

REPORT

Report of Meeting of the Vice Chancellors of State Open Universities on Reforming ODL System in India



Prof. Manjulika Srivastava



Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia
New Delhi, India

Meeting of the Vice Chancellors of State Open Universities on Reforming ODL System in India

***Date: 14 & 15 December 2015
Venue: Sheraton Hotel, New Delhi
Organized by: CEMCA, New Delhi***



***Prof. Manjulika Srivastava
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Participants

1. *Prof. R. B.P. Singh, Vice Chancellor, NOU*
2. *Prof. M. M. Salunke, Vice Chancellor, YCMOU*
3. *Prof. M G Krishnan, Vice Chancellor, KSOU*
4. *Prof. M.P. Dube, Vice Chancellor, UPRTOU*
5. *Prof. Chandrakanta Jeyabalan, Vice Chancellor, TNOU*
6. *Prof. R C Mishra, Representative of Vice Chancellor, UOU*
7. *Prof. Aiach, Representative of Vice Chancellor, NSOU*
8. *Prof. Praveen Jain, Representative of Vice Chancellor, MPBOU*
9. *Prof. Arupjyoti Chowdhary, Representative of Vice Chancellor, KKHSOU*
10. *Dr. Pandey, Representative of Vice Chancellor, PSSOU*
11. *Prof. Manjulika Srivastava, Representative of Vice Chancellor, IGNOU and Major Resource Person*
12. *Dr. B K Bhadri, DEA, Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD)*
13. *Dr Manas Ranjan Panigrahi, Programme Officer, CEMCA*
14. *Mr. R. Thygarajan, CEMCA*
15. *Ms Monica Sharma, CEMCA*

Vice Chancellors of BRAOU, VMOU and BAOU could not attend the meeting.

Contents

<i>Introduction</i>	5
<i>Highlights of the Report</i>	5
<i>New Agenda, Economic Goals and Open Universities</i>	11
<i>Group Work</i>	17
<i>Sharing of Best Practices</i>	22
<i>Action Plan: The Way Forward</i>	33

Introduction

The programme commenced with the Programme Officer of Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA), Dr. Manas Panigrahi welcoming all the Vice Chancellors (VCs) and their nominees, the MHRD representative and the major resource person Professor Manjulika Srivastava, Professor of Distance Education at IGNOU and presently the Director Academic Coordination Division. He then outlined the objectives of the programme and gave an overview of the two days programme.

Highlights of the Report



Prof. Manjulika Srivastava, at the outset thanked CEMCA for entrusting the task of preparing a *Status Report of the State Open Universities in India*, to her. She complimented the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) and CEMCA for identifying this area of study which she pointed out was indeed the need of the hour- at a time when the focus of the entire world is on imparting of higher education to achieve equitable and inclusive quality education and lifelong learning for all by 2030. She stated that the role of OUs is undeniably gaining importance, as only OUs hold the promise of providing high quality education anywhere anytime at affordable costs. She emphasized that OUs have extended their reach far and wide specially for target groups not served or ignored so far. The ascendance of ICT has increased the potential for the development of OUs for meeting the worldwide

demand for Open Education through Open Educational Resources (OERs), Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), etc. A review of OUs of India at this juncture is required in order to understand where they are heading and how they could be strengthened to meet the challenges of higher education. Also at a time when the Indian government has set the goals of enhancing the Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) to 30 per cent by 2020 and skilling 500 million by 2022, the OUS need to chart their own course to respond to the above mentioned goals of the government. Also, since the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), Government of India is in the process of developing the New Education Policy, this feedback study would be a valuable input to the government for re-engineering the Open and Distance Learning (ODL) system through the new policy initiative.

She expressed her deep gratitude to the VCs of SOUs for providing the necessary information and relevant academic inputs. She also acknowledged the (Distance Education Bureau (DEB) at the University Grants Commission (UGC) for providing the relevant documents for preparing the Report. She also mentioned the invaluable support provided by Prof. B. N. Koul, the internationally acclaimed ODL expert for systematically going through the contents and meticulously editing the document.

Prof. Manjulika Srivastava outlined the contents of the Report which she mentioned were divided into four parts namely: State Open Universities of India: A Review, A Critical Appraisal, Reforming the ODL System in India: Recommendations, Concluding Remarks and Recommendations. She briefly discussed the contents of each of the above mentioned sections (Refer to Appendix I). She then requested the participants to give their feedback on the Report within ten days, specifically with regard to any additions or deletions to be made in the Report.

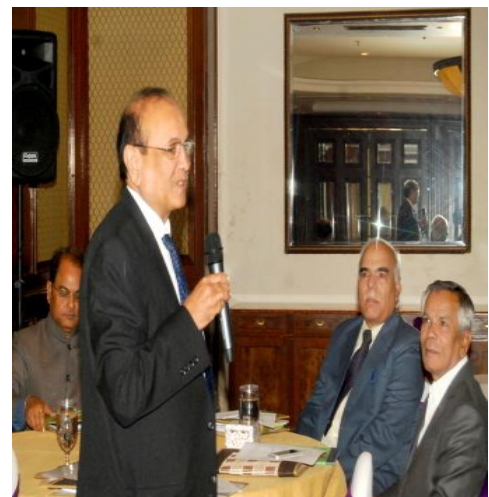
Discussion

There after there was a discussion on the critical issues confronting the system, the following were the issues raised in the discussion forum:



