

Block

1

BASIC ISSUES OF OPEN AND DISTANCE EDUCATION

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MDE-411: Growth and Philosophy of Distance Education

(New Course in place of ES-311: Growth and Philosophy of Distance Education)

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MDE-411 GROWTH AND PHILOSOPHY OF DISTANCE EDUCATION

Course Outline

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- Unit 3 : Emerging New Learner in Globalizing Era

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 - Unit 8 : Developing Improved Strategies Towards Better Students Support Services
 - Unit 9 : The Problem of Creating a Discipline of Distance Education
 - Unit 10 : Is Distance Education a Discipline
-

INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE

Dear Learner! Welcome to this course.

The purpose of this course on the Growth and Philosophy of Distance Education is to emphasise the fact that distance education is not just an educational fad, but an innovation which has immediate socio-economic relevance as well as sound philosophical basis. Consequent upon which it has taken only a couple of decades to become a universal movement. To contribute to an end practice distance education purposefully one must have a clear understanding of its fundamentals, its sociology, its philosophy and its history. With this belief in view, we are presenting this course in five blocks, each one of which is to serve a specific purpose.

Introduction to the Block

This block presents basic understanding and background of open and distance education. The block is more general in views, opinion and perceptions on open and distance education. This block serves basics of open and distance learning which enables you to enter in the world of distance education. Here we have addressed ourselves to the following issues:

- i) the basics of Open and Distance Educational issues were addressed to familiarised the world of open and distance education.
- ii) Given the present economic situation, is there any socio-political justification for promoting distance education as a reformative educational strategy?
- ii) Assuming that our answer to the above question is 'Yes', what degree of academic credibility does this reformative strategy claim in developing countries and what does it actually deserve?
- iii) If distance education has the kind of academic credibility which it deserves, can it claim to be a purposeful and effective educational strategy by itself the way, for example, conventional education is supposed to be?
- iv) If we accept distance education both as a reformative and effective educational strategy, what micro and macro problems is it faced with?

We shall devote a unit to each of these issues. In order to keep our discussion down-to-earth, we deal with the first two issues with the help of two case studies, the third issue through a discussion, and the fourth with reference to a specific practice of distance education in India.

In considering these issues, you would notice that we have started with "Understanding open and distance education", tackled the question 'why distance education?' (unit 1), the issue of its social credibility and justice (unit 2), We also discuss the attributes of the emergence of new learner (unit 3).

LET US BEGIN HERE

Study Guide

The course on Growth and Philosophy of Distance Education is divided into five Blocks. This is the first of them. It comprises three units in all. schematic representation of the design of units is given below to facilitate your access to the content presented here.

UNIT X?

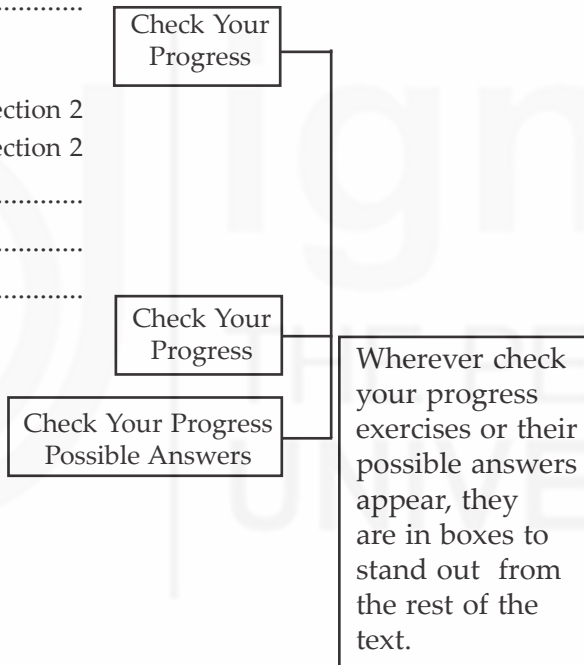
- X.0 Objectives
- X.1 Introduction
- X.2 Section 1 (Main Theme)
 - X.2.1 Sub-section 1 of Section 1
 - X.2.2 Sub-section 2 of Section 1

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- X.3 Section 2 (Main Theme)
 - X.3.1 Sub-section 1 of Section 2
 - X.3.2 Sub-section 2 of Section 2

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- X.n Let Us Sum Up



'X' stands for the serial number of the unit concerned.

As the scheme suggests, we have divided the units into sections for easy reading and better comprehension. Each section is indicated distinctly by bold capitals and each sub-section by relatively smaller but bold upper and lower typeface. The significant divisions within sub-sections are in still smaller but bold upper and lower typeface so as to make it easier for you to see their place within sub-sections. For purposes of uniformity, we have employed the same scheme of 'partitioning' in every unit throughout the course.

We begin each unit with the section 'Objectives'. It articulates briefly:

- what we have presented in the unit, and
- what we expect from you once you complete working on the unit.

In the last section of each unit, under the heading, 'Let Us Sum Up', we summarise the whole unit for purposes of recapitulation and ready reference.

Besides, we have given self-check exercises under the caption 'Check Your Progress' or 'Self-check Exercises' at a few places in each unit which invariably ends with possible answers to the questions set in these exercises.

What, perhaps, you would do is to go through the units and jot down important points in the space provided in the margin. (Broad margins in the booklets are there for you to write your notes on). Make your notes as you work through the materials: This will help you prepare for the examination as also in assimilating the content. Besides, you will be able to save time. Do use these margins. This will help you keep track of and assimilate what you have been reading in the unit, answer the self-check exercises and the assignment questions and easily identify the item(s) to be clarified.

Mail us

Please note that we have provided a questionnaire at the end of this block. After having gone through the course, complete the questionnaire and mail it to:

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Your feedback pertaining to this block will be very useful for maintenance and revision of this block.

Wish you best of luck.

UNIT 1 UNDERSTANDING OPEN AND DISTANCE EDUCATION

Structure

- 1.0 Objectives
- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Definitions of Open and Distance Education
- 1.3 Features of Open and Distance Education
- 1.4 The Paradigm Shift in Distance Education
- 1.5 Scope of Open and Distance Education
- 1.6 One System Many Names: Nomenclatures of Open and Distance Learning
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 - 1.6.3 Continuing Education
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 - 1.9.4 Food for Thought
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- 1.11 Check Your Progress: Possible Answers
- 1.12 Glossary
- 1.13 References

1.0 OBJECTIVES

After studying of this unit, you will be able to:

- Define Open and Distance Education;
- Trace the features and scope of Open and Distance Education;
- Differentiate face-to-face education and open and distance education;
- Identify different types of Distance Education Institutions and; and
- Recognize different vocabulary and instructions available at global level.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

In this unit we are going to study the basics of open and distance education. Here, we will explain the nature, scope, different meanings and definitions of open and distance education. Besides you will also study why and how open and distance education is different from face-to-face education. It is otherwise called paradigm shift in education. This paradigm shift is because open and distance education is learner centred education, whereas face-to-face education is a teacher centred education. In the face to face situation, it is the teacher who teaches whereas in open and distance learning, it is the institution that teaches. In fact, it can be called as institutionalized teaching and learning system at a distance. For both systems, the gamut is its learners; they are the real stakeholders of the system.

In this unit, we will define Open and Distance Education from various perspectives. This will enable you to generalise the relevance of Open and Distance Education and contextualize it to your own experiences. An attempt has also been made to explain the differences between face-to-face and distance learning systems. The overall focus of this unit is to provide various conceptual inputs, both western and Indian, to make ODL relevant to the context of developing countries. An attempt is also made to explain open and distance education based upon Indian experiences.

1.2 DEFINITIONS OF OPEN AND DISTANCE EDUCATION

Before we define Open and Distance Education, it will be useful to know about the first Open University of the world i.e. UK Open University and its mission. The underlying philosophy of the UKOU is reflected in the vision statement made by Lord Perry, the first Vice-Chancellor of the UK Open University, "The Open University is open to people, places, methods and ideas... It promotes educational opportunity and social justice by providing high-quality university education to all who wish to realize their ambitions and fulfil their potential" (Open University website (<http://www.open.ac.uk>)). This thinking has been followed in letter and spirit by most of the open universities across the world.

Open learning is a popular term. The trends evolved in open learning system have their roots in distance learning. It is seen that distance learning institutions are gradually mostly converting themselves into open learning institutions. Here in this section, we shall discuss more about open learning.

If you review literature on open and distance learning, you will find several definitions of open learning. As the scope of this unit is to explain the basics of open and distance learning, we have selected a few key definitions that will help you to understand these terms. These are given below. Based upon your experiences as a distance educator/learner, you can choose the most suitable definition as per your own context and purpose.

Derek Rowntree defined open and distance learning in the following manner (Rowntree, 1992):

- “Open learning as a philosophy or a set of beliefs about teaching and learning and distance learning as a method/s or a set of techniques for teaching and learning.
- Open Learning is an arrangement to enable a person to learn at the time, place and pace which satisfies their circumstances and requirements. The emphasis is on *opening up opportunities by overcoming barriers that result from geographical isolation, personal or work commitments or conventional courses structures which have often prevented people from gaining access to the training they need.*”

According to Perraton (2000), the term ‘open learning’, with its ambiguities about the meaning of the term ‘open’, has led some of its protagonists to shy away from defining it, labelling it as a philosophy rather than a method, as such, a usage is a pretext for its vagueness.

‘Open Learning’ was mentioned in one of the issues of the Pitman’s Journal in 1929 long before the first Open University in the world (UKOU) was established in 1969.

