

Ten Years of Indian Journal of Open Learning

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Abstract: *The paper analyses the contribution of Indian Journal of Open learning (IJOL) from volume one to ten. In ten volumes, IJOL has published 203 articles and 75 book reviews. Authors from twenty countries (excluding India) and 17 states of India have contributed papers regularly to sustain this publication. Analysis reveals that over the years IJOL has emerged as one of the scholarly publications in Open and Distance learning:*

Introduction

Periodicals disseminate new ideas and help the literature of a subject field grow by reporting research, critical opinions and reviews. As such they are considered as the lifeblood of research in any discipline. Periodicals are of two types: (i) Primary Periodicals – that are “mainly intended to be the major vehicles for publication of papers on the theory and practice of a discipline and are supposed to report the results of significant research findings in the particular field” (Anand, 1990:1) and (ii) Secondary Periodicals – that normally report about publications in primary periodicals, e.g. indexing periodicals and abstracting periodicals. The functions of primary periodicals are to:

- Make public the results of original research to the widest possible audience: provide a permanent record or archive of researches, which have been carried out;
- Enable an independent scientist or technologist or researcher to establish the fact that he/she was the first person to make a particular discovery, the process being formally known as the assignment of priority; and
- Ensure a guaranteed standard of quality in the papers accepted for publication, this being achieved through the refereeing system (Royal Society, 1981).

According to Garfield (1977) new journals emerge in a discipline due to five major reasons: “(1) undue delay in publication by established journals; (2) selection policies which force the ‘out’ group to establish initially ‘minor’ journals which quickly grow into major journals; (3) growth of new specialties which are not easily accommodated in the existing scope of established journals; (4) nationalistic or other political reasons which have little bearing on scientific merit; and (5) the growth of science in general” (p. 126). The specialized periodicals report research activities and therefore play a significant role in dissemination of knowledge in a particular discipline. For a discipline to be recognized as mature, research in its core domain of knowledge is highly necessary.

Research literature of a discipline “contains the record of the culture of the discipline. They contain the specialized knowledge and examples of research procedures that are the unique responsibility of the system. It is by means of them that a discipline maintains its heritage” (Robbins, 1973). According to Keegan (1990) distance education is “a distinct field of educational research and training within the discipline of education” (p. 7). Holmberg (1996) while discussing the character and scope of distance education in 1990 confirms his earlier (1986) view of distance education as a discipline in its own right” (p. 20). “The foundation of a number of academic journals and the development of research in sub-fields like course design, economics of distance education, student support services, and media in distance education” (Keegan, 1990:9) in the 1980s have resulted in an exponential growth of literature in distance education. By 1994 there were about 16 periodicals and 20 newsletters catering to the needs of the specialists in the field. Of these only six are referred journals and *Indian Journal of Open Learning* (IJOL) is one of them (Harry, 1994). In this paper an attempt has been made to critically analyse the contributions of IJOL to the field of distance education in the last ten years.

Indian Journal of Open Learning

The IJOL was started in 1992 by the Indira Gandhi Open University to meet the national aspirations of democratizing higher education through research, promotion and propagation of distance education. The IJOL has been setup with specific objectives to:

- Disseminate information about theory, practice and research in the field of open and distance education, including correspondence and multimedia education, educational technology and communication, independent and experiential learning and other innovative forms of education; and
- Provide a forum for debate about these areas of concern, particularly for India, allowing reasonable space to contributions from outside the country.

Initially the journal started as a half-yearly publication with two issues in a year. In 1977, a joint issue of volume six was published and from the seventh volume, it is being published three times in a year in January, May and September. As such 23 issues have been released for the 10 volumes since its origin in 1992. Over the years six special/thematic issues have been published as follows:

Vol. 4, issue 2, Decennial Number

Vol. 7, issue 1, Networked and Collaborative Learning

Vol. 9, issue 1, Research and Quality in Open and Distance Education

Vol. 9, issue 2, Professional Development in Distance Education

Vol. 9, issue 3, Web-based Education and Training

Vol. 10, issue 3, Globalization and Open and Distance Education

A detailed volume wise description of the number of articles and book reviews are included in table-1. For a period between volume 6 and 9, the journal published three sections: Articles, Communications and Book Reviews. However, the distinction of articles and communications was blurred. In the ten volumes, IJOL has published a total fo 203 articles and 75 book reviews with an average of 20 articles and more than seven book reveiws per volume. The Decennial number special issue had just one article on cost effectiveness of open universities.