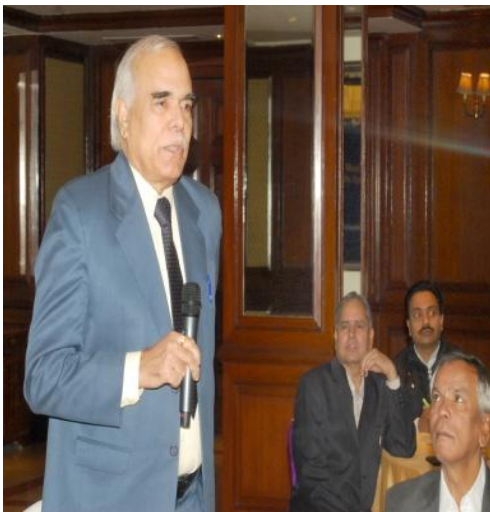
- OUs are not allowed to conduct research degrees which are a major setback for a university because of which they have been reduced to the level of degree colleges. Since teachers at OUs are not allowed to supervise research students, they cannot accumulate and points under this category in the API scores. This is impacting their promotion to the next level for which such activities are mandatory.
- Notwithstanding the vibrant presence of the SOUs, private entities are being allowed to offer the ODL programmes of study and SOUs are placed at par with these institutions in a common group called ODL providers. Also, grouping the Open Universities with the Distance Education Institutes (DEIs) attached to conventional universities is grossly incorrect and illogical. DEIs are structurally very different from OUs as they are not universities.
- The AICTE is not justified in prohibiting technical degree programmes from being offered by OUs. And now today allowing an OU to offer these programmes in the 'Blended Mode', provided the same programme is in offer in the 'face-to-face' mode prior to making of such a request to AICTE. AICTE has no logic in its arguments when it excludes OUs from its approval and rankings.

- OUs are accorded programme-wise recognition by UGC every year which is not necessary for conventional universities. As though, OUs are not governed by their Acts and the Statutes or their Academic Councils Executive Councils etc.
- The Master's of Education programme has abruptly been taken away from the OUs by NCTE without any sound logic for the same.
- LLM program is also facing the same dilemma because the Bar Council of India has disallowed OUs from offering it.
- There is no representation of the ODL system in any meetings conducted by Apex bodies or by other fora organized for developing policies for the Higher Education system. Therefore the points of view of the ODL providers are never discussed nor reflected in the policy documents. The recent example is that of the Choice Based Credit System (CBCS). The CBCS for the ODL system has not been worked out by the UGC.
- The issue of not receiving development grants from MHRD ever since the erstwhile DEC was dissolved and its authority transferred to UGC has not been resolved. This has put the OUs in disarray and has affected their qualitative growth and expansion and hampered their adoption and integration of ICT in their operations; development of SLMs; expansion of support services etc.
- It was also pointed out that even though accreditation has been made mandatory by UGC and an essential prerequisite for getting funding from the government, none of the OUs can be accredited within the stipulated period i.e. by the end of this year as NAAC does not have the parameters to accredit ODL institutions including OUs.
- Another very crucial and vexed issue plaguing the OUs is that of employability of their learners. Normally the private sector



and also the government/ public sector are not willing to recruit learners who have obtained their awards through distance mode.

- Yet another issue is that of ODL learners are not allowed to participate in sports activities conducted by conventional universities or by Association of Indian Universities.
- OUs are not allowed to offer any online programmes even though online education is becoming the norm at Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).
- OUs are not permitted to launch any new programme without permission of DEB of UGC which proving to be a major hurdle. This is in conflict of interest with the State government that expects the SOU to introduce a particular programme immediately which cannot be done so easily.
- In three years since Distance Education Council (DEC) was dissolved and shifted to UGC, the OUs are pushed to the margins as they have never been invited by the UGC for any discussion has taken place to redress their issues.



Dr BK Bhadri, the representative from MHRD addressed some of the issues raised by the participants. He mentioned that the New Education Policy (NEP) was in its final stages and it would address most the issues raised in this forum with the introduction of OERs and MOOCs, online methods of education will be advocated.

Further the creation of Distance Education Council of India (DECI) will iron out all the major problems that the ODL system is facing today. He also mentioned that the DECI Bill could not be presented before the Parliament because the NEP was yet to be unveiled. Also he was

hopeful that many of the recommendations made in the Report for strengthening the system would be included in the DECI Bill.

He also informed the house that the UGC had formulated New Regulations for ODL which are being thoroughly examined by the MHRD and that they have been circulated to all the bureaus of the Ministry for vetting and comment.

He also clarified the position of the MHRD with regard to the status of funding to SOUs. He mentioned that the UGC has agreed to waive off requirement of 12B Regulation and will hereafter not insist on 12B status of OUs to be eligible for these grants. MHRD is also in the process of developing a new mechanism for release of grants to SOUs but during the next financial year.

He also stated that MHRD has taken proactive steps and had informed NAAC to develop a separate format for evaluating ODL providers.

He advised all present to write to the Chief Secretaries of their States, informing them that the degrees obtained from SOUs are not different for those offered by conventional universities. Communication pertaining to equivalence of degrees of SOUs with degrees of conventional universities may be sent to the Public Service Commission of the State. This would definitely help to erase the biases prevalent against the learners of OUs. Another way out was to sign an MOU with CEMCA being an international organization with an international standing. Already with TNOU, OSOU and UOU have done it and there is a pending request from MPBOU.

