



The Role of ODL in Assam State, India

Dipankar SAIKIA
Gauhati University, Assam, India
dipgu2009@gmail.com

ABSTRACT :

Distance learning is a field of education that focuses on the pedagogy, technology, and instructional system designs that aim to deliver education to those students who are not physically "on site" like in a traditional classroom or campus. Although India is the third largest country in the world in terms of higher education, after China and the United States, India still has a current ratio of enrolment in the educational institution below 9 % which is less than the average of lower-middle-income countries in the world. In this context distance and open learning open up the door of higher education due to its flexible and innovative as well as low cost characteristics.

1. INTRODUCTION :

Since the time immemorial education plays an important role in moulding human behaviour. In common parlance education is termed as any act or experience which has a constructive effect on the human mind and improves the physical as well as mental ability of a person. In the technical terms education is a process of transmitting knowledge, skill from one to another generation. Education is a life long process. It is the sum total of our experience and it is unlike our conventional system is not limited to the four walls and a definite stage or age. In this context the concept of Distance and Open Learning was emerged as an alternative of our conventional educational system. The conventional education system is limited to the four walls and covered only those people who are in direct contact of the institution. But the distance or the open learning covers those who are unreached. In the simple term distance learning, is a field of education that focuses on the pedagogy, technology, and instructional system designs that aims to deliver education to those students who are

not physically "on site" like in a traditional classroom or campus. It is a flexible form of learning process where a student can study from home, work, on the move or wherever else is convenient. It is worth mentioning here that first of all The University of London introduced the distance learning process in the year 1858. Again it is termed as open, because unlike our traditional system of education the age of a student does not become barrier in getting education or a higher degree.

2. METHODS :

2.1 Education in India

As stated, education has been recognized as a major contributing factor to improve the human mind in the social, cultural and intellectual aspects of human being. In India where more than 100 crores people are living and termed as an emerging super power of international field but still its education level does not met the international requirements. It is worth mentioning here that India has a rich history

in the field of higher education since the most ancient times. Indeed it is the Nalanda University that is the oldest university-system of education in the world. However, the flow of western education is traced back to the British Raj. The establishment of the University Grant Commission has also boosted the development of higher education in India. Now, the educational system falls under the control of the Union as well as the state governments.

It needs mention here that with having 483 universities (39 Central Universities; 255 State Universities; 59 private universities; 130 deemed universities), and over 16,885 colleges including 1,798 colleges for women, India's higher education system is the third largest in the world, after China and the United States. In addition to this there are 1173 polytechnic institutes (UGC, 2007) but still the current ratio of enrolment in the educational institution is below 9 % which is less than the average of lower middle income countries in the world. The situation is worse in Assam. The drop out is higher than the rest of India. In this perspective the distance and open learning contributed a lot towards providing a quality higher education to all because of its flexible and innovative as well as low cost characteristics.

2.2 Distance Education in India

The history of distance and open learning traced back to the innovative idea formulated by the Delhi University to provide some courses in the year 1962. After that Punjabi University also took some initiative in this field. However, in an organized mood the open learning got its impetus with the opening of National Open University in 1982. Again with the Establishment of Indira Gandhi national Open University (IGNOU) in 1985 make a registered a remarkable progress in this field. Now IGNOU becomes one of largest Open University of the world. Now India has more than 10 mono-mode open universities and 65 centers for distance education in dual mode delivery. In terms of

providing education in distance mood South India occupied a predominant position. A significant initiative is taken by the government of India in 1992. It established the Distance Education Council (DEC) as the apex body for the promotion, coordination and maintenance of the standards of distance education.

2.3 The Role of Distance Education in Assam

Assam, the north-eastern state of India also adopted this flexible mood of education for the robust growth of its educational system. It is worth mentioning here that Assam is one of the backward state of in terms of its economic and social development. The educational level is also in a bad position. However, the children of Assam (North East Region) have consistently showed the low rate of education and childhood immunizations. According to the 2001 census the literacy rate of Assam is 63.25 percent which is much lower than the national level and stands below Mizoram, (88.80%), Tripura (73.19%), Manipur (70.53%) and Sikkim (68.81%) and Nagaland (66.59%). But the state makes a slow progress in its educational sector. The government of Assam with the view of provides education to all established The Krishna Kanta Handique State Open University, first of its kind in the entire North East and fourteenth amongst the Open universities by the Assam Legislative Assembly by an Act (XXXVII of 2005) in 1995. It covers all those students who were departed from the education in their early stages. The university provides level 10 to Graduate level courses. Apart from these the University also provides professional courses to generate self employment opportunities.

