



## Developing Open Junior Schools to extend Education in Bangladesh

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### ABSTRACT :

Bangladesh has resource constraints for ensuring education for every citizen. In the last decade, after the commencement of Bangladesh Open University (BOU), open and distance learning (ODL) has become the most reliable means to combine accessibility and affordability for the individual. It is also a cost effective means for the providers. BOU's mandate is to provide needs-based and cost-effective education it doesn't at all levels whether formal or non-formal mode ranging from school level to tertiary level. ODL providers need support services which help reduce the issues of isolation, lack in motivation or inability to self-motivate. This Paper examines the concept of community ownership of ODL centers and how this can work in partnership distance education settings where the citizenry believes that government has to provide all things at the school level. This Paper also discusses the arrangements of tutorial services in ODL centers in relation to sustainability.

### 1 Introduction

The Open School (OS) of Bangladesh Open University (BOU) believes that partnership is the key success of distance education. In pursuance of this, it launches in 2007 Junior School Certificate (JSC) Program for grade 6-8 in association with the NGO coalition, Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE) for the disadvantaged children of grade-5 pass learners graduated from the NGO/Community schools. This partnership program already has drawn much attention of the educationists, practitioners, adult education providers, donor agencies etc. for its uniqueness in all over the world. This program combines both general and vocational courses in its curriculum for developing learners' life-skills and livelihood. The main objective of this program is to ensure learning for development that is learners will be able to enterprising in getting jobs and setting new business. This is the first initiative for the vocational education through open schooling in the country. Through this program, Open School introduces the area-based vocational courses for bringing the economic balances. In this way, BOU Open School has become an innovation centre of education program. To get the program in the field level, it has gone through the innovations in every step. Tutoring for this program has become a challenging effort of the School as it combines vocational courses with general courses in consistent with regular mode of schooling. This paper discusses current state of tutoring and mentoring for the JSC learners at the ODL centre with strong community participation. This paper outlines the thinking and methodology employed for the JSC program.

## **2 Aims and objectives**

The main aim of this paper is to examine the concept of community ownership of ODL centers and how this can work in partnership distance education settings where the citizenry believes that government has to provide all things at the school level. It also discusses the arrangement of tutorial services in ODL centers in relation to sustainability as it is a pilot program. It also achieves following objectives:

- to identify how the JSC tutoring differs from other program of the Open School
- to discover how a JSC tutor controls over student in getting preparation for studies
- to see what extend the tutor motivates JSC learners in continuing their studies without getting dropouts from the program
- to observe how tutors of the vocational courses cope with the learners where resources are limited

## **3 Methodology**

Case study method has extensively used as the methodology for this study. A systematic inquiry into an event or a set of related events used to describe and explain the phenomenon of interest. The unit of analysis can vary from an individual to a corporation. While there is utility in applying this method retrospectively, it is most often used prospectively. Data come largely from documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant observation and physical artifacts. This research also used evidence base for professional applications. A "case review" might emphasize a critical reappraisal of a case. This study involves in-depth interviews with participants and key informants, review of the meeting records, and observation. Practical function also used for this study. When the unit of analysis is an individual, for example, an important concept to consider is life history. This study used the case study method to develop rich and comprehensive understandings about the sustainable tutoring for the ODL program at the school level for disadvantaged people.

## **4 Provision for Junior School Certificate Program**

### **4.1 Background of BOU School Program**

Bangladesh Open University (BOU) inherited school program and it has the long history of media use. In fact, it came into existence through a long process of media use in education. The BOU Act of 1992 was the culmination of almost forty years of development in educational technology. 200 radio sets were provided to educational institutions through the Education Directorate in 1956. An Audio-Vision Cell was set up followed by the Audio Visual Education Centre (AVEC) in 1962. A School Broadcasting Program was established in 1978, and that pilot project was merged with AVEC in 1983 to form the National Institute of Educational Media and Technology (NIEMT). Subsequently, the Bangladesh Institute of Distance Education (BIDE) – the precursor of BOU – was established in 1985 and NIEMT was incorporated within it.

BIDE represented the first step towards fully fledged distance education in Bangladesh, as it was empowered to offer a distance mode BEd program for untrained secondary school teachers, with GoB guaranteeing equal service conditions for BOU and conventional Teacher Training College (TTC) graduates. Shortly after established of BIDE, GoB began planning, with British ODA and ADB assistance, formation of a Bangladesh Open University. BIDE was merged with BOU on established of the latter, and a number of BIDE administrative and academic staff have continued to serve with the BOU. This continuity from before 1985 has served the new University in good stead.