New Agenda, Economic Goals and Open Universities

Prof Manjulika Srivastava gave an overview of the current trends in the world by highlighting the increase in demand for higher education against the backdrop of globalization and the development of knowledge-based economy. She also mentioned that the demand for higher education has also arisen because of changing global demographic trends. A tidal wave of young and not-so-young people is seeking higher education. With one of



the youngest populations in the world, India is projected to have 64 per cent of its likely population in the 15-59 age-bracket by 2021. A fact that is regarded as a demographic dividend, as it gives India the potential to become a global production hub as well as a large consumer of goods and services. India will remain a young nation and the largest contributor to the global workforce over the next few decades compared to the rapidly ageing population in the Western countries including China, owing to its one-child policy (recently modified). To achieve this, skill-and competency-based education relevant to the 21st century and knowledge era needs to be provided to the masses to convert India into the largest talent pool in the world. Therefore the MHRD is making concerted efforts to create a skilled workforce to meet the global economic needs. The Government of India has therefore set a target to impart the necessary skills to 500 million people by 2022, in line with its forecast of a significant requirement of skilled manpower over the next decade. She also stated that in the next 20 years we will need many more mass providers of higher education as skilled

and knowledgeable workforce requires even working adults to go back to higher education for re-training and re-skilling. The MHRD is already on the path to restructuring of higher education with its initiative for developing a New Education Policy by 2016 and expanding the higher education sector in all its modes of delivery so as to increase the GER to 30 per cent by 2020.

She also mentioned that there is a significant skills gap, with demand for employable and industry-ready people which is outstripping the supply. The OUs must take up the challenge by introducing programmes and courses which on one hand impart skill and training adequate enough for employability and on the other also promote more entrepreneurs. Besides having foundational skills like literacy and numeracy and knowledge in areas such as language, arts, mathematics and science, but they also need competencies like critical thinking, problem-solving, persistence, collaboration, curiosity and initiative. Changes in the labour market have heightened the need for all individuals, and not just a few, to have these skills mentioned above. In countries around the world, economies are run on creativity, innovation and collaboration. Skilled jobs are more and more centred on solving unstructured problems and effectively analyzing information. In addition, technology is increasingly substituting for manual labour and being infused into most aspects of life and work. The shift in skill demand has exposed a problem in skill supply: more than a third of global companies reported difficulties filling open positions in 2014, owing to shortages of people with key skills. She quoted a survey undertaken by the Manpower Group by interviewing more than 37,000 employers in 42 countries in the first quarter of 2014 and found that on average 36% reported having difficulty filling jobs. To uncover the skills that meet the needs of a 21st-century marketplace, the World Education Forum (WEF) in collaboration with Boston Consulting Group conducted a meta-analysis of research about 21st-century skills in primary and secondary education. They

distilled the research into 16 skills in three broad categories: foundational literacies, competencies and character qualities:

“Foundational literacies represent how students apply core skills to everyday tasks. These skills serve as the base upon which students need to build more advanced and equally important competencies and character qualities. This category includes not only the globally assessed skills of literacy and numeracy, but also scientific literacy, ICT literacy, financial literacy and cultural and civic literacy. Acquisition of these skills has been the traditional focus of education around the world. Historically, being able to understand written texts and quantitative relationships was sufficient for entry into the workforce. These Competencies describe how students approach complex challenges. For example, critical thinking is the ability to identify, analyze and evaluate situations, ideas and information in order to formulate responses to problems. Creativity is the ability to imagine and devise innovative new ways of addressing problems, answering questions or expressing meaning through the application, synthesis or repurposing of knowledge. Communication and Collaboration involve working in coordination with others to convey information or tackle problems. Competencies such as these are essential to the 21st-century workforce, where being able to critically evaluate and convey knowledge, as well as work well with a team, has become the norm. Character qualities describe how students approach their changing environment. Amid rapidly changing markets, character qualities such as persistence and adaptability ensure greater resilience and success in the face of obstacles. Curiosity and initiative serve as starting points for discovering new concepts and ideas. Leadership and social and cultural awareness involve constructive interactions with others in socially, ethically and culturally appropriate ways”.

She emphasised that in order to survive in the knowledge era that is driven by rapidly changing, technology-mediated world, learners must possess the above

mentioned employable skills. With the expansion of the manufacturing base in India the rate of savings are likely to go up and thereby the investments. In order for the “*Make in India*” campaign to succeed, there will be a need to make our workforce more competent and more skilled. All higher education institutions (HEIs) can give fillip to this campaign by providing skill oriented and competency based courses along with a mechanism for recognizing prior learning and certifying the same. As of now most HEIs including OUs are offering traditional conventional programmes with very few innovative and skill oriented programmes. The curriculum, as of now, is mostly past directed and present oriented. There is nil to negligible element of futuristic, out of the box orientation in the curriculum. As a result, a learner may get a degree and do well in his/her profession but his/her qualifications are not adequate enough to be applied in open market where he/she can generate employment for himself/herself or others on his/her own. Therefore, there is a need for curriculum to be progressive, application and skill oriented so that the knowledge gained can be actually applied to the world of work. OUs need to revisit all their programmes and modify the curricula in tune with the industry's requirement. Also the MHRD should be made to realize that the ODL system in general and the OUs in particular can play an important role and bridge the gap by offering degree programmes in professional, technical and skill development areas.