Some other common definitions of Open and Distance Learning are as follows:

- “An open learning system is one in which the restrictions placed on students are under constant review and removed wherever possible. It incorporates the widest range of teaching strategies, in particular those *using independent and individualised learning.*” (Coffey, 1977)
- “The family of instructional methods in which teaching behaviours are performed apart from learning behaviours, including those that in a contiguous situation would be performed in the learner’s present, so that communication between the teacher and the learner must be facilitated by print, electronic, mechanical or other devices.” (Moore, 1973).
- “A method of imparting knowledge, skills and attitudes which is rationalised by the application of division of labour and organisational principles as well as by the extensive use of technical media, specially for the purpose of reproducing high quality teaching material which makes it possible to instruct great numbers of students at the same time wherever they live. It is *an industrialised form of teaching and learning.*” (Peters, 1973).
- A comprehensive UNESCO document entitled ‘Open Learning’ describes open learning as follows: “Such systems are designed to offer opportunities for part-time study, for learning at a distance and for innovations in the curriculum. They are intended to allow access to wider section of adult population, to enable students to compensate for lost opportunities in the past or to acquire new

skills and qualifications for the future. Open learning systems aim to redress social or educational inequality and to offer opportunities not provided by conventional colleges or universities". (Mackenzie, Postgate and Scupham, 1975)

- "...consists of various forms of teaching-learning arrangements in which teachers and learners carry out their essential tasks and responsibilities apart from one another, communicating in a variety of ways. Its purposes are to provide...learners with opportunity to continue learning in their own environments, and developing...the capacity to carry on *self-directed learning*..." (Wedemeyer, 1977)
- "The various forms of study at all levels which are not under continuous, immediate supervision of tutors present with their students in lecture rooms on the same premises, but which nevertheless, benefit from the planning, guidance and tuition of a tutorial organisation." (Holmberg, 1981)
- "...educational process in which a significant proportion of *teaching is conducted by someone removed in space and/or time from the learner.*" (Perraton, 1982)
- Subsequently Perraton (1997) defined 'open learning' as an "organised educational activity, based on the use of teaching materials, in which *constraints on study are minimised either in terms of access, or of time and place, pace, methods of study or any combination of these.*"
- "Open learning" is a term used to describe *courses flexibly designed to meet individual requirements*. It is often applied to provision which tries to remove barriers that prevent attendance at more traditional courses, but it also suggests *a learner-centered philosophy.*" (Lewis & Spencer, 1986)
- "... a wide range of learning opportunities that both aim to assist learners in gaining access to knowledge and skills they would otherwise be denied and to *give learners the optimum degree of control over their own learning.*" (Dixon, 1987)
- "Open learning is a *state of mind* rather than a method with particular characteristics." (Jack, 1988)
- "Open learning is not just about access alone; it is also about providing people with a fair chance of success." (Holt & Bonnici, 1988)

The above definitions will be useful in understanding open learning in general. Let us now elaborate Distance Education characteristics as specified by the Commonwealth of Learning (COL). These are as follows:

- Separation of teacher and learner in time or place, or in both time and place;
- Institutional accreditation; that is, learning is accredited or certified by some institution or agency. This type of learning is distinct from learning through your own effort without the official recognition of a learning institution;
- Use of mixed-media courseware, including print, radio and television broadcasts, video and audio-cassettes, computer-based learning and telecommunications. Courseware tends to be pre-tested and validated before use;

- Two-way communication allows learners and tutors to interact as distinguished from the passive receipt of broadcast signals. Communication can be synchronous or asynchronous;
- Possibility of face-to-face meetings for tutorials, learner-learner interaction, library study and laboratory or practice sessions; and
- Use of industrialised processes; that is, in large-scale open and distance learning operations, labour is divided and tasks are assigned to various staff who works together in course development teams.

The above definitions have been further simplified as 'Distance Education is a method and open learning is a philosophy'. It is always promoted that Distance Education is a mode: the mode refers to a transactional strategy of different method/s or a philosophy.

When we look at all these definitions, it becomes clear that open learning incorporates removing the barriers and restrictions that are placed on learners as in the conventional education system. Open learning means opening up learning opportunities to a wider range of people, and enabling them to learn more congenially and productively. One can justify open learning as a new career avenue for both the teachers and new learners in the process of globalization (ie knowledge society).

Check Your Progress 1

Notes: a) Space is given below for your answer.

b) Check your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

Define Distance Education in the perception of Common Wealth of Learning (COL) (Answer in about 200 words).

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1.3 FEATURES OF OPEN AND DISTANCE EDUCATION

A study of the definitions will show you that there are some common broad features of Open and Distance Education, which are as follows:

- No upper age limit
- Qualification
- Openness with regard to place and time of study
- Flexibility in selection of courses
- Credit accumulation and self paced examination system

- Use of Educational Technology and Information Communication Technologies (ICT)
- Multiplier effect

Let us discuss the above features in detail.

No upper age limit

In the open learning system, while there may be a minimum age required to take admission to a particular programme, but there is no maximum age limit. For example, if a learner who passes Senior Secondary (10+2) school examination in June, 2011, he/she can take admission to a Bachelor's Degree programme either in a conventional University or in an Open Learning University in the same year. However the flexibility of the Open learning system allows him/her, even after a gap of some years to take admission to the Bachelor's Degree in any Open Learning University as per his choice. This is because there is no restriction on upper age and on the gap in his/her studies.

Qualification

In the conventional system of education, the enrolment capacity is limited. As a result, there are restrictions in admissions, based upon the percentage of marks/grades obtained by the learners. In the open learning system, there is no such restriction for most of the programmes. Only a few professional programmes (e.g. Computer, Nursing, Engineering, etc.) may have some restrictions due to heavy hands-on work that learners need to undertake and for which prior knowledge is required.

Openness with regard to place and time of study

In open learning system, the learner can select his/her own place of study. This means that geographical boundaries do not restrict admission and learning.

In open learning, the learner can continue his/her education from any place of his/her choice under the jurisdiction of the open university/institute.

In this system, the learners also have the freedom to take even more than one year to complete a 'one year programme'. This is because programmes have a minimum and a maximum duration during which the learner remains registered in the programme and thus a learner can complete a programme at his/her own pace.

Flexibility in selection of courses

In the open learning system, the learner enjoys flexibility in selecting his/her courses. This means that the educational preferences of the Open University are more towards learners needs and requirements, it is broader in their perspective than the traditional conventional universities.

Credit Accumulation and Self Paced Examination System

Open and distance education system offers learners the freedom to take examinations according to their own preparedness and mastery of the subject. Examinations are usually spread at different times of the year and learners can register for examination as per their own convenience and pace of learning. Further ODL also offers the learners the facility of credit accumulation as learners can spread their registration for examination

over a specified minimum and maximum number of years. This is quite different from the conventional system where every learner has to pass all the requisite number of courses in a particular year.

Use of Educational Technology and ICT

The essence of ODL is communication in all forms with the objective of reducing the distance between learning and teaching end. Educational technologies are almost an extended form of the distance education and open learning. The manipulation of education technology and ICT enables education anywhere and everywhere to be possible. The use of educational technology also enables multiplier effects of reaching out to a large numbers of learners in a cost effective and efficient manner. The usage of ICT is said to be a practicing tool in education rather than a preaching tool.

Multiplier Effect

The synergetic effect of multiplier is always equated with the inbuilt strength of open and distance education. It has been understood that the Open University can multiply its sources of learning and its resources. In the early sixties the concept of education was aimed at 'Each one Teach one' but over the years, it has been realised that even one person can teach many.

The strength of open and distance education lies in its multiplier effect. This implies that the ODL system can be used effectively for reaching out to large numbers without diluting the content as well as maintaining cost effectiveness. This multiplier effect is most visible in teaching-learning facilities for learners of ODL as well as training of trainers. In the spheres of training, it is said ODL has multiplier effects ie One trainer can train Eleven trainees. This implies that eleven can train One hundred and twenty one and these 121 trainers will multiply and this process will go on multiplying. This was the main object with which the Spoken English training programme was undertaken by then Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages (CIEFL) now renamed as English and Foreign Language University (EFLU) Hyderabad. This model has been replicated in other institutions.

The advantage of ODL is that it allows increased interaction capability naturally resulting in increased learning gains. The use of technology allows many user groups to share the network. It is also possible to organize specific video conferencing sessions for a separately identified group with different needs. All these advantages result in tremendous cost-cutting in travel, logistics and in repetition of teaching infrastructure. Another advantage of the multiplier effect is that it contributes to the repository of digital learning material/ knowledge and enhances the learning process of the learners of the institution. This approach is a dynamic concept to educate mass/majority of learners.

The multiplier effect allows the learning resources to be dispersed simultaneously among several geographically dispersed learners in minimal time. Also, the biggest advantage is the repetition of training courses/materials and their updating and dissemination despite of the geographic diversity.

Open and distance learning can be summed based upon above features as follows: accessibility is promise, flexibility is its commitment and educational equity is the overall philosophical basis.

1.4 THE PARADIGM SHIFT IN DISTANCE EDUCATION

Tomas Khuns, the proponent of paradigm shift denotes 'change' as the only constant factor in all walks of life. Education is not an exception. Education is undergoing radical changes from time to time in its historical evolution. It is generally assumed that distance education is a paradigm shift from face to face education. With the emergence of media and ICT, there are again changes /paradigm shifts in the field of distance education and also within the distance education. According to Peters (1999), paradigm shift in education would mean that certain models or patterns no longer exist as they have been substituted by new models and patterns which significantly differ from the old ones. Peters also opined that the traditional mode of distance education will probably become outdated. Distance education will have to reorient itself and develop new didactical structures. In this new situation, independent learning, self regulated learning and group learning will become very important. Prefabricated courses (as available now) for a very large number of students will lose their significance. The paradigm shift in distance education shows that the area of open and distance education is a fertile land for innovation, experimentation and creativity.

