IJCSMS International Journal of Computer Science & Management Studies, Vol. 11, Issue 02, Aug 2011
ISSN (Online): **2231 –5268**
www.ijcsms.com

QUALITY CONCERNS AND QUALITY ASSURANCE IN THE ERA OF GLOBALIZATION VIS-À-VIS ICT AND ODL

Dr. Supreet Kaur
Assistant Professor, Deptt. Of Education, USOL, P.U., Chandigarh
supreet10000@gmail.com

Abstract

Globalization is not a new phenomena but the present era of globalization driven by competitive global markets is out spacing the governance of markets and the repercussions on people. Globalization and the information revolution present increasing difficulties for the national states as they attempt to make choices about how to respond and allocate their scarce resources to confront this challenge. Technological advances have created a paradigm shift in education and definition of distance learning where telecommunication, software and internet eliminate walls and boundaries. However the use and the effectiveness of technology will depend on quality of decision making with regard to the choice of technology and the quality of content and its presentation. The emerging technologies of distance learning can have a positive effect in the educational system if we recognize that change is a journey; not a blueprint and the development of new skills, behavior and beliefs is a complex process that must, embrace the problems inherent in change. In the present scenario, need of the hour is not only to acquire needful technology but it is also necessary to clearly define the objectives to be achieved through technology. For this, it is necessary that ODL institutions have significant degree of advanced technology, the infrastructure and capacity to install it, the human resources to use it and the environment to tap its educational potential. However, this role can be played more effectively and meaningfully only when we link pedagogy and technology, without losing the site of fundamental concepts of quality, pertinence and innovation. The paper examines the ability of distance education to prepare youth to be useful and effective agents of change and transformation in the future globalize society.

Keywords: *Quality assurance, globalization, Impact on education, technology in distance education.*

Introduction

The term globalization came into common usage in the early 1980s. Initially the term signified technological advances that made it easier and faster to complete international transactions and enhance economic growth.
Gradually, the term also began to refer to the movement of people and knowledge across international borders. Today, the term has expanded its dimensions to include broader cultural, educational, political and environmental issues as well. The most striking aspect of globalization has, however, been the integration of financial markets made possible by modern electronic means of communication.
In essence, it is a process of growing interdependence between people of all nations characterized by increased in flows of trade, capital and information as well as mobility of individuals, across borders. It is not a new phenomenon- globalization has progressed throughout the course of recorded history, although though not in a linear fashion. The meanings attached to the process of globalization seem to be increasing rather than narrowing over time, taking on cultural, political and environmental dimensions in addition to economic. A buzzword of new millennium, the term 'globalization' acquired considerable force during the 1990's. The phenomena of globalization have captured world attention in many areas–the information superhighway, international trade, telecommunications and the internet.

GLOBALIZATION AND its IMPACT ON INDIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM

The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) report argues that globalization is not new, but that the present era of globalization, driven by competitive global markets, is out-spacing the governance of markets and the repercussions on people. Characterized by 'shrinking space, shrinking time and disappearing borders' globalization has swung open doors to opportunities breakthroughs in communication technologies and biotechnology if directed for the needs of people can bring advances for the whole of humankind.
When we visualize the system of higher education in India we realize that in the present scenario, it cannot prepare India for a competitive world. There exists a conflict between excellence and equity.
The system of higher education in country has been trying to meet the demands of nearly 8 million students with the help of 0.3 million teachers. Yet the proportion of college