The MHRD has developed an educational framework to assess and recognize competences gained outside formal learning and gain credit on-demand from various institutions that would be aggregated and would lead to acquisition of award of degrees/diplomas/certificates that can be aligned with the National Skills Qualifications Framework (NSQF) of MHRD. The defining element will be the credit system. All courses should be defined in terms of credits to facilitate mobility of learners between institutions and also to create multi exit points for

the learners. Adoption of choice based credit system (CBCS) should be made mandatory for all HEIs as the CBCS has been designed with the objective of restructuring the courses and incorporating the 21st century skills discussed above, thereby inculcating employable skills in the learners and improving their employability. A separate Board for Prior Learning Assessment may be required to be set up by OUs in order to assess and certify those with necessary skills and competencies. Such a scheme can help the most marginalized sections to effectively take part in the development of the nation, particularly women and the poor living in rural areas. Such a provision could also foster community learning and knowledge sharing that can help communities to develop networks to disseminate and share knowledge in an organized manner. This will create opportunities for building of social capital which is regarded as the missing link in the development equation. This could promote knowledge-based livelihood opportunities and income generation opportunities for the marginalized and OUs can be a tool for this.

To give fillip to the movement of capacity building, ICT based education delivery and certification may be introduced. Development of Open Educational Resources (OERs) and Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) are necessary for furthering the culture of open knowledge by free dissemination/sharing of knowledge with the objective of expanding the access to knowledge to all types of learners pursuing non-formal, formal and informal education. Through promotion and adoption of MOOCs, Universities can further democratize educational opportunities to the masses and foster lifelong learning, upskill the workforce and scale up the quantum of knowledge workers. Such steps will help in making a qualitative change in our educational system and can steer the OUs in a new direction by completely recasting distance learning. For the integration of OERs and MOOCs in the teaching-learning process, HEIs need to develop mechanisms for certifying students based on their learning from OERs

and MOOCs with the vast amount of free and open source content available on the internet and the limited degree of quality control, it is necessary for the HEIs to aggregate and curate digital content for their learners in the form of Repositories. These repositories should be expert reviewed and carefully tagged content needs to be uploaded on them.

She concluded her presentation by stating that the MHRD is probably trying to concretize all the above mentioned initiatives in the form of the New Education Policy that will be launched shortly and which would govern the Higher Education system of the country for the next two- three decades.



Group Work

Group activities were conducted in the following areas:-

- **Curriculum** (Skills and competencies; ICT in programme design and delivery (OER, Online and blended learning, mobile learning and MOOCs);
- **Learner Support**;
- **Accreditation** (accreditation of OUs and their programmes; Standards and regulations; and Certification of prior learning); and
- **Staff Development**

The major resource person Prof. Manjulika Srivastava initiated the discussion on all the above mentioned themes by highlighting the major issues and raising some pertinent questions to facilitate the discussion.

Curriculum

Issues

- Two thirds of the skill pool is unemployable
- 21 million are enrolled in HE yet GER is about 22%
- OUs to devise courses to impart skills and training for employability & entrepreneurship
- Skill and competency based education to convert India into the largest talent pool in the world
- To give fillip to the Make in India campaign
- Adoption of Choice Based Credit System



Questions

- Have OUs identified the skill requirement of the region?
- How many skill & competency based programs are being offered?

- Have these programs been developed in collaboration with industry?
- Are these programs aligned to the NSQF?
- What is the instructional designed adopted?
- What is the enrollment in these programs?
- What are the measures adopted to encourage enrollment in skill & competency enhancing programs?
- Have OUs adopted CBCS?

Recommendations

- OUs agree to implement CBCS as early as possible
- There should be a working group to work out CBCS for ODL system.
- Skill-based programmes must be developed in consultation with the industry.
- Each School at the OU will identify and develop its own skill based programmes
- Each OU will enter into a MOU with National Skill Development Council and NSDA of the State for aligning all the skill based programmes with NSQF
- The curriculum framed by the Sector Skill Councils for different skill based programmes shall be adapted by the OUs at certificate/diploma/higher level
- Values and ethics should also be an integral component of the curriculum.
- BPP should be delinked from OUs.
- OU must have an OER-Policy and ensure free licensing policy for use of materials.
- All materials (SLMs) to be converted into e-content
- E- content to be converted into OERs
- OUs should have their own e-platform
- All OERs should be placed in an e-gateway to managed by an apex body

- MOOCs to be developed by all OUs in relevant areas and launched on their e-platforms.

Learner Support

Issues

- OUs cast in a mold created three decades ago when ICT were not available in the education sector
- Still following two/three tier approach of learner support
- Methods of evaluation outdated – Tests learner skill to memorize concepts

Questions

- What media and technology are being used for learner support - providing the last mile connectivity?
- What mechanism is used to identify learners with special needs?
- How OUs are providing support to the learners with special needs?
- How OUs propose to increase the GER?
- What are the mechanisms adopted for student tracking?
- Do OUs provide customized/personalized support services to their learners?

Recommendations

- OUs should have a call centre to address queries and grievances of learners.
- Central databases to be developed and linked to the A/IVRS
- OUs should develop FAQs and place them on their websites.
- Kiosks should be provided at all central places including regional centres.
- Use of social media to provide updates to the learners
- Students tracking should be done to improve retention rate.
- Each university should maintain an alumni database

- Separate database of differently abled learners to be maintained and assistive technology should be provided to them.
- Barrier free campuses should be set up at HQs, Regional Centres and Study Centres.
- Private study should be totally banned.
- Provision of E-tutors should be made and personalized online counselling should be provided.