Check Your Progress 2

Notes: a) Space is given below for your answer.

b) Check your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

What do you mean by paradigm shift in Education in general and Open and Distance Education in particular?

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1.5 SCOPE OF OPEN AND DISTANCE EDUCATION

The next issue that we would like to discuss is regarding the scope of Distance Education with respect to the openness of open learning.

No learning system or programme is ever fully open nor is any system fully closed. Openness is an ideal for which an institution must keep striving so that the maximum number of learners can be benefitted.

Let us look at what a fully open system would look like. Some of the features would be as follows:

- You should be able to enrol for any programme that you want. The programme would be tailored to your objectives and at an acceptable cost
- You would get it when you wanted it, where you wanted it, and would be able to work through it at your own pace
- You would be able to set your own objectives, choose the content and sequence of your programme, and decide when and how your learning will to be assessed
- You would also be able to decide how you wanted to learn –e.g. with others or on your own, from books or from videos or online, with the emphasis on theory or on practice and on who might help you in what kind of ways.

The open and distance learning institutions in the developing countries are passing through a typical transactional phase, where we witness of contradictions when we apply these theories of ODL. This contradictions emerging because of the ODL system is passing through a transitional phase whereby we often found self contradictions in its operations.

Thus you will see that

- All open learning (even on-site) involves some degree of distance learning.
- Many open learning systems do not involve much openness.
- Some learning systems that do not call themselves open are actually more open than some of those that do.

1.6 ONE SYSTEM MANY NAMES: NOMENCLATURES OF OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING

The terms always confuse which system is open and which system is closed and what system is open and distance education. Here we will discuss various terminologies available to explain Open and Distance education. In this context broadly, one can say the system is one but it is called by many names, depending upon contexts and convenience. Some of the prevailing vocabulary/terms are *External exams/ private study, correspondence education, distributed learning, home study, self-directed/regulated learning, independent learning, didactic communication, programmed learning, proximate education, continuing and life long education, flexible learning, blended learning, virtual learning, online learning etc.* All these names directly or indirectly relate to open and distance learning/ education. Let us study few of them to comprehend our understanding of these terms.

1.6.1 Correspondence Education, Home Study and Independent Study

Correspondence education, home study and independent study are terms that denote distance learning methods that are:

- Well over a century old
- Based on stand-alone, self-study material

- Often print-based with communication through postal services or telephone, video and audio cassettes, electronic mail and television and radio broadcasts

This method of teaching-learning is characterized by the fact that learners do not have to leave their homes to study. They have the facility to make use of a variety of means for tutor-learner contact. Many Universities in India as well as other countries have renamed their correspondence programmes to those of open and distance learning or independent study.

1.6.2 External Studies

These terms refers to an organisational unit established within some institutions charged with responsibility for establishing and maintaining distance education operations.

External studies applies to instruction that takes place somewhere other than on a central campus, such as a classroom remote from campus; and includes a variety of delivery options like audio, video or computer conference or home study.

Many universities and institutions, such as those in Australia, New Zealand and Namibia have Centres for External Studies that are responsible for open and distance learning programmes.

In the Indian situation, the external studies/one sitting and writing exam are treated as private study. Here the institution does not provide study material and support services, hence the system has not been recognised as open or distance education learning. This system is not vogue since it is not recognised at present.

1.6.3 Continuing Education

The term continuing education;

- Usually applies to non-credit education
- Refers to courses that can be delivered on campus or at a distance; and has varied meanings.

The University of Botswana, for example, has a Distance Education Unit which is part of the University's Centre for Continuing Education.

In the Indian situation, continuing education is an earliest and cheapest form of distance education which was popular in the name of correspondence continuing education. During the Twelfth World Conference of the International Council for Correspondence Education (ICCE), the Council itself was renamed as the International Council for Distance Education (ICDE). Since then all correspondence institutions were renamed as distance education institution or directorates of distance education.

1.6.4 Distance Teaching

In the Indian situation, distance teaching institutions are mostly functioning as dual mode institution, where face-to-face and distance education systems are both available. Earlier such institutions taught mostly through print materials which was dominant mode of learning. Gradually the distance education institutions are also acquiring features of open learning with flexible and accessible patterns of education.

1.6.5 Self-instruction

The term self-instruction refers to a process in which:

- materials take learners step-by-step through the instructional process;
- Self-assessment exercises help learners monitor their own progress and
- Instruction can be print-based or computer-based.

Many language teaching schools offer self-instructional packages that consist of print materials and audio cassettes. Computer-assisted and web-based learning are often purely self-instructional.

In the Indian situation, all the open and distance education institutions are treated as self directed learning instructional systems wherein self learning is possible with an appropriate media and methods in the curriculum design, mostly print media dominates learning process.

1.6.6 Adult Education

The term adult education emphasises the principles of adult learning, often known as andragogy, as compared to pedagogy, or child-centred learning.

In the Indian situation, adult education programmes have been aimed at not only making people literate but also creating awareness amongst the people about various social issues and encouraging participation in the functioning of democracy.

1.6.7 Technology-based or Mediated Education

This refers to systems of teaching and learning in which a technology other than print has a major role; and takes two major forms: stand-alone (for example, computer-assisted learning and computer-managed learning) and conference (for example, audio, video or computer).

For example: The University of the West Indies used audio conferencing to link its various campuses and learning centres. Two of the postgraduate degrees available in open and distance learning - those offered by Athabasca University and the Open University of the United Kingdom-use computer conferencing as a primary mode of delivery. The University of Guyana, Institute of Distance and Continuing Education, uses audio teleconferencing and the Open Learning Information Network, in Canada, delivers courses via the World Wide Web.

In the Indian situation, technology in teaching learning process plays an important role to bring efficiency in the teaching learning process, both in face-to-face and distance education. In distance education institutions, multiple technologies are being used. In India we find distance education with dominant print media, multiple media multi-media (both integrated and non-integrated). Online learning is also being practiced in most of the distance education institutions. The Indian situation may be compared to a typical situation where we find the bullock-cart and air-craft moving together. We witness a blended approach as teaching and learning tool.

1.6.8 Learner-centred Education

In learner-centred education, integrity and freedom of the individual (learner) is primary. Therefore, the teaching and learning process provides:

- Flexible sequences of study
- Negotiated objectives and content
- Negotiated learning methods
- Negotiated methods of assessment; and
- A choice of support mechanisms.

1.6.9 Open and Distance Learning

This is a term adopted by institutions for a range of features through which access to educational opportunity can be extended to people who would otherwise be excluded. The term was intended to indicate that 'openness' is dependent on much more than just delivering courses at a distance.

The educational philosophy of open learning emphasizes giving learners choices about:

- Medium or media, whatever print, on-line, television or video;
- Place of study, whether at home, in the workplace or on campus;
- Pace of study, whether closely paced or unstructured;
- Support mechanisms, whether tutors on demand, audio conferences or computer-assisted learning; and
- Entry and exit points.

Many institutions use the term 'open' in their names: The Open University in the UK; Open Access College and Open Learning Institute of Charles Stuart University, both in Australia; Open Learning Information Network and the Open Learning Agency, both in Canada; Indira Gandhi National Open University in India; and the Open University of Sri Lanka.

1.6.10 Open Access

The term open access implies a lack of:

- Formal entry requirements;
- Prerequisite credentials; and
- An entrance examination.

1.6.11 Flexible Learning

The term flexible learning emphasises the creation of environments for learning that have the following characteristics:

- Convergence of open and distance learning methods, media and classroom strategies;
- Learner-centred philosophy;
- Recognition of diversity in learning styles and learners' needs;
- Recognition of the importance of equity in curriculum and pedagogy;
- Use of a variety of learning resources and media; and fostering of lifelong learning habits and skills in learners and staff.

1.6.12 Distributed Learning

The term distributed learning is a synonym for distance delivered education.

- Emphasizes the learning itself rather than the type of technology used or the separation between teacher and learner;
- Makes learning possible beyond classrooms; and
- When combined with classroom modes, becomes flexible learning

1.6.13 Proximate Education

This is again a new word in the area of distance education. This word was coined by National Academy of Legal Studies and Research (NALSAR), Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh to promote legal education through distance methods. The aim of such education is to minimize the gap between the learner and the education by using all the available technology for education by which the education will be more proximate to the learner's needs.

1.6.14 Online Learning

Till a few years ago, online education was unthinkable; now it is a reality as the internet has expanded greatly. The Internet has allowed us to cross boundaries that earlier took a long time to travel; technology has allowed us to learn and grow with people from around the world. It has given access to new opportunities in learning and networking. We are now witnessing a transformation in the way people learn. Online learning and virtual learning has made learning possible for everyone, from anywhere, according to one's own space and pace of learning.

Online education is defined as the creation and proliferation of the personal computer, the globalization of ideas and other human acts, and the use of technology in exchanging ideas and providing access to more people. Audio, video, computer, and networking technologies are often combined to create a multifaceted instructional delivery system. The fundamental method to unite the distance learning instructor with the distance learner is the network. Networks suitable for distance learning implementations include satellite, cable modem, digital subscriber lines (DSL), and wireless cable. (Collins, 2002).