going student population in the relevant age group of 16 to 23 years is dismal 6 percent. This is very low from the point of view of developing countries. The figure is 20 percent in Egypt, 10% in turkey and 11% for Brazil. However in developed countries access to higher education is to the tune of 40 percent. Thus, though higher education has expanded in India a lot, access and equity and excellence continue to be cause of concern in the existing scenario. Distance education has emerged as an alternative model to the conventional education system. The first and basic advantage of open education system is its flexibility. The flexibility in terms of time, place, age, occupation certainly gives a new hope and fresh life to thousands of learners who were the victims of the Indian traditional education system. Since the Open University is a learner centered system, it provides education to large and diverse groups of students in a flexible manner. As far as the qualifications are concerned most of the learners who could not continue in the formal system because of socio economic and cultural reasons have the advantage of open learning. Further the flexibility of entry into academic programs irrespective of their age, qualification makes the learner to pursue their higher education. Since open learning system in India adopts multi-media approach learner can study the course material, match audio visual programs related to their courses in his pace and place. To seek further help or information they can attend counseling sessions in nearby study centers during weekends. This facility helps the learners who work for their livelihoods. The examination and evaluation system also gives greater flexibility for the learners.

Thus Open University system in India came into existence with a popular slogan "education at your doorsteps" literally brought higher education closer to the people second important factor for the success of open learning system is its cost effectiveness. Access in terms of reach, particularly geographical distance is another advantage of D.E. Providing education to all in a country like India in conventional methods has proved to be a difficult task because huge population lives in vast geographical regions.

In such a situation, D.E. made access of higher education simple to learners through study centers covering all the geographical areas. Thus flexibility in terms of study, greater access compared to conventional educational system and multi media teaching, learning, package and the cost effectiveness has attracted millions of people. It resulted in equity, diversity and inclusiveness with in the society.

Now coming to the question of excellence, in developing countries, main questions concerning DE are

- Inadequate finances
- Poor communicational and infrastructural facilities.
- Absence of clear cut government policies.
- Limited use of audio-visual media.
- Shortage of experts to develop multi media courses.
- Lack of financial and academic autonomy for distance- teaching institutions.
- Low social and academic status of distance education because of quality issues.

Studies show that distance educators are confronted with following concerns.

- Will there be appreciable degree of success in the course completion rates.
- Are there job opportunities for those who complete their studies through distance mode?
- Are these enough arrangements to provide education to these who want it, irrespective of their value?

These are some of the issues dominate the thinking of the policy makers and administrators in the developing countries.

The distance and open learning system is presently not geared to meeting the challenges posed by the learning communities. This is because the existing distance and open learning system has based itself on the formal system of education and has catered largely to learners from the tertiary sector. The influence of the formal system has influenced the manner in which the distance education courses have been developed and offered. Thus, so called experts develop the content of such courses and the courses are delivered to the learners. Tests are designed to examine how much rote memorization has taken place. Further more, it is 'One size fits all' that has guided distance and open learning system so for.

If this is to change and the open and distance learning system has to build or support learning communities, then the system would first have to undergo a process of unlearning and then relearning in order to understand how learning communities can be built. This would entail a complete change of mindset and de-conditioning of all our parts. The challenge would be to develop a variety of courses for adults wherever they may be in the homes, outside in the fields, in the workplace, in the community – using whatever media is at their disposal- television, local radio, satellite, cable, ISDN networks, and the internet to make learning number one activity in each community. But in order for this to happen, open and distance learning would have to start focusing on the needs of people as learner and finding out what, why, when and how people prefer to learn, discovering new learning methods, identifying the basic skills which people need in order to learn better individually, in groups and in families using the modern technologies and tools to provide new learning for people wherever they want to receive it.

This may be difficult initially because broad aim of D.E. in a developing country like India is nation building, eradication of illiteracy, health education, women education, and tribal education, education of the socially disadvantaged groups besides the usual academic and vocational programs.

However in near future, with the systematic appraisal of the distance education, its broad aim will be provide education to individuals who need it at different levels with different individual needs.