Bangladesh Open University, in its 15 years of history, developed courses of studies for 23 formal and 19 non-formal educational programs. New programs are being offered to enrich its academic portfolio. As a result, a number of individuals from different formal institutions are getting involved in the various ways with BOU. DE describes teaching-learning relationships where the actors are geographically separated and communication between them is ensured through technologies such as audio-video broadcasts, teleconferences and recordings; printed

study guides; and multimedia systems (Matubber, 2007). However, BOU is still confined with texts and radio-TV broadcasts. Therefore, the University should put emphasis on using ICTs in the delivery of DE programs which is completely absent. In order to cope with this, policymakers and academics should work objectively with full commitment.

## **4.2 Open School Programs**

Open School of the Bangladesh Open University runs two programs at the school level: Secondary School Certificate (SSC) for grade 9-10 and Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) for grade 11-12 through using open and distance learning (ODL) mode. These two programs are quite popular and the number of learners is increasing in size. One of the unique features of these programs in relation to the gender issue is that there is parity in the male female ratio in the learners' enrolment. It is reported that Bangladesh has already achieved one of the MGDs related to the parity in the male-female ratio of enrolment in the secondary level recently through taking of different supportive measures such as stipend for the female students etc. But Open School's secondary enrolment did not have this kind of supportive actions for the female education. The nature of program is itself very congenial for expansion of female education. In this way, the School is contributing a lot in the expansion of female education in Bangladesh.

The Open School of BOU still has the 45 minutes chunk for school broadcasting program on the national radio in the evening. BOU OS prepares schedule of topic for the entire year and Radio Bangladesh authority produces program and duly broadcasts. This proves that BOU involvement in this arrangement is very minimal. Only because there is shortage of personnel trained in radio producer. Open School of the Bangladesh Open University runs two programs at the school level: Secondary School Certificate (SSC) for grade 9-10 and Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) for grade 11-12 through using open and distance learning (ODL) mode. In addition, it launches in 2007 Junior School Certificate (JSC) Program for grade 6-8 in association with the NGO coalition, Campaign for Popular Education for the disadvantaged children of grade 5 pass learners graduated from the NGO/Community schools. In this situation, BOU OS needs to broaden the scope of school broadcasting. In addition, it can put emphasis on establishing the community radio, very cost-effective media, where it can broadcast the area-based vocational courses.

## **4.2 CAMPE Education Program**

### **4.2.1 CAMPE's major Initiatives for Advocacy**

Over the decades, CAMPE has been striving to bring about positive changes in the education sector, particularly in primary and adult education. One of the most important functions of CAMPE is to act as a forum where stakeholders working in the education sector can share ideas and experiences, debate issues and disseminate information on issues of interest. Under the operational framework of media campaigns and advocacy, CAMPE is involved in leading a literacy movement at a national level. The activities of policy advocacy include organizing conferences, seminars, debates, roundtable dialogues, meetings and discussions on policy issues regarding literacy and education. As a part of mass communication, CAMPE works with media, cultural groups and other civil society organizations and individuals. Hence, as an apex-body of NGOs, CAMPE has been working together with them since its inception. Whatever it has achieved so far is a consequence of concerted effort of NGOS and CAMPE together.

- CAMPE has taken initiatives to incorporate NFE including literacy in PEDP-2, PRSP and MDGs.
  - *It represents NGOs in various forums, organizes workshops, seminars and provides feedback necessary for improvement.*
- CAMPE has also taken initiatives to review the status of adult literacy in the country through studies and has so far organized 40 grass-root-level workshops, seminars to raise people voice. Findings and recommendations would be shared in a national seminar and finally it would be published and disseminated.