Greenberg (1998) defines contemporary distance learning as "a planned teaching/learning experience that uses a wide spectrum of technologies to reach learners at a distance and is designed to encourage learner interaction and certification of learning" (p. 36). Source: <http://www.sabri.org/EDTECH-01/Definition.htm>

1.6.15 Virtual Learning

The definition of a virtual learning environment emphasizes the importance of *learning*. Learners in a virtual environment are expected to make use of and include examples, observations, experiences, situations, rules, concepts and techniques in a continuous (e.g., day by day or week by week), permanent (i.e., committing knowledge into memory) fashion to improve the performance of the execution of tasks Source:<http://www.technologysource.org/extra/341/definition/1/>

Juan R. Pimentel (1999) defines a “virtual learning environment” as follows: A virtual learning environment (VLE) is a set of teaching and learning tools designed to enhance a student’s learning experience by including computers and the Internet in the learning process. The principal components of a VLE package include curriculum mapping (breaking curriculum into sections that can be assigned and assessed), student tracking, online support for both teacher and student, electronic communication (e-mail, threaded discussions, chat, Web publishing), and Internet links to outside curriculum resources. In general, VLE users are assigned either a teacher ID or a student ID. The teacher sees what a student sees, but the teacher has additional user rights to create or modify curriculum content and track student performance. There are a number of commercial VLE software packages available, including Blackboard, WebCT, Lotus Learning Space, and COSE:

Source: http://whatis.techtarget.com/definition/0,,sid9_gci866691,00.html

1.6.16 Blended Learning

Blended Learning has been defined as an organic integration of thoughtfully selected and complementary face-to-face and online approaches and technologies.

(Garrison & Vaughan, 2008, p.148). Further it has been also defined as combination of face-to-face and online learning (Williams, 2002). A survey of e-learning activity by Arabasz, Boggs & Baker (2003) found that 80% of higher education institutions, 93% of doctoral institutions offered hybrid and blended learning courses.

Blended online learning environments include the simultaneous and complementary integration and implementation of an asynchronous-mode learning environment (e.g., a course management system or CMS) and a synchronous desktop conferencing environment (e.g. virtual classroom) (Power, 2008).

1.7 TYPES OF OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING INSTITUTIONS

While understanding the institutional perspective of Open and Distance Education the broad categorization is under three heads i.e. single mode, dual mode and consortium. The first two models single and dual modes are popular institution perspective and the third consortium is all together different from the above two. Let us understand these different categorization and their operations.

1.7.1 Single Mode Institution

This single mode institutions otherwise called dedicated Distance Education Universities are those that are specifically established to offer the courses and programmes to the students who are not able to pursue an education at a conventional on-campus university. Single mode institutions are exclusively dedicated for Distance Education Institutions. These institutions and universities may be State funded or run by private organisation.

1.7.2 Dual Mode Institution

This type of institution is called bimodal: an institution that offer learning opportunities in two modes, face-to-face and through ODL. Both modes

have common examinations, but the types of learners are both on campus and distance learners. This is a popular institutional strategy we witness in almost all the face to face institutions where Distance Education is also prevailing

1.7.3 Consortium

This refers to a Arrangements involving a number of organizations in formal partnership, with joint collection of resources and sometimes as independent managing agents; for example, open and distance learning institutions that setup formal partnerships, may involve co-production of elements of course, complete joint course production, joint learner enrolments or cross accreditations and credit transfer between and among the educational institutions.

1.8 PERCEIVED DIFFERENCES BETWEEN FACE-TO-FACE EDUCATION AND OPEN DISTANCE LEARNING

We have discussed that the Open and Distance education is a paradigm shift when we compare it with face-to-face teaching and learning system. Once we accept this paradigm shift, we find there is a different language used in both the systems. Let us compare the vocabulary in both face to face education and open and distance learning. They are broadly as follows:

1.8.1 Vocabulary in Face-to-Face (F2F) and ODL

Face-to-Face (F2F)	Open & Distance Learning (ODL)
➤ Students	➤ Learners
➤ Instruction	➤ Self-learning/Self Directed Learning
➤ Text books	➤ Self-Learning Materials.
➤ Books	➤ Blocks
➤ Teachers	➤ Academic Counsellors/ Tutors
➤ College/ University	➤ Study Centres/Programme Centres
➤ Subjects	➤ Courses
➤ Books	➤ Study Materials
➤ Chapters	➤ Units
➤ Headings	➤ Sections/Sub-Sections
➤ Questions /Answers	➤ Reflective Questions
➤ Small Questions	➤ Check Your Progress
➤ Teaching	➤ Counselling/Tutoring
➤ Examination	➤ Evaluation
➤ Mostly Marks	➤ Both Marks and Grades
➤ Mostly Multi Media	➤ Both Multi/Multiple Media

Learning at a distance demands different structural, functional and operational issues. Given below, some of the perceived differences have

been identified. This list is not exhaustive and exclusive but it only illustrative. These ideas provide a chance to discuss and deliberate on these issues related to face-to-face and distance learning.

1.8.2 Conceptual Differences between Face-to-Face and Open and Distance Learning

Face-to-Face (F2F)	Open & Distance Learning (ODL)
Systemic issues	
➤ Teacher teaches	➤ Institution teaches
➤ Individual teachers excellence is recognized	➤ Team excellence is recognized.
➤ Education is restricted to few.	➤ Education is for all.
➤ Rigid educational system – restrictions of age, qualifications and physical presence	➤ Flexible access to education – no upper age, no prior qualifications, accessible practices for teaching and learning
➤ Community and service oriented education	➤ Both community, market & technology oriented education
➤ Costing is rarely done on cost-effective and efficient basis	➤ Both cost-effective and efficient education
➤ Studying is restricted to mostly one time activity	➤ Learning is a life long and self-learning activity
➤ Quality is the educational agenda but not quantity of educational access	➤ Both quality and quantity are aimed by flexible educational practices for achieving equity and education for all
➤ Knowledge is restricted to few	➤ Seamless access to knowledge, for people, places, methods and its operations
Media, methods and technology	
➤ Multi-media is sparingly used and mostly not insisted	➤ Multi-media and multiple methods are widely used
➤ Educational technology is sparingly used	➤ Techno based teaching learning with aim of seamless education.
➤ Print is dominant mode in teaching, learning process	➤ Print, audio-video, radio and tele conferencing used for learning
➤ Reflective practices are rarely achieved in different media	➤ Reflective practices from various sources are preserved in various formats

Face-to-Face (F2F)	Open & Distance Learning (ODL)
➤ Teacher added books are widely used	➤ Self-directed learning materials are strength of its learning
➤ Teachers role is more towards pedagogical issues rather than administrative issues	➤ Equal importance given by the teachers to both pedagogical and managerial issues
Curricular issues (Design)	
➤ Curriculum is based on conventional and market designs	➤ Scope for experimentations, innovations and creativity in evolving curriculum designs
➤ Designed to suit existing resources available at market	➤ Designed to suit the requirements of a particular audience
➤ Mostly more conceptual, theoretical centered	➤ More experiences/ projects based
➤ Structured for specialists, supported by teachers	➤ Structured according to needs of distance learners
➤ Curricular planning processes mostly dictated by the top down approach	➤ Curriculum planning and development process are dictated from the bottom up approach
➤ Less scope for innovation, experimentation and creativity for individual teacher to design curriculum	➤ Enough space/scope for innovation, experimentation and creativity for individual teacher to design curriculum
➤ It is not cost effective and cost benefit	➤ Always aimed at being cost effective and cost benefit
➤ Instructional designs dominates teaching learning process	➤ Self-directed learning design dominates in teaching learning process
➤ Course/design development is mostly done by Board of Studies and delivery and examinations are being done by the teachers	➤ Design, development, evolving an appropriate delivery strategies and evaluation are integrated and undertaken by the Open and Distance teachers
➤ Learning objectives are implicit	➤ Learning objectives are explicit
Development of Curriculum	
➤ Done mostly by external agencies	➤ Done in-house in collaboration with best talent available from all sources
➤ Teaching staff not directly involved in development	➤ In house academic staff with team approach is involved

Face-to-Face (F2F)	Open & Distance Learning (ODL)
➤ Planning and organization are not specified for development of Curriculum	➤ Planning and organizations are specified for development of curriculum
➤ Content is mostly dense and requires support from the teacher	➤ Content is unpacked and concept mapping is done with meticulous care for self learning
➤ Little or no self-assessment	➤ Major emphasis on self-assessment and assessment and evaluation by the learners
➤ Scholarly presentation of the content	➤ Aims at successful learning at distance
➤ Standardization differs from institutions to institution	➤ Standardization across the programmes, courses, blocks and units
Delivery Strategies	
➤ Mostly guided by Board of Studies of Universities	➤ Intelligently using spare resources/excellence from the host institutions on payment basis
➤ Mostly face-to-face mode	➤ Using all available technologies
➤ Within the institutional campus	➤ Out of the campus and seamless
➤ Creates its own infrastructure	➤ Mostly uses spare human and infrastructural resources from its host institution
➤ Monitoring is not a periodical activity	➤ Monitoring is a functional activity
➤ Best practices are evolved during the process	➤ Best practices are identified, adopted, experimented and consolidated
Evaluation Issues	
➤ System /course / Programme evaluation is done only when institution requires	➤ System /course / Programme evaluation is done on periodical basis to maintain quality, cost benefit and its effectiveness
➤ Only summative evaluation in the text books	➤ Both formative and summative evaluation is done within textbook
➤ Marking or grading system	➤ Marking and grading

We hope that, as distance learners, you will reflect on these issues and make your own addition to the list to enrich your understanding in the above system

1.9 OPEN AND DISTANCE EDUCATION: THE INDIAN EXPERIENCE

Open and distance education is evolving in Indian context. Various experiments are made in this system, besides policy makers expectations are also high from open and distance education. Those are namely to increase gross enrolment ratio, in which 50% of enrolment of higher education is being expected from ODL system. Let us touch upon few issues related to open and distance education in the Indian Context as below:

1.9.1 Generation of Distance Educators in Indian Context

In the Indian context, distance education is providing new career avenues for the new learner. The learners are mostly from the second and third generation of education but many are also first generation learners. They often face difficulty in handling skills such as reading, writing and reflecting their thoughts and experiences. As you may be aware, the roots of Indian education did not allow education for all. The need for education has been gradually recognised by all sections of society and open and distance education has proved to be a powerful avenue for achieving this education for all.