Staff Development

Questions

- Does the OU have well defined paths for promotion and career advancement for its faculty and staff?
- Is it mandatory for faculty and staff to undergo training and retraining?
- How does the OU encourage research and extension activities?
- Does the OU have any mechanism for identifying and rewarding best practices?

Recommendations

- Mandatory induction of new staff – starter kits for new entrants.
- Sharing of experiences – visits to ODL institutions & regulatory bodies, attending conferences/seminars, academic exchange programs
- CEMCA to develop MOOC for academic counsellors.
- Upskilling of faculty and staff on new ICT applications should be undertaken at all OUs.
- Introduction of Management Information System (MIS) for effective monitoring of performance of faculty and staff may be instituted.
- Accreditation

Accreditation

Issues

- Accreditation is mandatory for all HEIs
- Adhoc regulatory body – DEB
- Confusion regarding accreditation of OUs
- Recognition of awards of OUs
- Equivalence of OU credentials with those from conventional Universities
- Implementation of RPL (Recognition of prior learning)

Questions

- What is the status regarding accreditation of OUs?
- What is the status of receipt of developmental assistance from MHRD?
- Do OUs have any evaluation framework to assess RPL?
- Do OUs have any system to assign credit value to competencies gained at other institutions?

Recommendations

- OUs to strengthen Centre for Internal Quality Assurance (CIQA).
- MHRD to write to NAAC to have distinct guidelines for accreditation of OUs.
- OUs may seek help from COL/CEMCA for self-appraisal.
- DEC's Scheme of Accreditation of Open Universities may be circulated for comments and feedback.
- OUs should adopt and accept credit transfer amongst themselves to begin with.
- OUs to evolve appropriate mechanisms for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL).

Sharing of Best Practices

The OUs were asked to share their best practices at this forum. Sharing of experiences was a beneficial exercise and also motivational to all.

Best Practices at Yashwantrao Chavan Maharashtra Open University (YCMOU)

Focusing on Skills and Competencies

- The YCMOU has collaborated with various Pharmaceutical Industries (LUPIN, CIPLA, WhOCKHARDT) and other industries (Tata Motors, ABB, Mahindra & Mahindra, Atlas Copco, Crompton Greaves, Perfect Circle, Ukay Metals) wherein the students registered for various skills/ competencies related academic programs undergo hands-on training activities.
- Collaboration with Foundation (Napate Foundation, Pune) and Institute (YIT, Pune) for imparting skill and competencies related academic programs.
- The theory component of the academic program is taught with the help of printed books as well as online academic support material.
- The program fee is paid by the Company/foundation as well as the students are paid monthly stipend while studying.
- A batch of BBA students is inducted at YCMOU, HQ and RC wherein the students work at various schools/departments of University and RC. In addition to designated course work, the students gain practical working knowledge of the system.
- YCMOU is the only State Open University having Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) for Nashik District at the University Campus.
- A per the mandate of KVK, various training activities are organized for different stakeholders such as practicing farmers, rural & urban youth, extension personnel of state department of agriculture. Such training programs pertain to emerging advances in agriculture, horticulture and animal husbandry.
- Front Line Demonstrations (FLD) of various agricultural activities are arranged with an aim to generate production data, obtaining feedback as well as popularization of technology



Support Services

- Distribution of Study Material (Books) at home address of students by post / courier.
- Support to farmers by conducting On Farming Testing (OFT) to evaluate and modify agricultural technology.
- Social Inclusion by offering various academic programs for special target groups such as minorities students (Urdu Medium), Prisoners, etc.
- The Students can participate in various sports, cultural events, Youth Festival and research festival “Avaishkar”.

ICT in Program Design & Delivery

- Fully Online Admission Process was adopted during AY 2015-16 for all academic programs.
- Status of book delivery schedule is updated and displayed on University website.
- Question-papers are delivered through Secured Remote Paper Delivery (SRPD) system to all examination centers.
- Commissioning of Software of Online Assessment of Answer-books.
- Online payment process for Migration Certificate, Verification of Marks, Transcript, etc.
- Grievance Box Module
- Pre-printed personalized answer-books
- Software Development / Technology Support:
 - Accounts and Finance Software
 - QB preparation and Question-paper generation
 - Online Examination
 - Mobile App for Academic Support
 - Study Centre Management and Approval System
 - Development of MOOCs
 - Discussion Forum
 - Online Assessment
- Program Publicity through “KIOSK”



Staff Development

- Training to staff regarding use of Online Assessment Software
- Training to Regional Centre and Study Centre staff regarding Online Admission Process

Best Practices at Pandit Suderlal Sharma Open University (PSSOU)

Methods of evaluation

Every student appears in the Assignment Test for each subject / paper. Assignment Test is conducted at the nearest centre decided by the Study Center. At the time of Assignment Test students come with study material/books and question paper which has been given to him/her. However, Answer books are given at the time of the Test examination.

All Term- End Examinations are fully Objective type with multiple choice answers; it is examined manually or by computer. There is provision on negative marking on wrong answers at the rate of 25% of the marks assigned to the answer.

Skilled based vocational courses

Graduate programmes (BA/B.Sc./B.Com.) are divided in two modules. First module is non vocational and second module is with vocational courses. Its main objective is to help of students to get jobs. Efforts are going on to align the industry training institutes with the University.

Scheme of Examination

Examination of each subject/ paper is divided into two parts; (1) Assignment Test (TMA) and (2) Term End Examination (TEE). University Academic Council has decided 40:60 marks to TMA & TEE.