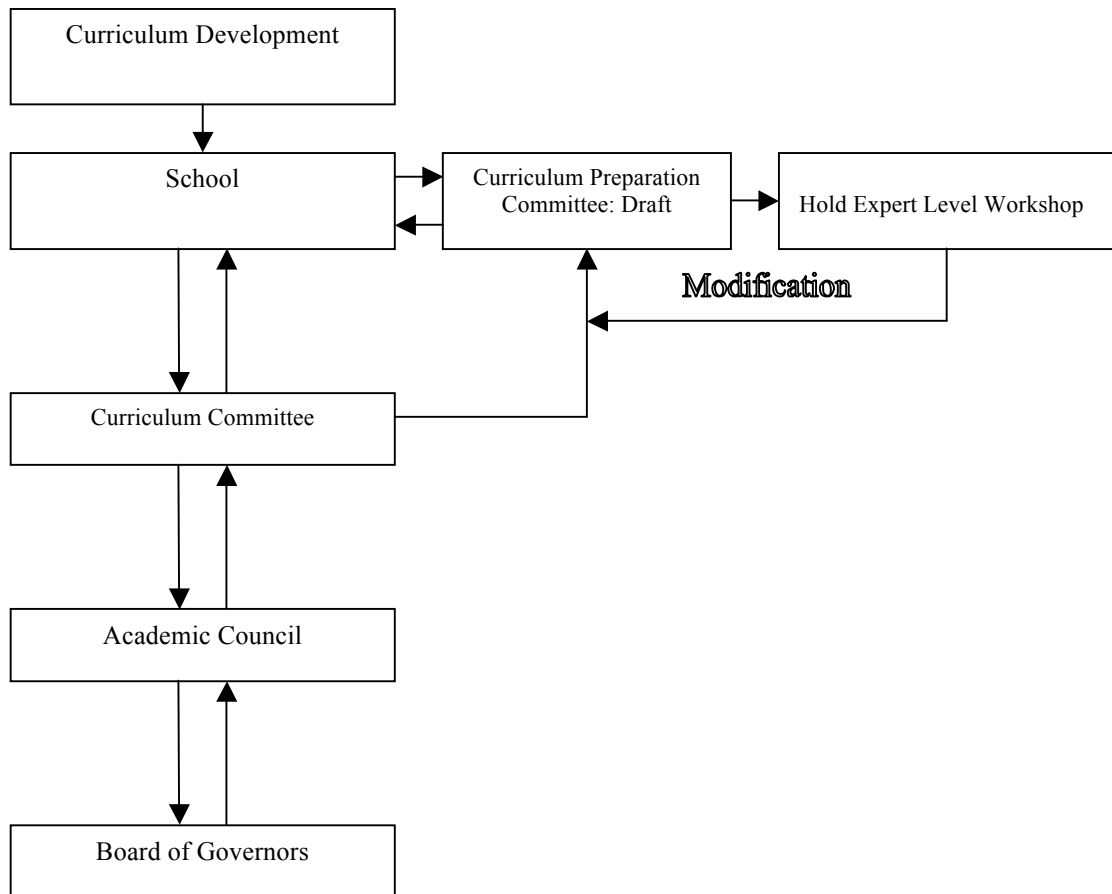
- ‘Education watch’ of CAMPE provides necessary data and information to the policy makers about necessity of quality education both in primary and NFE level.
  - *By this time, 6 Education Watch Reports have been published and findings of the study are accepted by the NGOs, civil society groups and International agencies.*
  - *Education watch is a civil society initiative where CAMPE plays coordinating role.*
- CAMPE and member NGOs by this time motivated the concerned ministry to provide free textbook and Tax rebate for investing in education and environment.
  - *CAMPE has published supplementary pages in the daily newspapers on educational policies etc., organized rally, signature campaign, seminars and finally arranged policy dialogues with the concerned ministries including Prime Minister*
- CAMPE with the assistance of Commonwealth Education Fund (CEF) has undertaken a project to strengthen the capacity of civil society and policy makers of Bangladesh in order to help the government ensure that the marginalized children are enrolled and complete quality primary education.
  - *CAMPE has organized numerous of consultation and coordination meetings, seminar workshops, and training and formed various forums. Also CAMPE has published and distributed various booklets on present policy, strategy, achievements and gaps on educational issues.*
- People’s Forum on MDGs (PFM) in Bangladesh was formed as a civil society platform in November 2004 in an attempt to reflect on the progress of the state initiatives towards achieving the MDGs through a consultation process represented by civil society organizations, sectoral networks, some development partners, media and relevant Government agencies. It has developed broad based coalition of 134 organizations representing networks, umbrella bodies, professional groups, women’s movement, human rights organizations and NGOs. CAMPE works as secretariat of the forum.
  - *CAMPE published and disseminated ‘Peoples report’ based on public opinion, organized rally and workshops, seminars on different issues for emphasizing NFE*
  - *It has also been organizing constituency advocacy with MPs for influencing educational policy and strategy.*

## **5 Partnership building between BOU and CAMPE**

CAMPE already developed considerable platform to provide partnership education program through using its field level network with local NGOs. It is needless to say that CAMPE is fully specialized organization in imparting non-formal education and BOU is also having the full capacity to provide ODL at any level. As a result, a successful partnership has been developed between two apex-bodies of different kinds to fill in the gaps of schooling needs of the disadvantaged children who are graduated from NGO/community schools. For this program, BOU is being providing the academic support and CAMPE providing financial and secretarial supports. Both BOU and CAMPE are jointly ensuring the administrative supports to the ODL Centre through Regional Resources Centers (RRCs) and Local member NGOs respectively.