Before the establishment of Open University in India, there were no ODL models except that of distance education in dual mode universities. The instructional models have been borrowed from the UK Open University and gradually customized to Indian needs and requirements. Sir John Daniel in his blog was of the view that each country should come out with their own country's context of theorization on Open and Distance Education to generalise with their subjective experiences. Such attempts are more relevant to each country's context rather than blindly following western theories and models.

As you may be aware, the first Open University in India was established in Hyderabad in 1982. This was followed by the Indira Gandhi National Open University that was set up in 1985. The apex body of the distance educational institutions, named 'Distance Education Council' (DEC) is stationed within IGNOU. Today(2012) there are around 14 Open Universities in India. Emergence of open universities in Indian context is a historical necessity created by the need for liberalisation of higher education through cost effective and efficient strategies. Such policies particularly in the economic liberalisation and globalisation process would strengthen democratic institutions.

You have already discussed the nature and scope of Open and Distance Education in the previous sub-units. Distance education has become very popular in India and many universities and institutions have initiated distance education centres for reaching out to the large number of learners.

The strength of Distance Education in India is that it has been able to:

- Introduce flexible patterns of entry in education and thereby making it possible to provide continuing education and lifelong education to all sections of society
- Introduce credit system of education in India and give learners many chances to complete a programme of study

Basic Issues of Open and Distance Education

- Engage the learner through self-directed materials and reduce the distance and isolation of learners
- Successfully manipulate multiple media baskets for teaching learning process and also provide Open Learning Resources
- Provide and facilitate modular/ semester based studies
- Utilization of spare resources from the host institution and their usage for open and distance education which has ultimately created a national network of distance education centres
- Introduce continuous assessment system in open and distance education through assignments
- Successfully prove that the ODL is both cost-effective and benefits the system of education

The need for open learning in India, according to G. Ram Reddy, the founder of Open University system in India, is due to the fact that elitism in education and politics in democracy do not go together. He strongly felt that to strengthen the democratic institutions, participation of people with education was a powerful instrument. After dealing at helm of affairs of higher education in the capacity as a Vice-Chancellor, he held a strong conviction that the future belongs to open and distance education. Open and distance education system spread aggressively in the developing countries including India. Some of the Open Universities attained the status of mega-universities. Mega Universities is a term coined to designate those distance teaching institutions that have over 100,000 active students in degree-level courses. According to Sir John S Daniel (1996), a Mega University combines three criteria: distance teaching, higher education, and size. IGNOU is categorized as one of the Mega Universities.

Distance education has enabled the introduction of various types of courses and programmes at higher education level such as:

- Appreciation programme (for profession & capacity building activities)
- Certificate (awareness courses)
- Diploma & P.G. Diploma (extension courses)
- Degree Programmes/ courses (both in general and professional levels)
- Master level programmes (both in general and professional levels)
- Research Degree Programmes
- Network and collaboration under Community Colleges
- Different types of convergence schemes and
- Customizing its Programmes and Courses for the industry and society.

The conceptual base to understand operations of open and distance education in its gamut is broadly categorized as design, development, evolving appropriate delivery strategies and learner and system evaluation. Among all these activities, the delivery is considered to be the important activity which is otherwise called the gamut of open and distance education. The learner support services considered to be the important element in the gamut of open and distance education. The best academic programmes would fail if their delivery was not effective. The

market approach to education is the emphasise on providing services. In the context of distance education, this may be seen as 'after sales services'. Based upon this assumption, is the thinking that those who provide effective services, will be considered the best sellers in the market.

Check Your Progress 3

Notes: a) Space is given below for your answer.

b) Check your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

How do you understand Distance Education in India? Explain the issues with few examples (Answer in about 200 words).

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Let us see the figure given below which explains the gamut of open and distance education.

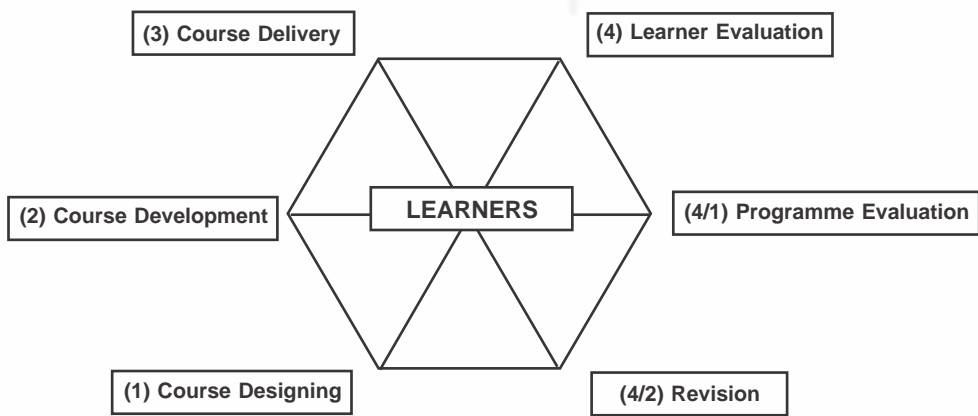


Fig: 1.1: Gamut of Open and Distance Education

The gamut of distance education is explained in the above figure as course design, development, evolving an appropriate strategy for delivery or its transactional strategies, undertaking learner's /course evaluation/ programme evaluation and finally periodical undertaking of revision of course/programme. These are the major activities of open and distance education.

All the above activities have cyclic relations and chaining linkages, which one cannot detach from another. The overall emphasis and importance is given to learners in all activities. Hence it is said that the gamut of open and distance education is the gamut of its learner and their support services. You will be studying the above issues in detail in the course ES-416 of this programme.

Check Your Progress 4

Notes: a) Space is given below for your answer.

b) Check your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

In about 15 lines answer the following: Explain the gamut of Distance Education? (Answer in about 200 words)

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1.9.2 Some Initiatives of Indian Open Universities

Open Universities in India have taken initiatives that have influenced ODL. B.R. Ambedker Open University, Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh, declared 2003 as the Year of Students Service and developed a learners’ charter. The most popular slogan of the University was “University at your doorstep”. This caption of the University denoted the will of the University to provide education at the doorstep of such learners, who wished to continue their education and upgrade their qualifications. This shows the importance given by BRAOU to its learners.

The caption of the Y C Maharashtra Open University (YCMOU) “Gyana Ganga Garo Gari” refers to the importance of making knowledge and wisdom accessible to the doorsteps of every house. YCMOU’s brochure titled “Liberating the learner” aptly expresses the philosophy of distance education.

IGNOU has evolved a diversified approach to Student Support Services with various kinds of models and arrangements. IGNOU is today reaching people and places hitherto unreached through its programmes and courses. The University has succeeded in creating a wide network of Regional Centres (RCs) and Study Centres (SCs) across the length and breadth of the country.

Besides systemic issues developments IGNOU has also initiated innovations and experimentation in the following areas:

- Initiated Community Colleges under which Associate Degree is awarded
- Expanded its collaboration and networking with various private public partnerships.
- Evolved distance education programme along with face-to-face education system as a convergence scheme.
- Proved its existence in the international sphere as an educational vendor.
- A first university initiated its learning resources under open learning resources for public use.
- A university with its concern for national and international requirement has established Sign Language Institute through the initiative of Ministry of Social Justice, Government of India.
- A university with huge infrastructure including extensive multi-media facilities to meet the educational needs for all.
- The only university in India which has highest networking with its diversified study centres and regional centres.

All these efforts have resulted in IGNOU becoming a household name across the country.

1.9.3 Assumed Model of Open and Distance Education in India—Dependency Model

ODL borrows the best talent available from all the best resources without compromising quality programmes for seamless education. The similar exercise made in the area of learners' support services, most of the study centres in Indian distance institutions use human and physical resources from the host institutions and pay for the services rendered. This is known as Dependency Model (Venkaiah, 1993, pp.53-58) in which administrative support is expected by Coordinators in organizing face-to-face contact classes, examination and other student support services. In this model, experienced practitioners say that the host institutions are not extending the required co-operation to the study centre Coordinators, and periodic meeting between Open University and the Principals/ head of the host institutions may provide a good opportunity to sort out difficulties and create cooperative environment. The change in attitude of all the functionaries associated with the university on part-time and full time basis will help to realize the objectives of student support services (Venkaiah, 1993).

1.9.4 Food for Thought

Few ideas for debate and discussion with an Open mind for the cause of open learning: Think...

- Open and Distance education is more a mind set in its whole gamut.
- Ekalavya to be the first Distance Learner in Indian context of distance education

- The distance education is compared as *ABIMANYU SYNDROME* where entry is easy and exit is difficult.
- In the face-to-face situation, it is the student who trouble the institutions whereas in open and distance education the institution troubles the learners.
- Self-Learning Materials in open distance materials are subject to praise and criticism in public life
- Face-to-face system uses distance education materials but it rarely acknowledges.
- Distance Education is a historical necessity in Indian situation' Think!
- Distance Education is a new career opportunities in the globalisation of Education for both teachers and new learners.
- Open Learning and Closed mind do not go together.
- ODL promote shameless borrowing of knowledge for seamless education.
- Communication is the essence of Distance Education.
- In the face to face system teacher excellence is recognised whereas in open and Distance Education, team excellence is recognised.
- Establishment of open university have positively influenced many Correspondence Courses Institutions of conventional universities to reform their teaching and delivery methodologies.(Power-1989)
- Distance education is "a more business oriented form of education" (Page-227).. Rumble. G (1986).
- The teacher working for Open and Distance Education should have social concern and develop courses and programmes, at the same time their programmes are market wise viable (for its economic reasons) and finally he/she working for the cause of ODL should posses handling of technology.
- Teachers working for Open and Distance Education need to be always be *active* to generate ideas, they also need to be *pro-active* to develop the ideas in to action, also need to be *process active* for evolving an appropriate strategies to delivery mechanism of their programmes and finally they need to be *post-active* to undertake system/ programme and their student evaluation.
- The teachers working for open and distance education can be compared to un-acknowledged legislators of Knowledge for the knowledge society.