Emphasis on Social Networking

Social Networking technologies have significantly improved the learning environment of distance education. University uses SMS alert service and social networking sites like YouTube, Facebook, website etc. for student's welfare and feedback.

Digital India Programme

The University has recently developed a Wi-fi campus.

Online admission and counselling

The University has started online admission for all programmes with M.P. Online Bhopal. This has benefited both the students and the university.

Green campus

The University has 70 acre land. Two ponds have been constructed; installing appropriate equipment to conserve water and promote water waste management systems. In the buildings environment friendly materials have been used and in the design energy conservation has been implemented. The University works on Solar Energy System. University has sent a proposal to CREDA (Chhattisgarh State Renewable Energy Development Agency) for 99 KV Solar panel installations in the campus.

The University's Library is open to all.

Events

Workshops, seminars, lecture series, meetings and cultural events are organized to promote to academic rigour and research. Recently university organized two days national seminars on the subject of "Manas me Vigyan".

Best Practices at UP Rajarshi Tandon Open University (UPRTOU)

Academic Programmes & CBCS

The vision and mission of the University are reflected in the academic programmes being carried out by the University. The human resource objective is pursued through formal curricular activities, directed towards enlarging the knowledge base, developing the natural spirit of enquiry, and refining the analytical skills, intellectual creativity, technical dexterity and professional competence and students. All out efforts have been made to follow an immaculate process in designing and developing a curriculum that would comply with international standards and uniqueness of regional and national demands. UPRTOU offers Ph.D, PG, UG, PG Diplomas, Diplomas, Certificates & Awareness programme. All courses are based on Choice Based Credit System

(CBSC). Professional course offered by university are MBA, MCA, B.Ed, B.Ed (Spl), PGDFM, PGDMM, PGDHRM, PGDPM, PGDEM&FP, PGDRJMC & PGDJMC.

MoU with IIT Bombay

The University has signed an MOU with IIT Mumbai for skill training, LOOC, MOOC will be soon operative for learners free of cost to enhance learner's skill.

MOU WITH Deity NIELIT- University is going to sign an MOU with Department of Electronics & Information Technology NIELIT, Gorakhpur for skill training under Information Security Education and Awareness through Basic, Certificate and Advanced level and also virtual Lab.

Teaching-Learning Process

It is being ensured that the faculty of the university contributed its best to make learning student centric. A very rigorous exercise is done in preparing self-study materials. They are devoted towards holistic development of students are their qualitative progress in terms of learning besides facilitating life-long learning and knowledge management. Some of the notable measures in this regards are as follows:

- Qualitative improvement in lectures and counseling;
- Teaching and learning in Smart class environment;
- Learning aided by Wi-Fi access in some classes;
- Video conferencing whenever needed;
- Learning through extempore, power- point and presentations of projects allocated;
- Teaching through Mobile Education;
- Utilizing Virtual classes;
- Learning in Workshops in specific areas;

Community College

The University has started community college in which various skill based course are being offered by the university mainly Advance Diplomas, Diploma, and certificate course in 62 skill based programme. Some of which are Soil testing, Lac Production, Pearl Culture, Jewelry Designing, e-Commerce, Tourism& Hospitality Management, Fashion Technology, Textile Design & Technology, Interior Design, Nursing, Dairy Development, Service & Hospitality Management,



e-Office Management, Foot were Production Design, Yoga In Modern Life, Sales Management, E Library, Urdu Grammer etc. Many of the new professional/ vocational/ training Diploma and Certificate courses have been designed as add-on courses for students enrolled in degree programmes, while being available to external candidates as well.

ERP

The new ERP-USM has started functioning from 2015 where online admission Examination, Finance and SLM including all the administrative activity are done online. We are moving towards virtual university with smart classes and other ICT based facilities. This will reduce the geographical gap between learner and university.

Evaluation Process and Reforms

Accuracy, confidentiality, transparency and credibility of examination are being ensured. An online and digital system/ platform and necessary software has been developed that will integrate all stages of the examinations such as pre-, - and post- examination stages. Digital certification has been introduced. There has been provided proper mechanism for the redressal of the grievances of the students. Examination system is being reformed to test the ability of students to tackle real situations. Innovation will come from hands-on experience, not from writing essays. Research is given priority. Efforts are being made to link the university with research institutions and to industries to ensure the pursuit of research with a purpose.

New Initiatives

New Centres have been established to make university highly visible in the higher education and research map of India, such as –

1. Centre for Gandhian Thought and Peace Studies
2. Charkha Lab and Kapas Bank
3. Centre for Redemptive Change Study
4. Nehru Studies Centre
5. B R Ambedkar Study Centre on Social Justice
6. The University Innovation Cell (UIC)



Learner Support

In learner support with the use of ICT different sections like SLM, Admission, Counselling, Library, Examination, Placement etc. will work under one roof. Grievance Redressal Cell, Career Counseling & Coaching Cell, Placement Cell, Women's Advisory Board, Student Welfare Cell, Education Awareness Cell, PRO, Prevention of Sexual Harassment Committee, Anti-Ragging Cell, Foreign Students Advisor, Environment Awareness Green Audit, Alumni Cell, Innovation Cell. The University has introduced Online Admissions for all programmes.