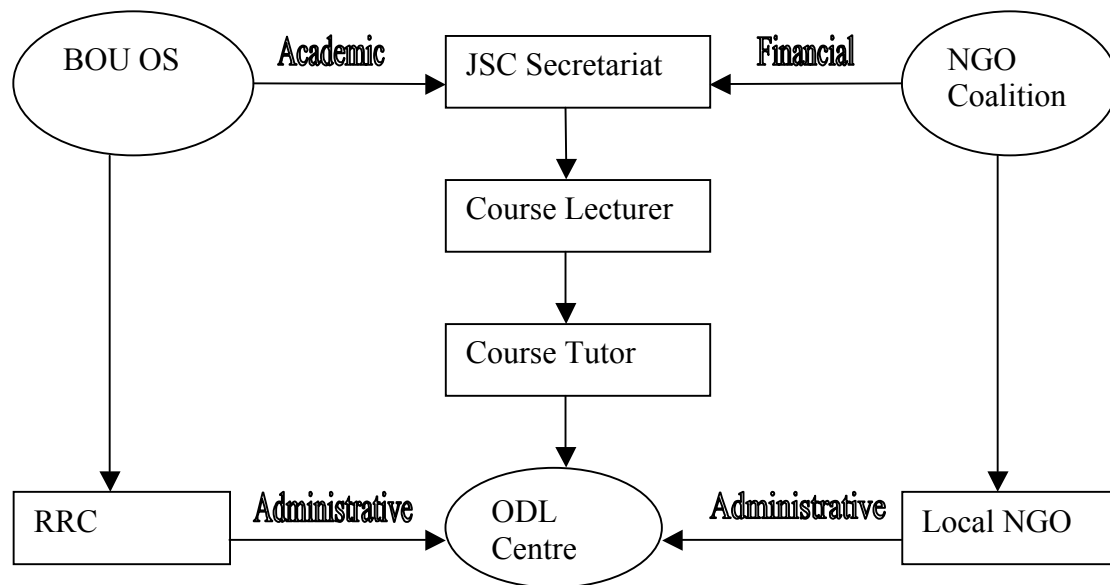
## **6 BOU Tutoring System**

BOU extensively uses expert-centered curriculum development approach for its programs (BOU system, 1993). It can be depicted in fig 2.



### 7 JSC Partnership model

Bangladesh Open University has the history of partnership with The Commonwealth of Learning in running CMBA, CEMBA program and DYD program with the Ministry of Labor. Both programs are the University programs, but JSC, pre-University program, is the only program which has the partnership with the private body and its nature completely differs from other programs of BOU depicted in Fig. 1. Model for this program is shown in Fig. 2.



### ODL Centre

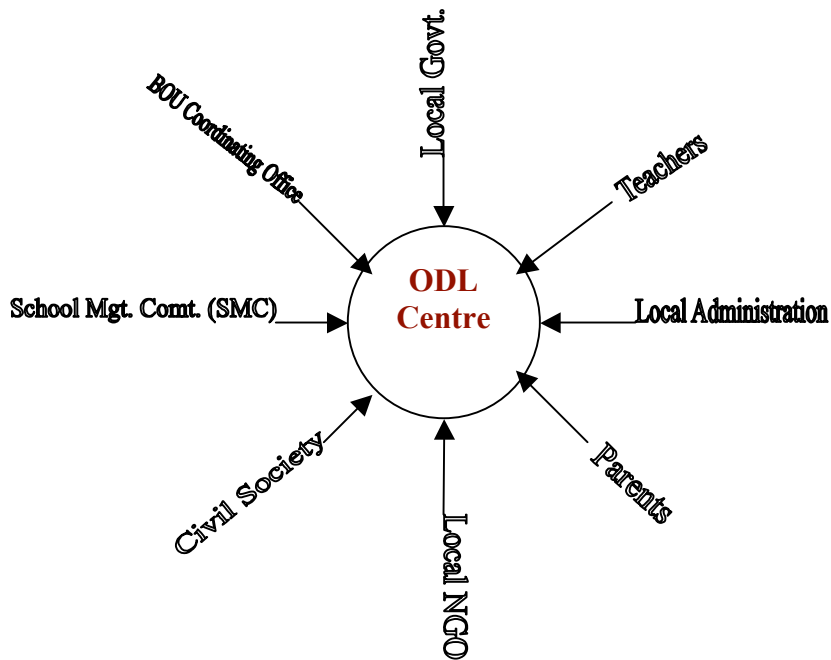
Study centre is termed as ODL centre for JSC program. BOU termed study centre, for other program, as Tutorial Centre (TC). Ipaye (1996) states that a study centre is a designated outpost for an ODL institution outside the headquarters, where students go to receive tutorials, meet support staff of the institution, get the study materials, take their examinations, meet other colleagues, carry out their practicals and other learning related activities for the promotion of their studentship.