In this field one concrete step was taken by Gauhati University the pioneer institute of Assam's with the motto of 'Quality Higher Education for All' provides higher education to the unreached through 'Post Graduate Correspondence School' established in the year 1998. Now in 2011,

SAIKIA

this Gauhati University's Post-Graduate Correspondence School has completed 12 glorious years.

3. RESULTS :

The university has changed its name to the 'Institute of Distance and Open Learning' (IDOL) in 2000. Due to its increased access and flexibility as well as the combination of work and education facility makes IDOL the first choice of Assamese people for getting a higher degree and acquiring knowledge of his interested field.

The IDOL as an integral part of the Gauhati University has now become a pioneer institute in providing higher education to all. It is clearly visible when the number of students reached more than ten thousand in the year 2011. It is worth mentioning here that IDOL provides an opportunity to the working people or those who wants to carry their study. Most recently 72 years old housewife make an example by getting masters Degree form the institute. It should be an example for those who are interested to get a University degree. Various initiatives like e-portal, face to face contract with the students, good printed study materials, and teleconference with the faculties in any day of weak and with a well arranged and fully loaded library IDOL helps the students to acquired knowledge in the various fields. Most recently IDOL also take initiative to provides the basic knowledge to the students how to prepare for the National and state level competitive examination. Basically the Department of Computer Science, Political Science and Assamese take the leading role in providing model questions and answers and the basic logic of success to catch-up the National level examination specially NET and SLET. In other words we can say that IDOL is not only providing a higher degree to its students but also provides a way to compete in his future life.

Besides IDOL and KKHSU, Dibrugarh University and most recently the University of Tezpur have also introduced distance

courses in their campuses to help people to extend a dynamic personality for themselves as they help them to connect in several activities. For those who cannot go to attend regular classes, distance learning in Assam has come as blessings.

3. CONCLUSION :

In the context of globalization the distance education may provides many opportunities especially in Assam for the realization of their goals. In this context the two main factors of IDOL which have lead to attract the interest of the Assamese people are the growing need for continual skills upgrading and retraining ; and also the technological advances that have made it possible to teach more and more subjects at a distance. Apart form these good infrastructures, leadership and efforts of its all employee, more learner-centred approach, enrichment, higher quality and new ways of interaction makes IDOL a better place for getting not only a higher degree but also knowledge of their desired fields. It is often said that the success of democracy greatly relies on the people's participation level and the way they behave. In this context IDOL with the well utilization of Information and Communication Technology brings revolutionary changes in bringing awareness among the students. The records of its E-Portal users, which is reached more than two thousands revels the success of IDOL. Now the concept of digital democracy is well accepted because of its effectiveness and participatory nature. For the proper utilization of digital democratic system there should be someone who takes the leading role. In this context with the one-way information provision the two-way consultation relationship and active participation of the students can make the dream of digital democracy be true.

REFERENCES :

Beeby, C.E. (1966). *The quality of education in developing countries*, Cambridge, MA : Harvard University Press.

- Daniel, J. (2005). *Towards a culture of quality*. International Conference of Quality in Distance Education, Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose Open University, Kolkata, India.
- Perraton, H., & Creed, C. (2000). *Applying new technologies and cost-effective delivery systems in basic education*. Thematic study for Education for All 2000 Assessment. Paris: UNESCO.
- Prasad V.S., & Stella, A. (2006). *Best practices benchmarking in higher education for quality enhancement*. University News, New Delhi, India.

Dipankar SAIKIA is in the Faculty of Political Science, at the Institute of Distance and Open Learning <http://idolgu.org> of Gauhati University, Assam State, India. <http://www.gauhati.ac.in/>
Telephone : 91- 361 2673728. email : dipgu2009@gmail.com

For copyright / reproducing permission details, email : Office@AsianJDE.org