Administration and Finance

Steps have been taken to raise the quality of administrative and financial management towards making the system 'user' friendly, time-conscious, cost-efficient, self-critical and term-work oriented, speedily responsive to problem situation, amenable to amenable to intervention-oriented monitoring and imbued with a positive work ethic with the help of a sophisticated software. The accelerated automation and computerization of office and administrative work have been of major help in this regard. Accountable based autonomy is given to 10 Regional Centres to coordinate 654 Study Centres

Staff Development

The teachers are trained in modern pedagogy. They are encouraged to use online material such as MOOCs and TED talks liberally. The system of 'flip schools' would also be adopted, making it possible for students to listen to lectures at home and do their assignment in the counseling class with the help of teachers. University organized 16 seminars/ workshops during the year 2014-15. Out of different seminars, 9 books are being published by the Pentagon press as a University publication. At the sometime all the convocation addresses by the Chancellor and the Chief guests are being published by the university as an edited volume. Several scholars were invited to deliver lectures at the university those lectures are being compiled in an edited book from. The university is organizing 23 seminars/ workshops/ training programmes during the academic year 2015-16 the University has taken a giant step in the area of social media. One can access all the activities and events of the university on Face Book, Twitter and You Tube that has been tagged with the new Website of the University.



Green Campus

Steps have been taken for energy conservation, use of renewable energy (solar lights have been placed at Ganga and Saraswati campuses), water harvesting, plantation, hazardous waste management, and E-waste- management. Sensitization and awareness regarding eco-friendly campus among the staff and students have been done by including environmental concerns in framing the curriculum of the UG and PG classes by encouraging research on environment, and by organizing seminars/ symposia/ conferences, debates, essay competition and exhibition. Greenery in the campus has increased and its periodic review (audit) has been ensured.

Best practices at Uttarakhand Open University (UOU)

University-Industry interactions have truly been actualized by this University through its Skill Based Vocational Programmes. Under these programmes a large number of learners of the University have worked in the leading industries of the country, located in this region, viz., M/s TATA Motors, Ashok Leyland, Maruti Suzuki etc., to name a few. A stipend of over Rs. 28 cores has been paid by these industries to more the 5000 learners of Uttarakhand Open University. Many learners have been absorbed by the industries which had initiated the training for them. It is one of the best practices of the University which may, perhaps, be emulated by the other Open University.

From the year 2010, the University laid maximum emphasis on introduction of user friendly and enabling ICT practices. It began with a software known as SIS (Student Information System). It is developed by the University and it has helped the learners as well as the University to record and access the information for various purposes. Simultaneously, a very active and vibrant website is in place. The issues of SLM to learners, particulars of their fee, and particulars related to examination have been integrated into SIS. It has proved to be an enabling exercise and the flow of information between the learners and the University has become very fast, simple, and easier. At present, all the study centres, Regional Centres and the learners are linked with the University through this software, which contains the entire lifespan of a learner. The complaints of the learners are handled in an efficient manner, where for each complaint a ticket



number is generated and till the complaint is satisfactory addressed, this ticked number helps to trace the statues of the complaint. Thus, ICT can easily be referred to as one of the best practice prevalent in Uttarakhand Open University.

Direct involvement of University of organizing counseling-workshops for its learners at different locations in the State is another novel experiment of the University. It is a new initiative, in the sense, that teachers of the University directly interact with learners at different location. Additionally, compulsory counseling sessions in Professional Programmes of study have also been organized.

Creation of blogs by different Schools of the University.

The University has its own University Anthem, its Logo, its Vision and Mission statements.

Meetings of all the Statutory Bodies of the University, i.e., the Examination Committee, Academic Council, Executive Council etc. take place regularly to ensure democratic functioning of the University.

Establishment of the University's Radio Station, 'Hello Haldwani' 91.2MHz from 02-11-2012.

Recording of video lectures on various themes relevant to course-contents of individual courses.

Preparation of SLM for most of the programmes.

Best practices of KK Handiqui State Open University (KKHSOU)

The following best practices were initiated based on the COL-RIM exercise

Recommendations

Theme I: Communication

Dissemination of information in the public domain

Implementation

All necessary information are regular updated on the website covering the following areas-

- i) admission
- ii) examination
- iii) study centres
- iv) assignments
- v) recruitment



To bridge the communication gap with internal and external stakeholders

Appointment of Public Relations Officer

- vi) notifications
- Distribution of mobile phones to 260 study centres and University departments
- SMS services
- e-mails
- Facebook pages (KKHSOU City Study Centre; KKHSOU Job portal)
- Office circulars
- One faculty member of the rank of Assistant Professor has been designated as Public Relations Officer in- charge
- University has a designated Public Information Officer under the RTI Act, 2005.
- to enhance the communication inflow and outflow, following administrative personnel have been appointed –
 - Dean (Study Centre)
 - Deputy Registrar (Administration)
 - Deputy Registrar (Academic)
 - Assistant Registrar (Administration)
 - Assistant Registrar (SLM)

Theme II : Innovation and Creativity

Innovative approach in meeting the needs of the learners and stakeholders

Central Library of the University now has a Radio Frequency Identification Machine (RFID). This system consists of a self-service kiosk machine, a book drop box, a multipurpose staff station system and a security gate; library books have been classified under Dewey Decimal Classification scheme

SLM distribution in different zones

Partial adoption of OER policy under Creative Commons Licence with respect to printed Self Learning Materials

Significantly, the Bachelor Preparatory Programme (BPP) of the University is of two year duration in contrast to other open universities where the Bachelor Preparatory Programme is of six months' duration. This has been done with a view to adding value to the programme. The BPP programme is offered in 3 different streams.