Table-1: Number of papers and book reviews published in IJOL

Volume No.	Issue No.	Articles	Communications	Book Reviews
1	1	7		1
	2	6		2
2	1	9		2
	2	8		2
3	1	10		1
	2	6		2
4	1	7		2
	2	1		
5	1	8		3
	2	9		2
6	1 & 2	9	2	3
7	1	7	5	5
	2	4	3	5
	3	5	3	2
8	1	6	5	3
	2	5	4	5
	3	3	6	5
9	1	7	5	4
	2	6	6	7
	3	7	5	6
10	1	10		4
	2	9		4
	3	10		5
Total	23 issues	159	44	75

Authorship Pattern

The authorship pattern of articles in IJOL is depicted in table 2. The table shows that single authors have contributed 69.45 per cent of papers, whereas multiple authored

papers constitute 30.55 per cent. This finding is almost similar to the earlier study by Mishra (1997), which reported that distance education being a social science, authors mostly prefer to work individually. At the same time, it was also pointed that as application of technology grows, multiple authored papers too would increase as in *American Journal of Distance Education*. Five authors from four different countries contributed one paper each for the special issue on Web-based Education and Training. This shows the power of communication technologies in doing collaborative work.

Table-2: Authorship Pattern

Number of Author(s)	Frequency	Percentage
One	141	69.45
Two	46	22.66
Three	13	6.4
Four	2	0.98
Five	1	0.49
Total	203	100

Leading Contributors

For the 203 papers published in IJOL, there were 213 unique authors. Table 3 shows the leading contributors of IJOL (with three or more papers published during the last ten years). Similarly, 30 unique book reviewers have patronized the journal. Table-4 shows the book reviewers who have contributed two or more reviews.

Table-3: Leading Contributors

Name (Country)	Number of Papers
Sanjaya Mishra (India)	5
Andrar Chole Nyondo (PNG)	3
B. N. Koul (India)	3
B. K. Passi (India)	3
Chandra Gunawardena (Sri Lanka)	3
Godorn Burt (UK)	3
H.C.S. Rathore (India)	3
J. McDonalad (Australia)	3
J.S. Mirza (Hong Kong)	3
K. Murugan (India)	3
Madhu Parhar (India)	3
P. R. Ramanujam (India)	3
Robert M. Corderoy (Australia)	3
S. Kishore (India)	3
S. Reushle (Australia)	3
S. V. S. Choudhury (India)	3
Suresh Garg (India)	3

Table-4: Leading Book Reviewers

Name	Number of Reviews
Sanjaya Mishra	11
P. R. Ramanujam	9
M.V. Lakshmi Reddy	4
R.C. Sharma	4
Anurag Saxena	3
Gopinath Pradhan	3
H.P. Padhy	3
Prabir K. Biswas	3
V. Ranga	3
Ashok K. Gaba	2
V.S. Prasad	2

Country-wise Distribution of Papers

For the analysis of country-wise distribution, the first author's country was taken into consideration. Table-5 depicts that 66 per cent papers came from India and the rest 34 per cent from all over the world from 20 different countries. This clearly shows that the second objective of the journal has been reasonably met in the last ten years. From the Indian contributions, 56 per cent came from authors in Delhi. However, all the Indian contributions came from 17 States and Union Territories of Indian Union. Table-5 also shows the reach of the journal across the country and around the world.

Table-5: Country-wise and State-wise Distribution of Papers

Name of Country/State	Number of Papers
India (66%)	
Andaman and Nicobar	2
Andhra Pradesh	9
Assam	2
Bihar	2
Delhi	75
Gujarat	1
Haryana	1
Karnataka	4
Kerala	2
Madhya Pradesh	3
Maharashtra	1

Punjab	2
Rajasthan	3
Tamilnadu	15
Uttar Pradesh	7
West Bengal	3
Outside India (34%)	
Australia	15
Bangladesh	3
Bhutan	1
Botswana	1
Canada	5
Germany	2
Hong Kong	3
Japan	2
Lesotho	1
New Zealand	1
Nigeria	1
PNG	3
Netherlands	1
Spain	1
Sri Lanka	3
Thailand	1
Turkey	1
UK	8
USA	9
Zimbabwe	1
Total 20 Countries + 17 Indian States & Union Territories	203

