Title of the Paper:

QUALITY ASSURANCE IN OPEN AND DISTANCE   LEARNING

Name & Address of the Author:

PROF. Ms. SHEETAL M. RANDHIR & PROF. Mr. P.V.ANTURKAR
TIKARAM JAGGANNATH COLLEGE KHADKI PUNE 3
(CONTACT- 9921015759)
Sheetal.karna@yahoo.co.in,   p.anturkar@rediffmail.com

ABSTRACT OF THE PAPER

INRODUCTION:

The term open and distance learning is used throughout this paper in recognition that this is a familiar term that has entered every-day usage in many parts of the world (though not in all). Since the discussion is not limited to learning alone, but also includes activities aimed at guiding and supporting learning. Normally referred to by terms such as teaching, training, facilitating, etc. . The term distance learning is used as a synonym for the more comprehensive and precise term distance education. The rationale for distance education from its earliest days has been to open opportunity for learners to study regardless of geographic, socio-economic or other constraints. The use of the term open is intended to highlight this key feature of the theory and practice of distance education.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

1.To study all processes related to ODL with reference to quality assurance ,requirement of students and industry.

2. The whole process of ODL has to be very dynamic to taken in to account the changing aspiration of the student and need of the industry in rapid changing environment.

3. To find out whether the mechanism of continues improvement process is being utilize or applied by the institute.

4. To find out whether Education institute itself is a learning institute's

HYPOTHESIS:

The hole process of distance learning has to be very dynamic, based on continues improvement procedure, taking in to consideration Industries specific requirement, the students aspirations , and educational institute which is catering this services of distance learning and their recourse constraints.

CONNOTATIONS OF TERMS:

a) Quality:

Quality itself has been defined as fundamentally relational: 'Quality is the ongoing process of building and sustaining relationships by assessing, anticipating, and fulfilling stated and implied needs
        It means adhering to the specification, and fitness for use and which can be measured.

b) Quality assurance:

- *The process of ensuring that the degree of excellence specified is achieved or a set of activities or processes that are designed to ensure that products, goods and/or services satisfy the requirements of customers in a systematic and reliable fashion.*
- *For the purpose of research Quality assurance means establishing quality in each process so that the desired quality is produced in each process.*

PROCESSES ARE INVOLVED IN ODL :

a) **Admission**

Student should be able to get admission and paying fees online and if he has got any queries they should be answered quickly.

b) **Curriculum designing as per the expectation of industry**

Courses and curricula define the profile of a system or institution. They should be related to the mission and to defined needs of the industry. Many distance education systems provide courses for preparation for examinations and degrees which are equivalent or similar to those offered by conventional institutions, and subject to similar regulations as regards content, admission and assessment

c) *The students expectation for the curriculum particularly with reference to the application of the knowledge they gained in this course in their present or future job.*

i) *Writing Books suitable for this course which is adequate and only referred by the student.*

ii) *Interactive E-learning-*

E-learning should be Interactive. It means if student will ask the question, answer should be given by software.

iii) Class room teaching-

The feedback from student particularly whether the required syllabus has been covered by the lecturer, whether student has understood, if they have not understood then their should be some mechanism which will provide additional classes.

iv) Assessment of the student:

It should be based on 50% objective and 50%subiectve. It should not be 100% objective. so that the quality of leaning by the student can be assessed subjectively.

v) Assignment and Project:

These must be relevant and are to be designed with the specific reference to the industry .It should be designed every year. And these should be done by the student themselves in their own job.

Sample & collection of Data:

Purposive sample will be used by researcher. Interview and questioner method will be 0followed by researcher.

FULL PAPER

INRODUCTION:

The term open and distance learning is used throughout this paper in recognition that this is a familiar term that has entered every-day usage in many parts of the world (though not in all). Since the discussion is not limited to learning alone, but also includes activities aimed at guiding and supporting learning . normally referred to by terms such as teaching, training, facilitating, etc. . the term distance learning is used as a synonym for the more comprehensive and precise term distance education. The rationale for distance education from its earliest days has been to open opportunity for learners to study regardless of geographic, socio-economic or other constraints. The use of the term open is intended to highlight this key feature of the theory and practice of distance education.

Distance education is any educational process in which all or most of the teaching is conducted by someone removed in space and/or time from the learner, with the effect that all or most of the communication between teachers and learners is through an artificial medium, either electronic or print. By definition, in distance education the normal or principal means of communication is through technology. Obviously teachers in conventional classrooms may use technology as a supplement to their teaching, but since it is not their principal means of communication the classroom is not considered to be distance education. Another way of discriminating between distance and other forms of education is to ask where the principal educational decisions are made. Who is deciding what is to be learned? When and how is it to be learned? When has learning been satisfactorily completed? If such decisions are made in the classroom, this is not distance education. If they are made elsewhere and communicated by a technology the programmed is defined as distance education.