Theme III: Quality Management

Systematic review of performance

A specific Quality Assurance Committee has been instituted to look into the different aspects of quality management and enhancement

An Examination Reforms Committee has been instituted to look into the various aspects of the examination process and to suggest appropriate remedial measures thereof.

Furnishing of monthly progress report is mandatory on the part of academic staff

The practice of submission of annual work plan by academic staff has been initiated

Theme IV: Needs Orientation

Designing model guidelines for evaluation

Specific guidelines are provided to question setters and evaluators

Theme V: Capacity Building

Rationalisation of work load for academic and non-academic staff

A number of new academic and non-academic staff personnel have been appointed depending on the number of academic programmes and the volume of work in a particular section as the case may be.

Sponsorship provided to employees for attending national and international seminars/ conferences / workshops/ training programmes

Periodical training and workshops are organized for skill development of faculty members

Laptops, external hard discs, pen drives and dongles for internet connectivity have been provided to all faculty members and senior officials

Facilities of computer lab and digital library at the main campus

A Regional Centre has been established at Jorhat town with an Assistant Director and other staff members. A plot of land has been granted for establishing another Regional Centre at North Lakhimpur town.

Regular bus service from the city to University headquarters (Patgaon, Rani) have been provided for the employees by the University



Action Plan: The Way Forward

The Vice Chancellors of OUs expressed their gratitude to CEMCA for playing a pivotal role of bringing all of them on one platform to discuss the issues confronting the ODL system in general and OUs in particular and how to redress them. They also appreciated the idea of working together to develop an action plan to translate the ideas generated into reality to actually streamline and strengthen the system and help it regain its vigour and robustness. It was decided that working groups should be constituted for working out the modalities for CBCSs; developing an common pool of programmes, conversion of existing SLMs into e-content and OERs; and mechanism of certifying/giving recognition to prior learning.

Working group on CBCS

The working group on CBCS will comprise of two representatives from each OU to be nominated by the VC of the respective OU. The 30 members group will:

- Work out the equivalence credits prescribed for the conventional system with that of the ODL system
- Develop templates for BA, BCom, BSc and vocational degrees
- Working as evaluation system as given in the CBCS scheme

Working Group on Development of Common Pool of Programmes

All the OUs will provide a complete list of programmes and courses they offer and in what medium, also the details of the discipline wise expertise available at their OU in terms of permanent faculty would be made available. The CEMCA would facilitate by organizing another meeting of Vice Chancellors for deciding on the programmes to be placed in the Common Pool. Also in the same meeting the distribution and allotment of disciplines for the development of e-

content by the OUs could be decided by the VCs. The existing courses would be converted into e-courses. CEMCA guidelines for development of e-content will be followed.

Working Group for OERs

The VCs would finalize the modalities pertaining to adoption of OER policy and Creative Commons License and development of OERs by OUs. The OUs will in the meantime have in place their own OER policy and adopt the Creative Commons License. CEMCA's draft policy for OERs could be adopted by OUs. A working group would be constituted by the VCs of OUs for vetting the e-courses converted, for their quality, before their placement in "SWAYAM" as OERs.

Working group on Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

Since majority of the skilled workforce in our country does not have certification, OUs would like to facilitate the *Skill India Campaign* and give fillip to the *Make in India Campaign* of the Government of India by devising a mechanism for RPL. It was decided that the following OUs will work together to devise such a scheme namely: UOU, TNOU, YCMOU and KKHSOU, as all of them are offering a number of vocational education programmes and therefore have the prerequisite experience.

Follow-up Action by CEMCA

MOOC for Academic Counsellors

CEMCA has offered to develop and launch a MOOC for capacity building of academic counsellors who are the part time teachers working into the conventional system and lack the skills of tutoring and counselling distance learners. All OUs have agreed to this proposition of CEMCA and would ensure that their academic counsellors register for this MOOC of CEMCA.



Meeting of Faculty of OUs

CEMCA to organize a meeting of faculty members of OUs to work on CBCS for ODL

Meeting of Vice Chancellors

CEMCA to organize a meeting of Vice Chancellors of OUs to identify the programmes to be placed in the Common Pool. Also the VCs would decide on the distribution of disciplines and devise an action plan for the conversion of existing SLMs into e-Content (discipline wise) and finalize modalities pertaining to adoption of OER policy and Creative Commons License and development of OERs by OUs. Finally the VCs would identify a working group for vetting the e-courses for their quality before their placement in SWAYAM.

Conclusion



The time has come to rethink, redefine, re-imagine and disrupt the present ODL system to put it on a fast track to enable it to leapfrog from the first and second generations of Distance Education to the Fourth and Fifth generations of Distance Education. OUs can overtake the conventional universities because as compared to them they already have the advantage of possessing plenty of software that simply needs to be recast as e-content and placed as OERs. Following a technologically mediated system OUs can systematize and

customize and personalize their learner support system in order to provide the last mile connectivity. Emerging pedagogical approaches such as project-based, experiential, inquiry-based and adaptive learning methods can be uniquely deployed to facilitate the teaching of 21st-century skills such as communication, creativity, persistence and collaboration required of knowledge workers. Activities need to be specially designed to help learners develop competencies such as collaboration and communication by facilitating group work, peer to peer learning, and peer feedback with the objective of developing the 21st century skills. Gaming and interactive simulations are other interactive techniques being used to enable learners interact with the content in a more engaging manner and also contribute to the development of 21st century skills. Also what is required is a comprehensive understanding of student learning and performance what has come to be known as learning analytics. Therefore technology should be used for learner information and learning management systems and for student tracking purposes.

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