ODL centre operates in different forms from TCs of other programs. TCs serve only as centers for tutorials or for material distribution or for purveying information etc. But ODL centers become the replica of the main institution, serving as a mini-university in the locality and depicting the political presence of the government. ODL centre are satisfying the requirements of politics in education which is depicted objectives of the University:

*“to increase equitable access to education, to develop the human resources of the country and the improve quality, relevance and efficiency of the education system. It will also support the Government’s current and long term education policy on eradication of illiteracy and thus help alleviate poverty in the country. The role of the BOU will be primarily to cater to those sections of the population that are currently excluded from the conventional education system for a wide variety of reasons. The potential clientele of BOU will therefore include significant numbers of students of rural areas, particularly women, out of school and adults who must do work to support their families. (Source: BOU Project proforma (PP), June 1996.”*

BOU is supporting the Government’s policy through establishing ODL centre at the rural areas where majority disadvantaged group of the country lives. The most issue relates to run the ODL centre is the sustainability because it is not like TCs of other programs of BOU. What affects the sustainability? Funding, lack of learners, and commitment of the headquarters may hamper the sustainability of the ODL centre. Ipaye (1996) affirms that a study centre can ‘die’ if learners stop visiting, if they stop coming for tutorials, if tutors stop coming etc. especially if such development is traceable to some derelictions or deprivations from the headquarters. This is very important for the JSC program because learners are very poor, sometimes ultra poor, and there is a likelihood that learners may not be interested to attend the tutorial centers for variety of soci-economic reasons. Many JSC learners, at the community meeting, reported feelings of isolation, monotony, lack of self-direction as well as self and time management difficulties and eventual decrease in motivation levels (Community

Meeting at Ashroy, July 2007). Local NGO got the challenging responsibilities of monitoring the learner's activity through involving the supervisor. They are instructed to make the centre friendly, approachable, empathetic and familiar with learners' problems and possible solutions so that they can get interested to be attentive to their studies and attending the tutorial sessions. One of the futures of the JSC ODL centre is its community involvement. Before establishing the centre, there was a community meeting originated by the local NGO to make the centre a spirit of community? This is depicted in fig 2.



**Fig 2: Cummunity Participation in ODL Center**

The community clearly has gone far down the path of reform and they are unlikely to turn back. The challenge now seems to be to achieve the major shift from emphasis on how to teach better to how to guide students in their learning. In particular, the emphasis needs to be on defining what students are to learn and how students best move to a strong emphasis on depth of learning and acquisition of thinking skills with strong content.

## **8 Tutoring**

As noted by Ipaye (1996) tutoring in ODL provides learners with a belonging to the institution; and a feeling of being students. In Bangladesh, the culture of face to face teaching is the main recognized mode of studentship and most people do not regard one as students if he/she do not have that face to face teaching; neither do they recognize his/her as an institution if that phase is missing. Distance Education has this problem; on the other hand ODL philosophy believes that learners have to be touched with the teachers so that they feel to be being students and it simplifies this situation by a network of tutorial centers, either owned or borrowed by the institution but the problem of quality; organization, monitoring etc. are obvious. ODL centre gives the learners with the institutional attachment which they use as identity in the society. Tutoring at the junior school level, where the program is being implemented through ODL mode, is very important.