Topic-wise Distribution of Papers

Table-6 illustrates the distribution of papers in the modified scheme (Appendix-1) developed by Mishra (1997). Internet and World Wide Web related issues in distance education contributed 8.86 per cent of papers followed by Programme Evaluation and Quality Assurance (8.37%) and Student Support Services (6.89%). More web related publications might have been due to the two special issues on this very important topic. All the sub-groups have been re-arranged into seven major thematic areas in table-7 to show specific trends. In consonance with the current trends in technology, 22.66 per

cent of papers fall in the category of technological issues. The next major chunk of articles is from the groups on learner issues (18.71%). Except for issues related to learning materials (5.91%), all other strands have received reasonable space in IJOL. Statistics in table-6 and 7 also show the research gap and directions for authors/researchers to focus on these areas.

Table-6: Topic-wise Distribution of Papers

Sl. No.	Topic	Frequency	Percentage
1	Distance education in general	6	2.95
2	Distance education and open learning, open schooling	3	1.47
3	Distance education: Growth and development	6	2.95
4	Distance education in national development	6	2.95
5	Equity, Access and Globalization	11	5.41
6	Learner characteristics (Including dropouts)	10	4.92
7	Student learning, workload, study skills	10	4.92
8	Cognition and meta-cognition	–	
9	Student support services	14	6.89
10	Interaction and feedback	4	1.97
11	Study materials: Design and development	8	3.94
12	English for Distance education	3	1.47
13	Learning from media	–	
14	Tele-teaching and learning, networked learning	1	0.49
15	Instructional and communication technologies	7	3.44
16	Computer mediated communication	3	1.47
17	Interactive multimedia, telematics	5	2.46
18	TV, ITV, Teleconference	8	3.94
19	Video conference (2 way)	–	
20	Audio conference, Interactive radio	2	0.98
21	Audiographics	–	
22	Telephone	–	
23	A-V tapes	1	0.49
24	Computer-based training	2	0.98
25	Internet and WWW	18	8.86
26	Management and planning	2	0.98
27	Economics of distance education	3	1.47
28	Programme evaluation and Quality assurance	17	8.37
29	Distance education: Theory and philosophy	4	1.97
30	Distance education research	8	3.94
31	Professional development in distance education	11	5.41
32	Discipline based context	7	3.44
33	— Industry and business	1	0.49
34	— Teacher education	11	5.41
35	Programme description	9	4.43
36	Distance education institutions	2	0.98

Table-7: Major Groups of Subject Coverage

Items in Table 6	Groups	Number of Papers	Percentage	Rank
1-5	Distance education in perspective	32	15.76	III
6-10	Students and their learning	38	18.71	II
11-14	Learning materials and related issues	12	5.91	VII
15-25	Technology issues	46	22.66	I
26-28	Management issues	22	10.83	VI
28-31	Distance education: Theory, research and training	23	11.33	V
32-36	Distance education in practice	30	14.77	IV

Research Methods and Data Collection Techniques

Table-8 indicates the research methods (see Appendix-2) used by distance education researchers. Descriptive method (34.12%) was the major approach adopted in the papers published in IJOL, followed by survey method (18.25%) and conceptual analysis (11.5%). The articles, which used survey, evaluation, experimental and qualitative methods, were further analysed to identify the preferred data collection techniques. Use of questionnaires and psychometric scales was in 82.44 per cent cases (Table-9). The lack of methodological rigor in the articles published is in tune with the discipline's early stage in terms of research (Holmberg, 1986, 1990; Moore, 1985) and the situation is true for other journals as well (Mishra, 1997).

Table-8: Research Methods

Research methods	Frequency	Percentage
Descriptive/Discussion based	86	34.12
Content/Critical/Conceptual analysis	29	11.50
System analysis, design & modelling	7	2.77
Literature review	17	6.74
Historical	9	3.97
Survey	46	18.25
Experimental	15	5.95
Evaluation	15	5.95
Qualitative	28	11.11

Multiple methods used in some papers.