1.10 LET US SUM UP

Government of India has high expectations aimed at increasing gross enrolment ratio in higher education particularly through open and distance learning. Over the last many years, the contribution of ODL for the knowledge world has been recognized. Open and Distance education has played a major role in liberating knowledge and providing it to all sections of society through Open Educational Resources. It is well known

that many face to face education institutions and general public use open and distance education institution materials in their teaching learning.

The dynamics of the success of open and distance learning lies in the team approach of the system. People working in different units and divisions work of an ODL should have effective coordination among the units and divisions, integrity of the people to acknowledge the knowledge and resources of others for seamless education and commitment for the overall achievements of its goals of ODL. And finally, all this has to be supported by a statutory policy on Open and Distance Learning which will give greater credibility to overall system of Open Distance Learning.

We hope that this Unit would have given you a comprehensive understanding on basics of Open and Distance Education with which you will be in a position to further study of various theories of distance education in forthcoming Blocks of this course.

1.11 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: POSSIBLE ANSWERS

Check Your Progress 1

According to Common Wealth of Learning Perception (COL), the Distance education has been defined as follows:

- Separation of teacher and learner in time or place, or in both time and place;
- Institutional accreditation; that is, learning is accredited or certified Institution . This type of learning is distinct from learning through your own effort without the official recognition of a learning institution;
- Use of mixed-media courseware, including print, radio and television
- broadcasts, video and audio-cassettes, computer-based learning and telecommunications. Courseware tends to be pre-tested and validated before use;
- Two-way communication allows learners and tutors to interact as
- distinguished from the passive receipt of broadcast signals. Communication can be synchronous or asynchronous;
- Possibility of face-to-face meetings for tutorials, learner-learner interaction,
- library study and laboratory or practice sessions; and
- Use of industrialised processes; that is, in large-scale open and distance
- learning operations, labour is divided and tasks are assigned to various staff who
- works together in course development teams.

Check Your Progress 2

Tomas Khuns proponent of paradigm shift denotes 'change' is the only constant factor in all walks of life. Education is not an exception.

Education is undergoing radical changes from time to time in its historical process. It is generally assumed that distance education is a paradigm shift from face to face education. With the emergence of media and ICT, there are again changes /paradigm shifts in the field of distance education and also within the distance education. According to Peters (1999), paradigm shift in education would mean that certain models or patterns no longer exist as they have been substituted by new models and patterns which significantly differ from the old ones. Peters also opined that the traditional mode of distance education will probably become outdated. Distance education will have to reorient itself and develop new didactical structures. In this new situation, independent learning, self regulated learning and group learning will become very important.

Check Your Progress 3

Before establishment of Open University in India, we did not have any models except distance education in dual mode universities. The instructional models have been borrowed from the UK Open University and gradually customized to Indian needs and requirements.

Few strength of Distance Education in India is that it has been able to:

- Introduce flexible patterns of entry in education and thereby making it possible to provide continuing education and lifelong education to all the sections of society
- Introduce credit system of education in India and give learners many chances to complete a programme of study
- Engage the learner through self-directed materials and reduce the distance and isolation of learners
- Successfully manipulate multiple media baskets for teaching learning process and also provide Open Learning Resources
- Provide and facilitate modular/ semester based studies

The need for open learning in India, according to G. Ram Reddy, the founder of Open University system in India, is due to that fact that elitism in Education and Politics in Democracy do not go together. He strongly felt that to strengthen the democratic institutions, participation of people with education is a powerful instrument

Check Your Progress 4

The gamut of distance education is explained as course design, development, evolving an appropriate strategy for delivery or its transactional strategies, undertaking learner's /course evaluation/ programme evaluation and finally periodical undertaking of revision of course/programme. These are the major activities of open and distance education. It often said that the gamut of open and distance education is the gamut of learners support services. The learners are the real stakeholders of the system and the entire system rotate them round.

All the design, development, delivery strategies and learner's evolution activities have cyclic relations and chaining linkages, which one cannot detach from another. The overall emphasis and importance is given to learners in all activities. Hence it is said that the gamut of open and distance education is the gamut of its learner and their support services.

1.12 GLOSSARY

Design	: An ideation process and evolving basic structure
Development	: Translating Ideas in to a product or in reality.
Delivery	: Evolving appropriate strategies to evolve delivery mechanism.
Evaluation	: Refers to both learners evaluation for awarding marks by which one can obtain degree other wise it is system/course/programme evaluation.
Indigenous	: Local/localized
Learner Centred Education	: The popular name for open and distance education
One system with many names:	The system either distance or open Learning is one and the same but being called by many names.
Paradigm Shift	: A change from the existing.
Mode	: Same now do it, other wise a transactional strategy to implement methods.
Method	: Involve planning and management activities on systemic principles and procedures.
Philosophy	: Search for truth, specifically in terms of Open and distance education it refers to innovation, Experimentation and creativity.
Proximate Education	: Another expression to open and distance education to reduce the gap between learner and institution by using technologies
Typology	: Various view/Models
Single mode	: One system
Seamless	: No boundaries
Dual mode	: Two systems (i.e. Face-to-face and Distance education within the same campus or institutions)
Consortium	: A groups of institutions gathering for common goals.
Liberalization	: An economic policy inviting private entrepreneurs /liberal economy
Globalization	: Crossing the national boundaries.
Political will	: Policy acceptance by the politicians

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UNIT 2 SOCIAL CREDIBILITY AND JUSTICE

Structure

- 2.0 Objectives
- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Education and Social Credibility
 - 2.2.1 Advancing Knowledge
 - 2.2.2 Imparting Skills
 - 2.2.3 Building a Cultivated Society
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2.0 OBJECTIVES

After completing this unit, you should be able to:

- Explain the criteria for assessing the social credibility of an educational system;
- Analyse the quality indicators that determine the social credibility of ODL systems; and
- Discuss social justice as an integral part of social credibility with reference to ODL.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

You may think that it has become a cliché, but the statement that education makes a difference in the lives of people still merits repetition. All of us will acknowledge that education holds the key for development. If education can improve the quality of life, work towards wealth creation and make the world a better place to live in, the questions such as the following need to be addressed:

- What actually prevents us from framing viable policies that guarantee education to all and corresponding plan of action for their effective implementation?
- What prevents us from creating the required human and material resources to address the issue of quality education for all?

- What prevents us from reforming our educational systems in order that equity and quality are assured in education, no matter who and where the learners are?
- What prevents us from reprioritizing and redistributing the required resources to accelerate equity in education?
- If investments in education do assure rich dividends in terms of national development and social transformation, what may be the stumbling blocks in not doing so?
- Whose responsibility is it any way to make quality education available to all who aspire for it?

As you may have noticed, the questions posed above are as much rhetoric as substantive in nature, warranting convincing answers.

Against the backdrop of these illustrative questions (and you may wish to add more to the list above), in this Unit, we shall attempt to give you a snapshot of the present and emerging higher educational scenario vis-à-vis the prevailing quality norms confined generally to determining the social credibility of the face-to-face educational system, which all of us are quite familiar with. We then present the indicators of quality, as they obtain today, in ODL environments to show that the notion of social credibility assumes a new dimension in open and distance learning (ODL). In this Unit, we shall also touch upon the question of social justice as an integral part of the social credibility spectrum and urge you to reflect on the issue in the context of ODL.

2.2 EDUCATION AND SOCIAL CREDIBILITY

The relevance of any educational system ought to be adjudged in terms of the criteria that give the system a significant social function. Thus, it is not presumptuous to say that the basic issue of credibility can be seen as one of either success or failure to meet such criteria. To serve our immediate purpose, let us consider the following four required aims that characterize the functioning of an educational system:

- 1) **To advance learning:** An educational system must make a contribution to the growth of knowledge which in turn leads to the advancement of truth or the unveiling of ignorance. This growth of knowledge becomes a specialized function of an educational system, especially at the higher level of learning, which explains the reason why research is generally coupled with teaching at this level of learning.
- 2) **To give instruction in skills:** The primary function of an educational system is to give instruction in skills that are related to and promote a general division of labour and at the same time respond to changes in such division of labour. (It should be mentioned here that students come to institutions of higher learning mainly because their studies and training are related to future prospects.)
- 3) **To build a cultivated society:** Besides imparting skills that are purely practical, education aims at teaching whatever it does in a manner calculated to develop the powers of the mind. It thus attempts to produce a cultivated society, and it is this particular function of the educational system that places it in a highly eminent light.

- 4) **To transmit the secular view of people:** An educational system is unique insofar as it is the only system that seeks to transmit a common human culture and common standards of citizenship. It indicates the spread of rationality or of a certain view of people and so a vision of human potential that distinguishes it from other social institutions. To emphasize, educational institutions, thus, play a crucial role in the evolution of human culture.

The degree to which the traditional educational set up meets these criteria seldom attracts discussion. In other words, that it meets the criteria adequately is taken for granted – however unfair the assumption could be – unlike in the ODL context. The latter is often called upon to prove its social credibility from time to time, owing to our culturally induced bias towards face-to-face education.