School age students are studying with BOU OS at any age from 14 upwards. Comply with school age students' consideration, JSC has a pre-enrolment advice for these students. Before establishing the ODL centre, a needs survey was done for the prospective learners because their background, motivation and commitment towards study are completely different. School age students are in a minority that's why tutors are to be alert to the special needs of those allocated for them. Sometimes they are very able, though they will not usually have the mutuality of an adult student. Often parents arrange additional local support, or provide it themselves. Their unique needs are for even more rapid feedback, and for understanding encouragement. Comments should be couched in language they can understand and learn from.

### **8.1 How does tutoring work?**

JSC tutors spend a minimum of two days per month at the ODL centers that they work in. Each tutoring session lasts for 45 minutes. Each tutoring session differs. The tutor designs their own lesson plan or tutoring protocol designed by the Course Lecturer who selects contents within the learner's reading range and level, activities for enhanced learning, and an "after tutoring session" fun activity, if any. The tutors at each ODL centre have a lead tutor, supervisor, or both that supervise tutoring sessions. No tutor is ever left alone with the learners while in a session. The JSC program prides itself on providing excellent tutors that ensure professional and productive tutoring sessions between learners and tutors.

### **8.2 Who are the tutors?**

JSC secretariat hires at least degree pass teachers from local formal/NGO/community schools with excellent organizational, interpersonal and communication skills. Tutors for vocational courses are sometimes undergraduates who have a minimum 5 years experience in the course related activity, and who have received recommendation from the local NGO. In some cases, graduate students and first-year students may become tutors. Tutors work under a lead tutor and supervisor. Tutors provide academic support for all the learners on the courses they teach. Tutors are expected to monitor learners' progress and to encourage learners to form self-help groups.

### **8.3 Who are Lead Tutors?**

Lead Tutors are peer tutors who have attached with the local NGO either as employee or as a tutor for at least one year with other programs, and have received five days of additional training with facilitator of The Commonwealth of Learning. They are highly motivated and exceptional tutors. Occasionally they conduct new tutor training sessions, and act as mentors for other tutors. The lead tutor is effectively considered an "assistant manager" to the supervisor. Lead tutors actively tutor, but also provide assistance when needed to the supervisor, by observing sessions, acting as a leader when necessary, and performing some administrative tasks. Dependent on work study eligibility, Lead tutors work more than tutor.

### **8.4 Supervisor**

The supervisor acts as the direct liaison between the participating NGO and the JSC program. The supervisor handles most in-school communications, organizes staff schedules, conducts ongoing meetings and staff training, and organizes semester events, such as parties or other activities. Supervisors have other administrative duties that are discussed at the point of hire. Candidates should have experience either working with children or in administrative roles in previous employment situations. Those with backgrounds or special interest in literacy or education is also encouraged to apply.



## **8.5 Tutor training**

Distance teaching was new to the tutor of the program and it has become a challenging learning experience for both NGOs and them. That's why they were oriented with ODL system and conducting tutorial sessions at the ODL centers. CAMPE delivers the offer of a contract for the Local NGOs for managing the ODL Centers. This contract contains details of work and payments of financial terms. Open School maintains academic standards similar to other schooling body, but are a very different place from most other educational settings. Tutors are trained in ODL system particularly in the tutoring so that they feel that learner's are distance from the learning facilities, their commitments, and their choice. They are the vital link to help individual learners and the part of the academic community of the Open School. For the other OS program it was found that tutors feel isolated as there is no provision for contact with the faculty members. But it is very important and valuable in the successful delivery of the ODL. That's why; the project introduces for the first time to prepare courses profile for the tutors for conducting their duties as per the set guideline. Using the course profile all the tutors are brought under an umbrella of the lecturing. The term Lecturer may be the misleading in relation to teaching of other programs of BOU. For JSC program, faculty member are assigned to teach a particular course and he becomes the Course Lecturer and Tutors of that course do what lecturer instructs through course profile. In this way, they become the Associate lecturer of that course. Therefore, tutor is the medium of teacher and placed as the frontline personnel in the program delivery.

Tutors require dealing with tutor marked assignments (TMAs) by commenting on them and scoring them for continuous assessment. This teaching is the most important element in tutors' work because it is the only support that to every learner, so it is vital that tutor learns the skills of supportive correspondence teaching. In addition, in-course test and final examination making also be done by tutors.