Table-9: Data Collection Techniques

Techniques	Frequency	Percentage
Questionnaires/Scales	46	82.14
Observation	4	7.14
Interview	6	10.71

Reference Characteristics

Bibliographic references are symbols for “a concept, functions as a metaphor for the cognitive content of a specific publication. That is the relationship between the cited document and the concept it symbolizes is metaphoric” (McInnis, 1982: 56). References are also indicators of the scholarliness of a journal (Cline, 1982: 210). Table-10 reveals the reference characteristics of articles published in IJOL. 84.72 per cent of papers have references with only 15.28 per cent without any reference. For the articles with references, the average per article references is 13.02, which is within the average (16+6) per paper estimated by Price (1970) and Avramescu (1980) for scholarly journals in terms of their information content and quality. From an average of 9.27 in the study of volume 1 to 5, IJOL has progressed in its index of scholarliness as is reflected through citation behaviour.³

Table-10: Reference Pattern

Number of references	Frequency	Percentage
Without references	31	15.27
With references	172	84.72
01-05	53	26.10
06-10	39	19.21
11-15	28	13.79
16-20	20	9.85
21-25	12	5.91
26-30	7	3.44
31-35	5	2.46
36-40	1	0.49
41-45	3	1.47
46-50	2	0.98
51-55	–	
56-60	–	
61-65	–	
66-70	1	0.49
71-75	–	
76-80	1	0.49
Mean Score	13.02	

Conclusion

An analysis of the 10 years of IJOL reveals that the journal has sustained itself with the strong institutional support of the publisher — Indira Gandhi National Open University. With contributions from experts/scholars from around the world, the journal has satisfactorily achieved its political mandate to act as a forum for Indian authors with reasonable space for authors outside India. The journal has maintained quality through a refereeing system and the average number of references (13.02) is a proof of its established nature of scholarliness. A trend towards multiple authored paper writing is yet to be seen in IJOL. However, as more and more papers come from the issues related to technology, collaborative works in distance education will also increase. The topic-wise distribution of papers in IJOL shows a balance of contributions from traditional and advanced areas. However, there are still gaps in some areas that are yet to be covered by articles in IJOL. Interestingly, not much work has been reported in the area of design and development of self-learning materials, though it forms the basis of most open and distance learning. The analysis of the 10 years of IJOL, it is hoped, would act as a pointer for readers to evaluate the journal's strength and weaknesses. At the same time, it gives an opportunity for reflective thinking to the editors and the publisher.

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Subject Categories in Distance Education

- 1 Distance education in general
- 2 Distance education and open learning, Open schooling
- 3 Distance education: growth and development
- 3 Distance education in national development
- 5 Equity, Access and Globalization
- 6 Learner characteristics (including dropouts)
- 7 Student learning, workload, study skills
- 8 Cognition and meta-cognition
- 9 Student support services
- 10 Interaction and feedback
- 11 Study materials: Design and development
- 12 English for Distance education
- 13 Learning from media
- 14 Tele-teaching and learning, networked learning
- 15 Instructional and communication technologies
- 16 Computer mediated communication
- 17 Interactive multimedia, telematics
- 18 TV, ITV, Teleconference
- 19 Video conference (2 way)
- 20 Audio conference, Interactive radio
- 21 Audiographics
- 22 Telephone
- 23 A-V tapes
- 24 Computer-based training
- 25 Internet and WWW
- 26 Management and planning
- 27 Economics of distance education
- 28 Programme evaluation and Quality assurance
- 29 Distance education: Theory and philosophy
- 30 Distance education research
- 31 Professional development in distance education
- 32 Discipline based context
- 33 — Industry and business
- 34 — Teacher education
- 35 Programme description
- 36 Distance education institutions

Research Methods

DESCRIPTIVE/DISCUSSION: Articles mainly having descriptions of institutions, programmes, concepts without specific methods per se.

CONTENT/CRITICAL/CONCEPT ANALYSIS: Articles having used specifically the content analysis, critical analysis and discourse analysis techniques dealing with meaning and interpretations of concepts, process, phenomena etc.

SYSTEM ANALYSIS: Articles based on the systems approach and having used the mathematical models and system design procedure.

LITERATURE REVIEW: Stock taking of the areas covered along with analysis and interpretations.

HISTORICAL METHOD: Includes collection, verification and analysis of historical facts and records.

SURVEY METHOD: Research based upon data gathered directly through questionnaires, interviews, etc.

EXPERIMENTAL METHOD: Research in which investigator(s) specify exactly, or control the conditions of the variables.

EVALUATION METHOD: Normally a survey kind of research method with emphasis on measuring or evaluation usefulness or effectiveness.

QUALITATIVE METHOD: Includes articles, which specify 'qualitative method' as such in their methodology part and others that employ more than one methods and techniques to gather and analyse data. Includes case study.

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