Adding to the element of culturally induced bias are the habitual offenders, i.e., the ODL institutions that pay lip servicing to instructional design, learner services, etc. As the ODL practices of these institutions leave much to be desired, they tend to strengthen the view that the system could, at best, be substandard. A majority of those seeking education at a distance, for whatever reasons, tends to approach it only with this mindset. The ‘what’ of the system, i.e., its inherent potential, gets obfuscated, while the ‘how’ of it, i.e., the way it has been put to practice, determines the world view. What worth is the intent, if it is not translated into action? Lack of political will as represented by government apathy towards ODL encourages the offenders. On the one hand, institutions of higher learning suffer from dwindling government funding which they used to enjoy traditionally, irrespective of whether or not they are any productive. So used to the unflinching financial support from governments of the day without the concomitant responsibility and accountability, on the other hand, institutions are historically maimed to generate funds from such activities as research, consultancy, etc.

Keeping this in view, we will discuss the extent to which ODL addresses the issue of social credibility in the rest of this Unit.

2.2.1 Advancing Knowledge

Can distance education lead to research and add to the growth of knowledge through research? Yes, it can. The kind of research that may entail distance education programmes concerns the designing and selection/innovation of courses. This research can be very fruitful as it will have to concern itself with continually modifying and updating courses and thus provide a basic dynamism to the distance education system.

Consider the following:

You would have noticed, by this time, that by itself distance education is a socio-academic activity – an activity that

- i) has to develop not only new insights into but also new ways of explaining and achieving the educational aims of different courses required by distance learners; these aims mostly pertain to cognitive, psychomotor and/or affective domains. However, it does underscore the fact that the variety of courses offered by an open university or a distance education institution – academic courses, refresher and updating courses, training courses, general awareness courses, etc. – will demand an unusual ‘mixing of these aims, and therefore each course will have to be designed and presented differently.

- ii) must be based on investigations and insights into the study habits of individual learners, the processes of learning, teaching and effective academic communication.
- iii) assesses and then exploits the differing strengths and weaknesses of different education media - print, audio and video materials, oral communication, communication by correspondence, telephone, computers, etc. - for purposes of both the cost and the pedagogic effectiveness of the type of courses offered.
- iv) plans two-way feedback extensively for purposes of reducing misunderstanding by students, failure of courses, the difficulties caused by the variations in students' abilities and other difficulties that may be caused by the failure of postal services, the private problems of a distance learner, the unsympathetic attitude of a tutor, etc.
- v) makes use of investigations and insights into the systems and strategies of information processing for purposes of promoting more effective teaching materials and thereby discarding the less effective ones.

The items (i-v) presented above give us a broad outline of the research activities that are basic to distance teaching as a system.

Check Your Progress 1

Notes: a) Space is given below for your answer.

b) Check your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

In about 15 lines describe how distance education fulfils the criteria of advancing knowledge. Are you yourself convinced of it?

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2.2.2 Imparting Skills

Society is naturally concerned with the question of imparting 'skills', if it is to give its approval to the system of distance education. This question is significant also because the distance learning system does not rely upon oral instruction, and hence does not depend on the kind of socio-academic interaction which is the mainstay of the formal system.

Though distance education depends mostly on the written word, the role of the spoken word is not wholly discarded. Being a multi-media system of education, the distance mode of teaching/learning imparts instruction through electronic media as well.

A basic learning of skills is thus inherent in distance education.

For our purpose, we shall divide skills broadly into three categories:

- i) Communication skills (listening, reading, writing, and oral skills),
- ii) Intellectual skills (reasoning abilities), and
- iii) Specialised skills (scientific and technological abilities as well as management skills).

Communication skills

In fact, the distance education system makes ample provision for the distance learners to communicate, though mainly through the written word, with the distance tutors or institutions. Having read through the course materials, the students are expected to respond to the assignment questions sent to them. (Usually, the submission of assignments is made compulsory in this system). These days electronic media are being used more and more successfully and conveniently for two way communication.

Intellectual skills

These skills are presupposed in the course design. Sufficient demands are made upon the students who may at the same time be permitted to pace their learning. However, a point of some importance may be made here. Distance education programmes are bound to function in a somewhat different existential situation where the student is more immediately concerned about his/her ability to support himself/herself and is thus likely to make an informed choice of courses. It is this *feasibility* that gives him/her stronger motivation to study. It can be argued that intercultural stimulation would produce a more promising response in him/her than it would in a student who is part of a traditional university.

Specialized skills

Such skills pose problems of a logistic nature. They concern the teaching of science and technology and those areas where an insistence on project work is considered desirable. Certain solutions do suggest themselves such as the use of, practical kits in the case of basic science. There are other solutions too, such as week-end practical or summer schools where laboratory based practical may be possible. We can also think in terms of apprenticeship programmes with the active participation of industries. These problems are by no means intractable. So they call for a good deal of innovation and considerable coordination. At this juncture, let us distinguish between 'higher' and 'lower' levels of education.

The 'lower level' of education will consist of traditional courses with suitable modification in so far as their administration/monitoring is concerned and will provide education in the fundamentals. There is no harm in retaining the traditional-arts, commerce and science streams or in integrating these into a common stream with adequate modification to effect distance teaching! learning, allowing multiple choices, monitoring student progress and awarding degrees on the basis of credits earned. Thus a student might be allowed to opt at a time for two disciplines at an elementary level, and over a minimum period of three years complete at least six disciplines, along with a selected few at somewhat more advanced and specialized levels, to be able to earn his/her first degree.

At the 'higher level', a variety of courses will have to be offered. These may consist of in-service and post-experience courses that will assume a basic knowledge of the discipline/area, seek to further update knowledge/skill levels, and provide the adult learners with an opportunity for continuing their education. These courses may include instructional packages giving the latest information on relevant disciplines such as astronomy, chemistry, sociology, anthropology, economics, etc. Such courses include discussion at a fairly sophisticated level and lead - once again through a credit earning system to a post-graduate degree.

We should not, however, overlook the problems which arise from the general conservative attitude of society. The social problem which deserves our attention is whether a distance student will be employable in the teaching profession or for that matter any other profession, at par with a student from the formal system. Of, course, we have argued that a distance student is in no way inferior to his/her counterpart at a conventional institution. Our discussions in units 1 and 2 give us adequate support on this issue. But has society in general accepted it?

Check Your Progress 2

Notes: a) Space is given below for your answer.

b) Check your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

In about 15 lines describe how distance education fulfils the criteria of imparting skills. Are you yourself convinced of it?

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2.2.3 Building a Cultivated Society

Apart from furthering a more professional Understanding of social and economic roles, distance education can help significantly in the evolution of a learning society. The possibility of taking a course and of updating

one's information level at any time in one's life is more than likely to promote a professional attitude towards one's social role. Consider the case of a general medical practitioner who, without having to go on leave, can take a course in order to learn about the latest diagnostic practices and the principles behind the new formulations in drugs. Such a course would foster in him/her a more professional attitude, besides adding to his/her efficiency. And such a task would be accomplished within a limited time, with limited resources and limited commitments. In other words, in spite of several constraints, distance education strategies would certainly help us move one step nearer to a more self-Conscious, professional and learning society.

Hence, it is hardly necessary to justify the idea that distance education leads to a general improvement and transformation of learners and through them, of society as a whole. By initiating them into subject and areas which are valuable in themselves, the system will turn out more cultivated persons whose powers of reasoning are likely to be more sophisticated than they were before. And, since distance education can act without the restraining condition of numbers, the system can reach out to very large groups and bring about desired changes in a very short period of time.

Check Your Progress 3

Notes: a) Space is given below for your answer.

b) Check your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

Write in about 10 lines how distance education can transform an ordinary society into a cultivated one.

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2.2.4 Instilling a Secular View

More specifically, distance education - and this encompasses its fuller development including the use of audio-visual supplementation and, gradually, the channeling of radio/TV and computer networks -- will promote in the individual those basic abilities that form a necessary part of the adult in a modern, changing society.

What are these basic abilities?

- i) ability to support himself or herself,

- ii) ability to make informed choices about-life, including career, religion, politics, life-style and general attitudes, and
- iii) ability to decide what is and is not morally acceptable.

Corresponding to each of these, one's education must provide one with

- i) sufficient skills to obtain work,
- ii) general education giving a reasonable understanding of the nature of human beings and of the world, and
- iii) education in morality.

It may be possible, at this point, to say that a distance education system, when properly and fully developed, leads to a furthering of those interests that are peculiar to an open society. By providing education to all, the educational process ceases to be a preserve of the elite. And by catering to the needs of school/college dropouts, distance education can almost eliminate the academic isolation of those who have been deprived of education for whatever reason.

Thus, distance education is placed in a position which enables it to take on the responsibility of offering diverse courses throughout an individual's life.

It also ensures the spread of rationality and a common human culture based on values that arise out of learning and professionalism. Distance education, is thus a highly potent tool in a developing society that is anxious to bring about egalitarianism through the educational process.

In contrast with this system of education, the educational structure now prevalent tends to be autocratic and coercive. The manner in which the formal university is structured, and functions in some of the developing societies leaves much to be desired. In these societies, universities were set up quite early in the colonial era and often by the ruling Western societies. These universities tend to ape the Western universities of the past and often turn out products that are more suited to Western societies. What is, however, the most abominable part of these universities is that they are wary of giving to the student any real measure of academic freedom. For instance, there is generally a great deal of restriction on the choice of subjects/ disciplines and these are such formidable barriers that students often take up courses of study only through the pressure the system exerts and not through any degree of voluntary choice. In fact, the students do not even know about the choices possible in the western world. Thus, a student who may wish to change a course midstream finds it impossibility and is compelled to continue with a programme in a halfhearted manner.