Course lecturer determines the details content of tutorials and tutor may have to plan for tutorials although the dates and venue of the tutorial timetable is arranged. Tutorial sessions are fortnightly for all the courses in the program and held in the weekend. These face-to-face tutorials are the prime activity of the tutors which provides tutors with the satisfaction for sharing ODL with disadvantaged group of the society. Attendance at tutorial is optional and some learners might not come to any tutorials; all tutor's support to these individual has to be via correspondence teaching and the telephone or computer. Home visits – perhaps to disabled learners – are a rarity; such as undertaking is optional, and they are paid extra for it. Most Tutors of the JSC program are trained to work with adults, school aged distance learners and adolescents for handling adult problems.

## **9 Educational administration**

BOU is a large and complex organization that is constantly developing and changing. In a system where most of the learners and staff are working in isolation, good communications and effective administration are especially important. Tutor plays an important part in this organization, and help learners to manage their studies.

### **9.1 Learning**

The content of the course is delivered by a carefully designed package of open learning materials. So, tutors do not have a primary responsibility to deliver the curriculum; tutor teaching role is one of facilitating learning and supporting learners. Tutors help students – particularly those new to open learning – to develop the skills of learning at a distance from a variety of media: written, visual, aural or electronic. Indeed, tutor may need to acquire some of these skills, such as effective reading, academic writing, numeric, revision and examination

techniques. There are specially developed materials to support in these areas. Many students expect to be taught by conventional lectures – some may need encouragement to realize that they are responsible for their learning, and that self-directed activities and group discussion can lead to a deeper level of understanding that is more valuable than conventional memory work.

## **9.2 Vocational consideration**

Vocational education is the integral part of the JSC program.

## **9.3 Role of regional centre**

Each centre has a Student Support services section. Student Service staff offer specialist information, support and counseling – for example on the University regulations, fees, disability or vocational guidance – and tutor are welcomed to refer students to support services, if there is complex or specialized issues involved. Supervisors are responsible for local support of students (preparation for study or assistance with problems that are hindering progress) and the counseling role.

## **9.4 Role of academic staff**

Tutors are primarily responsible for the academic side of the Local presentation of courses (tutorials and assessment) and the teaching role. Central academics at the Open School produce course materials and carry out research; tutor becomes the regional academics also contribute in these areas.

## **10 Counseling**

Counseling is the one of the important support services in ODL delivery. Both the institution and the students require the counseling supports. But why? For example, many tutors, even after orientation, still felt confused and utterly unaware of what to do and particularly how to do it. A follow-up counseling after orientation for tutors could be very useful and effective in getting new tutors to grasp what they are expected to do and to settle down to work. Many tutors after orientation still prefer teaching as they were accustomed to in conventional institute. Interventions through counseling could be very helpful in getting them to self-appraise and identify crucial steps and procedures as well as personal qualities and attitudes required for effective tutoring.

Supervisors are trained to work with tutors, centre coordinator, and finally learners as counselor.

Learners of the JSC Program generally do not easily and willingly go for counseling. But it is very important for getting learners settle down. In the western countries, in a place, Councilors wait for learners to come to them to imbibe effective study habits, acquire efficient learning strategies and develop self monitoring techniques. Because of cultural and socio-economic reasons this doesn't work for the JSC. Counselors must go to the learners to find out what their problems are. Supervisors are instructed to do the same. The sustainability of the JSC is also very much dependant on supervisors role. They are well trained to work with adults and distance learners. Most Counselors are trained to work with adolescents.

Supervisor are oriented that most adolescents in ODL prefer minimal reading, copious didactic face to face teaching. They thus need counseling and guidance in self study and personal reading habits. The Counselor must be able to do this for them to sustain their interest in counseling and in their studies.

Supervisors are instructed to increase personal attention to the learners because most learners need personal attention, personal contacts and interaction which give them the feeling that the Open School (Open University) is not too 'distant' from them both physically and emotionally. The Counselor fills this gap for the Open School and for the individual student

by ensuring that the School gets to know about every individual registered student's progress, challenges and fears; and by assuring the individual learners get acquainted with School rules, regulations and any changes thereof; acquainting him or her with important dates and reminding him or her of deadlines for schedules ; serving as the mirror reflecting what the School knows, feels and thinks about the individual student to him or her.

Supervisor is instructed to provide counseling to cover all students. JSC has ICT infrastructural problems and deficiencies, mobile technologies have to be used. Quality counseling with more students will eventually reap in a higher completion rate. Learners see the gains of counseling, then counseling is more likely to be sustained and more will patronize counseling services.

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