The .open. nature of education that is mediated by electronic or printed technologies might be formally institutionalized in such policies as open admissions, freedom of selection of what, when and where to learn. Distance education organizations may indeed limit the extent of their openness, but traditionally they have shown a strong bias towards supporting the freedom of individual learners to exercise choice over one or more of the main processes of their learning. Typically this involves helping learners take responsibility

for aspects such as what they learn, how they learn, where they learn, how quickly they learn, who to turn to for help and whether, when and where to have their learning assessed. The openness of distance education is also seen in relatively flexible organizational structures, delivery and communication patterns, and the use of various technologies in support of learning.

Distance education have seen extraordinary growth in the last decade owing to the increasing demand for education and training and rapid development of information super highway. While well-established single mode ODL institutions are expanding beyond their national boundaries and becoming global resource centres, newer players are emerging at both national and global level. Many single mode institutions have embraced dual mode delivery of programs in order to harness the opportunities for increasing demand for places and to augment their income in the wake of shrinking public funds. Each of these ODL institutions passionately trying to convince the academics, stakeholders, and public in general about their supremacy over the others. The wave of growth of the ODL although washed away the skepticism about its quality, professionals still believe that same-time, same place interaction is central to the success of learning experience (Twigg, 2001; Muirhead, 2000). While academic debate will continue on the learning experience in both modes, the ODL providers have promoted quality assurance as an important tool for building public confidence. There are quality assurance frameworks and transnational qualification frameworks developed nationally and internationally to guide and regulate ODL programs and institutions. Emerging trend has been to develop quality assurance toolkits (Mishra, 2006) to guide institutions to develop their quality assurance policies. National regulating authorities, professional bodies and ODL providers developed these policies and frameworks based on the inference drawn by them with respect to potential learners (Deshmuk, 2005). As a result, quality assurance policies and frameworks are more prescriptive based on perceptions rather than evolutionary based on learner experience.

A specific quality assurance strategy is not universally adoptable (Olojede, 2008) because distance education 'outfit' varies widely from institution to institution and one country to another. As a result, the pace of development and process of maintenance of quality assurance on open and distance learning must be flexible (Granger and Gulliver, 1995) to the extent of practices without prescriptions.

Quality is an incremental process (Daniel, 2005) involving continuous development along with the development of ODL institutions. Hopkin (2003) suggests the evolution of quality assurance at three different stages of ODL institutional development: embryonic, evolving, and matured stages. He further argues for development and implementation of quality assurance policies in accordance of the stages of institutional development.

Prescriptive quality assurance policy is more or less influence by the quality assurance and/or accreditation frameworks to meet the requirement of the accreditation body. Similarly, use of quality assurance toolkits and/or well-developed policies is susceptible to an ambitious quality assurance policy covering all stages of development while the institution may be at early stage of development. Therefore, a suitable and practicable

quality assurance policy would evolve with the stages of institutional development in order to ensure the consideration of the learner and practitioners' experience. 'There is no single definitive or foolproof method of ensuring quality, especially in the context of distance education' (Upot, 2005). It is necessary to consider different forms and criteria for quality assurance to suit different educational function (Middlehurst, 2001). Thus, it is imperative to formulate quality assurance policy along with the implementation of various functions of the ODL institution rather than developing a quality assurance policy before hand.

An ODL institution and more profoundly a new institution thus may not have a well documented

quality assurance policy, as the institutions may have concentrated on its establishment, capacity building, designing, and implementing systems process and procedures. What is required essentially is to keep the quality concept in mind while developing and implementing systems, process, and procedures. The University of Papua New Guinea Open College did not formulate a quality assurance policy during its establishment period but the quality assurance evolved along with its development. The formulation of quality assurance policy takes place at later stage of its establishment based on the learners and institutional experience.

The full paper is going to focus on the QUALITY ASSURANCE IN OPEN AND DISTANCE   LEARNING

• **What does the student want?**
Skill, knowledge, qualification for career or self-realization, employability, relevance, flexibility, support, value-for-money

• **What does the employer want?**
Graduates with readily-applied skills & knowledge, non-academic skills, upgrading opportunities for staff

• **What does the institution want?**
Good reputation, healthy student intake, successful graduates, robust academic System

• **What does the country/society want?**
Trained manpower (quality, quantity, type), good returns on public investment in education, value-for-money institutions & programmers, learning community, new knowledge for advancement

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

1. To study all processes related to ODL with reference to quality assurance, requirement of students and corporate..

We have developed separate questionnaire for students , Corporate, and Institutions. The objectives of this exercise is to collect primary data for understanding quality assurance requirements of corporate and quality perceived by the students and the quality objectives of the Institutions with reference of the requirement of corporate and students.
The questionnaires are as follows:

