned of the ODL system, which lies in unfolding the windows of knowledge and skills.

A) This is the story of visually impaired girl, Sonali Pal from Jharkhand. When Sonali was dejected owing to discrimination and her disability. Thus, she took admission in IGNOU's Bachelor of Arts programme and successfully completed it. Following her degree, she got selected for the South Asian Regional Leadership Skill Development programme for disabled woman and now she not only supports herself but is also involved in spreading awareness among the disabled woman. Besides,

she also completed Master's degree in Sociology from IGNOU."

B) Another example is that of "two friends Keshvandra Kumar and Ravikant Singh who after passing out of H.S. level joined clerical service in Indian railways to support their family. Both of them were posted in remote areas in West Bengal and while doing their jobs had enrolled themselves in B.A. Programme of IGNOU. The impressive part of their story is that they had cleared civil service exam. Keshvandra Kumar secured 45th rank and Ravikant Singh 77th rank. (Taken from the 2nd Foundation lecture delivered by Prof. Swarj Basu, Director, DEC, IGNOU, New Delhi, at K.K.Handiqui State Open University, Guwahati, Assam)

Thus, it is evident that people recognise the importance of the alternative or sustainable system of education. Here, the emergence of ODL might be one of the platforms to strengthen and address the issues of the burning problems such as quality education, dropout tendency of learners, gender disparity, and unemployment. Hence, it has immense

scope to flourish as a new platform to discover the potentialities of learners.

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