Distance learning and its relationship to emerging technologies have together offered many opportunities in the field of education. The arrival of newer technologies certainly seems to have stimulated a resurgence of interest in diversifying methods of knowledge delivery. The increasing use of technology in distance education has lot of promises but also poses some serious challenges especially in developing countries in developing and delivering the educational programs. However technology has different role to play in developing and advanced countries of the world. In advanced countries, technology offers an opportunity to learners to choose their ways to learn but in developing countries, it proposes to increase the educational access to masses. In the latter case, the possibility of increasing the educational access through technology is intimately bound up with the many factors namely, whether ODL institutions have significant degree of advanced technology, the infrastructure and the capacity to install it, the human resources to use it and the environment to tap its educational potential. This paper will examine some of the current research and thought on the quality concerns regarding the use of ICT in distance education.

Inducting Technology in Distance Education

UNESCO (2002) views Open and Distance education as representing approaches that focuses on opening access to education and training provision, freeing learners from the constraints of time and place, and offering flexible learning opportunities to individuals and group of learners.

It can be deduced from the above definition that open and distance learning (ODL) provides educational opportunities needed by anyone, anywhere and at anytime. Hence, ODL may be viewed as a formalized teaching and learning system specifically designed to be carried out remotely by using a variety of media and technologies for instructional delivery. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) which has revolutionized the entire world deals with the aspect of managing and processing information through the use of electronic computers and computer software to convert, store, protect, process and transcript and review information. The ICT knowledge, skills and understanding are now more emphasized and integrated into many areas including education. ICT is a process of creation, processing, storage, retrieval and dissemination of information and data using computers and telecommunication. In education, ICT can be viewed as the application of digital equipment to all aspects of teaching and learning. It involves combination of technologies for collecting, storing, processing, communicating and delivering of information related to teaching and learning processes (Johnson, 2007). With the emergence of the new technology, the barriers of time, space and location are removed as people have new opportunities to learn through open and distance education. Thus in the present scenario, distance education has gained tremendous reorganization for its ability to accept and use new educational technologies, while traditional education has been resistant to change and is not structured to make complete use of the new developments.

Technology is the bedrock of the Open and Distance mode of education. It has come a long way from correspondence via print material to technology that currently ODE i.e. audio-teleconferencing facilities, video conferencing and broadcast via TV/radio. The common perception is that physical distance between teacher and learners is the biggest barrier that can be removed effectively by using communication technology effectively. However, the solution to this challenge is not so simple. It requires critical thinking on the following issues in order to harness technology in an efficient and meaningful way to serve educational needs.

Clearly Defined Objectives

Every distance and open learning institution before going in for multi-media approach in all its educational activities much decide what is its driving force. Is it because of sheer fascination for ICT or the anxiety to be ‘modern’ in order to stay in business? Or is it because of the wish to attain economics of scale in the long run and increase the access to educational programs through ICT? It is very important that institution should be clear about the choice and use of technology. Nevertheless, if it is based on unrealistic ambition and expectations, the results would be devastating so far as the institutional health and its future are concerned.

Unfortunately, many institutions have gone ahead with their multi-media approach without adequate preparedness. They are so much lured by the fancy and glamour of sophisticated multi media technology that they hardly get any time to think about the educational value of it in a given situation. The need of the hour is that apart from establishing the real need for technology, it is also necessary to clearly define the objectives to be achieved through technology

Adequate Infrastructural Facilities

Every ODL institution should have necessary basic infrastructural facilities such as the equipment, personnel and space at the study/ regional centers to link the students with the institutions. Ability of institutions to develop adequate infrastructural facilities will ultimately decide the success of policy implementation. Each and every factor such as buildings, space design factors to install the equipment and the personnel to use the technology right way will impact the implementation of any technology policy.