QUESTIONNAIRE TO INDUSTRY

1 Do you feel the curriculum design has taken care of the requirement of industry? If no what changes you want?
2. The knowledge acquire through this course by the student will be utilized in the industry. Please specify the topic and subjects.
3. Do you have any career plan for the students who are undergoing this course?
4. Do You have plan to groom your employees and then send them to a suitable distance learning course. If no would you like to have support from the institute?
5. How do you motivate student to attain all lectures full time?
6.The role of facilitator and coordinator is very critical for ODL . Do you train them for this particular job ? if no do you expect any support from the institution?
7. The student who have failed in the examination do you analyze the reasons of failure and plan corrective action?
8. From the point of attrition does this type of education really helps you?
9. Can the student go out to get the better job after completion of the course?
10 would you like to work on the board of studies to provide information regarding the requirement of industry with reference to different subjects?

QUESTIONNAIRE TO INSTITUTION

1. Do you take in to account the requirement of industry with reference to each subject? If Yes describe the process in detail.
2. The students aspirations for their career progress are addressed time to time ? if yes hoe do you do it and hoe frequently?
3. The assignments and projects are selected taking in to account their present job ? if no do you not feel that students will have difficulties in executing the projects and assignments?

4. The teachers role is designed taking in to account the student difficulties with reference to time ability conceptual understanding and application of knowledge? If no then don't you feel that this process requires review?
5. Do you have plan continuous improvement process ? if yes please elaborate.
6. As a part of quality assurance system can you provide information regarding action taken in corrective and preventive action taken with reference to customers complaint particularly student and industry.
7. While designing curriculum do you take in to account the requirement of industry and allow industries specific flexibility for each subject?

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR STUDUNTS

1. Why have you decided to join this course? And what course u have joined?

2. Are the subjects in this course relevant to your present job? If not are they related to your future plans?
3. Do you expect any additional coaching in case you could not attend regular lectures because of work pressure?
4. What benefit did / will you get due to this course ?
5. Do you feel feedback forms are adequate to provide necessary information ?

2. The whole process of ODL has to be very dynamic to taken in to account the changing aspiration of the student and need of the industry in rapid changing environment.

While going through the secondary data available on the same subject it is noticed that while designing the curriculum ODL Institute are matching the curriculum of the universities giving similar degree. The Corporate are not part of board of studies to taken in to account the requirement of the corporate .The students on the other hand are not selecting the particular course related to the present job or for the purpose of their future requirements such as promotions or switching over to new discipline. The Industry is looking at this course as a tool for a retention of the employees and a motivational factor by providing partial financial assistance for the payment of the fees.

3. To find out whether the mechanism of continues improvement process is being utilize or applied by the institute.

It is observed from the secondary data available on this subject that there is no formal or structured methodology of continues improvement process moreover all the institutes have a system of feedback forms for various levels like teachers, students, and coordinators from the industry but there is no mechanism to sort out the requirements from the feedback forms or there is no action taken repot on such feedback forms. There is no report also to indicate that there is some improvement in some activity because of action taken.

So far the assessment by NAAC committee gives stress on infrastructure facilities but they don't involve themselves in the continuous improvement program or the quality requirement of the student however as mention by **Dr.Gandhe** of SCDL in his paper " The Distance Education Council set up under the Indira Gandhi National Open University Act has been assigned the regulatory role for the open & distance learning universities and the higher educational ODL institutions. The DEC examines the working of these universities and institutions in all its aspects before granting recognition. This has had a salutary effect on their working. It is likely that the DEC also undertakes assessment and accreditation of the open & distance learning institutions in India in the near future."

4. To find out whether Education institute itself is a learning institute's

We have to accept that these institutes are learning Institutes because their survival depends on their learning curve. So they have to find innovative ideas to cater the changing requirements and aspirations of the students. And most of them are successful.

HYPOTHESIS:

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CONCLUSIONS:

1. If the ODL system, which has a far better reach to the interior rural areas and the disadvantaged sections of population, has to play its expected role in India's
Sustainable development, it must raise the quality of all aspects of its working.

2. It would remain risk for ODL institution not having a quality assurance policy if leadership is not committed to guide and ensure the same and more profoundly when parent institution does not pursue quality assurance with vigor.

3. Researcher observed that without the help of adequate data it is very difficult to design a sustainable and dynamic system to take in to account the aspiration of the students and needs of the corporate.

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Name & Address of the Author:

PROF. Ms. SHEETAL M. RANDHIR & PROF. Mr. P.V.ANTURKAR
TIKARAM JAGGANNATH COLLEGE KHADKI PUNE 3
(CONTACT- 9921015759)
Sheetal.karna@yahoo.co.in, p.anturkar@rediffmail.com