Proper human resources management

It is true that ICT-driven ODE has distinct advantages in that the extent of delivery is not dependent on human number alone. However, this does not negate the dire need for highly qualified, well trained facilities in the ODE institutions. Due to the prevalent and pervasive misconception that ODE systems hardly need human resources, many centers are understaffed for academic as well as administrative purposes. In addition, a large proportion of personnel currently engaged in ODE are not equipped to handle ODE pedagogy and delivery, especially with regard to the efficient use of ICT. Human resource management would includes content designed to meet the needs and requirements of teachers and staff in work situation, and delivery through distributed classroom modes, including need-supported, audio usual and face to face interaction on a regular basis with experts, practitioners and peers. The success of networked training team, consisting of local tutors as well as master teachers and experts, should be judged from the transformative value they achieve as reflected in learners performance. Human resource training must be undertaken for developing and maintaining the systemic ability to learn as one wants, where one wants, when one wants and what one wants. The need is to create human resource cadre with capability to develop, provide and maintain updated and appropriate infrastructure for each program, as well as the general infrastructure.

Linkage of Pedagogy and Technology

Pedagogy in ODE must abandon the one size fits all approach and be redesigned to provide high quality education at a low cost to suit diverse needs of life long learners. The hallmark of pedagogy in ODE system is the creation of self instructional material (SIM) transmissible through several modes. The pedagogical process in ODE must evolve beyond that of the conventional system and evolve its own unique structure suited to its basic aims. Pedagogy in ODE should encompass not only the teaching process, but also instructional design, interactivity with learner in terms of supervision and guidance, and the ability to transcend barriers of both space and time to enable life long learning for all. It must be flexible and dynamic enough to suit the need of every learner and respond effectively to the needs of workplace in the knowledge economy. Such capacity can be achieved through appropriate integration of technology particularly ICT, broadband and satellite connectivity. The emphases of pedagogy must be on learner autonomy, personalized modules and situated learning and development. The complex and dynamic pedagogical design desirable in ODE is best achieved by adopting the "intelligent flexible learning model" which combines interactive multimedia internet based access to common resources and computer based communication using automated response system. The 'flexible learning model' allow learners to:

- Choose the content, media and method of learning as per ones own requirements or requirement of group where one belongs.
- Get considerable scope for interaction with tutors counselors and learners.
- Access global exchanges of views in a learning situation as the system permits.
- Take increasing responsibility for one's own learning within a framework of easily available support.

The pedagogical content should address the developmental aspirations of individuals and communities, especially in terms of vocational training, capacity building, devising sustainability and long term survival strategies.

Conclusion

The paper has discussed the concept of ICT as it relates to enhancing quality in open and distance learning (ODL). Distance education and advancing technologies are changing the relationships between institutes of higher learning. Just two decades ago, very few states promoted distance education, while today virtually all states have distance education programs and are promoting the use of computer based communications for information, transmission and interaction. As these new relationships develop and higher education institutions adapt to changes in educational technologies they are evolving new technological infrastructures that define the new environment.

Distance education technology is evolving and exponential gains in technology continue to create increasing opportunities for innovation. However, this role can be played more affectively and meaningfully only when we get engaged in finding right solution through linkage of

pedagogy and technology without losing the site of quality of programs and services.

REFERENCES

[1] Gedam, R. (2005), Digital divide and Education. In Y. Josephine (Ed.) Globalization and challenges for education. New Delhi: Shipra Publications.

[2] Josephine, Y. (Ed.) (2003), Globalization and Challenges for Education. New Delhi: Shipra Publication.

[3] Mohanty, J. (2002), Adult and Non-Formal Education. New Delhi: Deep and Deep Publications.

[4] Mukhopadhay, M. (Ed.) (2007), Education for a Global Society, New Delhi: Shipra Publications.

[5] National Policy on Education (1986 and Revised 1992), Government of India, MHRD, New Delhi, 1993.

[6] Ramanujam, P.R. (Ed.) (2009), Globalization, Education and Open Distance Learning. New Delhi: Shipra Publications.

[7] Sarkar, A.N. (2009), enhancing global Competitiveness: Advantage India. New Delhi: I.K. International Publishing House.

[8] Sausanwal, D.N. (2000), Information Technology and Higher Education. University News, 38 (46)

[9] Thakur, A.K. & Patel, M. (Eds.) (2010), Challenges of Education in 21st Century. New Delhi: Deep and Deep Publications.