It should be mentioned here that those universities which resisted the influence of colonialism were able to define their objectives more clearly and hence avoided this rather lop-sided development.

It is here that distance education as a system is in a position to offer flexibility in course curricula. It can cut through the heavily ritualised manner of functioning of the formal system. Education can become a more vital experience, giving to the learner a chance to alter his/her existential situation and hence perception of society. In effect, distance education can reduce significantly the constraints on development that

originate and arise out of the formal educational system. That this alters the historical experience of a society makes distance education a basis for revolution as well as for evolution.

By altering the existing social stratification through educational restructuring, it is possible to alter significantly the developmental experience of a society. This is particularly relevant in a developing society. In other words, it is only when one perceives education as a future-oriented programme that one is able to link it up with the process of development.

Some inferences:

The following major inferences emerge from this argument:

- i) Education is very heavily conditioned by the constraints and compromises of the past and thus does not easily respond to new demands and to change in society. An educational system can achieve a high degree of autonomy and social insulation under certain conditions and can grow indifferent to the world around it.
- ii) The responsiveness of education to social, economic and political demands depends largely upon the type of society and the kind of development it permits. (From this point of view, one can see the educational system in India reflecting the general conservatism of Indian society. This may not permit any radical change unless the values of leading socio-political groups overcome the constraints of the past and conceive of new options for the future. Thus, a degree obtained through distance education may carry a stigma in Indian society for quite sometime until the overall social framework is amended through political pressure. However, the way it gains currency indicates that distance education has come in a big way in India. This may, be the experience of other developing societies too.
- iii) There is, a special responsibility of the academicians in so far as they have to spell out the vision of a better future of an evolving society in which education is going to be widely available and will be linked to the development and participation of all individuals in the general social growth.

It is in this light that distance education can also be seen as an important declaration of policy. Policy in education does not reflect only a concern with resources and priorities. It is more deeply related to questions of social demands. These demands cannot be separated from the interests of dominant groups with vested interests and their political power and form the network of international relations. Thus, a programme for education cannot be discussed except within the social needs it reflects.

Besides reflecting social needs, educational planning, to be realistic, should take into account not only the choices available but also those constraints which cannot be easily overcome, and the means through which ends have to be realised. Distance education provides just such an alternative. It accepts the challenge of existing constraints on resources, buildings for schools and, colleges, funds, availability of workforce etc., and seeks to mobilize available resources to provide the much needed instructional package. It is in that sense that distance education is an answer to a genuine need and is a significant policy change in education.

Check Your Progress 4

Notes: a) Space is given below for your answer.

b) Check your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

Write, in not more than 10 lines, how distance education succeeds in instilling a common secular view among human beings.

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At the micro level, education is also related to livelihood. Social credibility of an educational system is also seen from the strength of its degrees/ diplomas fetching employment or promotions. Looked at from a different angle, with liberalization and globalization coupled with the gigantic growth of the information and communication technologies (ICT) resulting in IT-enabled services across sectors, employers also seek for higher education that make people job-fit.

Consider the following questions in this context:

- Shouldn't we have a robust education policy with directions for employability?
- Shouldn't we repackage our learning materials?
- Shouldn't we change our teaching styles?
- Shouldn't we change the assessment/evaluation pattern?
- Shouldn't we change the way we plan our curricula?
- Shouldn't we embark on technology-mediated teaching/learning environment?
- Shouldn't we retool the teachers?
- Shouldn't we make education/learning learner-friendly?
- Shouldn't we have built-in mechanisms for transparency in selection education leaderships?

Note that the list above is not exhaustive and it is not meant to be! However, the list represents the categories of questions that need to be adequately addressed in order to establish the social credibility of an educational system. In other words, quality does matter, which we will discuss in Section 3.3.

2.3 QUALITY AND SOCIAL CREDIBILITY

The cost of education and perhaps lead to a multi-tiered system. Skewed growth seems to remain the world order and continues to be more a rule than an exception, no matter what the sphere of concern is. While, on the one hand, for example, there is astounding growth in technologies, which include information and communications technologies (ICT), biotechnology, space technology, etc., contributing to improving the quality of life, on the other, countries are getting devastated for reasons ranging from HIV/AIDS, food/nutrition insecurity, environmental degradation to engineered political instability cankering human value systems. This, despite the fact that these very impoverished countries are among those in the world endowed with natural resources that many of the developed economies cannot boast of. As a consequence of these rather paradoxical trends, the world view on various sectors understandably keeps on changing. One such sector is higher education.

Institutions of higher learning – be they campus-based (with or without dual-mode operations) or off-campus (e.g., Open Universities) – are to necessarily reinvent themselves in the wake various factors including the current General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) dispensation promoting globalization of education., the Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) regime that is widely seen as a potential instrument to commodify knowledge; the emergence of New Learner that seeks to earn while learning in technology-enhanced environments; the ever-shrinking of government funding for higher education; the increasing privatization of education that seems to place, among others, the onus of research more on privately funded institutions/industries than on public universities, etc. The inclusion of education as one of the trades in services seems to have a direct link to the current trends in higher education, which include the emergence of corporate-model for-profit educational outfits, the growth of seamless online educational provisions, emerging knowledge-driven markets, the upsurge in transnational mobility of experts and professionals and the dwindling government budget for higher education. In other words, the inclusion of education in WTO/GATS seems to be a response to as well as a contributing factor for the current trends in learning provisions, demography, market, etc.

You must note that the process of reinventing assumes various aspects including robust learning experiences; flat governance that encourages participatory decision-making and ownership; flexible learning environments, etc., which when implemented would sufficiently fuel the institutions to ably compete or/and collaborate with overseas providers of higher education for learners and to generate funds for sustained development. Clearly, governments and higher education institutions have to think beyond affirmative actions/reservations for various categories of people in institutions of higher learning so as to embark on a robust *global* policy.

In addition, indicators are such that the responsibility of the government are being arrogated by private players who provide education on their terms, some of which may prove to be, to be fair, more discerning than offerings made through government sectors. However, some may argue that leaving such a (Welfare) State subject as education to the realm of private concerns potentially divides the already imbalanced societies. They further add that the noble purpose of opening up education for which the arrogation assumedly took place thus remains unfulfilled, while

the very act of arrogation further deepens the divide. Some others may refute this claim citing excellence and exemplar performances registered by private institutions. Ensuring access to education is going to be a formidable responsibility for public education institutions in a scenario where the demand for higher education is steadily growing, often well beyond the capacity of the country to provide it.

Similarly, the debate on the implications of WTO/GATS (World Trade Organization/General Agreements on Trade in Services) on higher education is ongoing. Some are of the opinion that the potential of digital as well as social divide is more now than ever before in the context of GATS, while some others look at the possibility for digital dividend and social inclusion that could be achieved through the instrument of GATS. In other words, on the one hand, there is a view that highlights the benefits educational trade can bring in terms of increased access to international new knowledge and economic gain, while on the other, the focus is on the threat this dispensation poses to the role of government, the state of education as public good and the nature of quality of education. In sum, GATS enthusiasts maintain that consumers/students can have greater access, as providers are ready, under the trade, to offer higher education services across borders. Non-supporters, however, believe that access may remain as it is, and if anything, may still be limited because trade will commercialize education and consequently escalate

Among the number of unanswered questions that still remain, the social development goal of education and the governmental role of education assume significance. Relevance, quality and accreditation are at the heart of this debate. For example, the importance of frameworks for licensing, accreditation, qualification recognition and quality assurance are important for all countries whether they are importing and exporting education services. Developing countries have expressed concern about their capacity to have such frameworks in place in the light of the push towards trade liberalization and increased cross border delivery of education.

For the purpose of this Unit, let us be very clear that we are not making any value judgments on these socio-academic claims and/or counter-claims. You could assess the situation on your own on the basis of your exposure and arrive at an informed conclusion. The sole purpose of our bringing it up here, however, is to inform you of the differing views on these factors and relate them to the issue of social credibility as it pertains to ODL and related indicators.

2.3.1 Campus Education

The traditionally perceived elements of quality in the context of campus-based education could be typically categorized as under:

- **Physical plant:** Is the plant purpose-built and/or aesthetically appealing? Does it have facilities such as library, labs, etc., for research? Are there enough teaching complexes/lecture theatres? Do the lecture theatres have multimedia facilities? Is the information and communications network efficient and effective? Are there recreational facilities/sports complexes/eateries? Does the physical plant satisfy safety standards and security specifications? Does the plant meet the needs of the differently-abled? Is the plant eco-friendly?, etc.

- **Institutional reputation:** How traditional or modern is the institution? Does it have an enviable tradition/history? What is the stature of its past and present staff in the society/academia? Is the staff-mix international in nature? Do the staff members represent an intellectual force to reckon with locally and internationally? Do their peers, students and others, recognize the faculty members as scholars or/and effective teachers? What is the social environment within the institution? Does the institution assume any responsibility to maintain and upgrade the quality of life of students and staff members? What is the level of institutional commitment to make available the required resources to accomplish the goals set?
- **Student entry and exit criteria:** What are the student-admission criteria/entry requirements in use? How rigorous is the assessment/evaluation process? What are the pass-rates? How employable are the students?
- **Learning environment:** Are the existing programs/courses relevant and appropriate to the local contexts? Do they prepare the students for global contexts as well? Are the aims/objectives of the programs/courses clear to all the stakeholders? What is the nature of student-teacher ratio and interaction? Do the staff members enjoy academic autonomy? How are the contents/methods of programs/courses and assessment of student performance decided? Are the students involved in curriculum framing, and in the assessment of teachers, at any stage? What is the extent of technology used for teaching/learning? Are the faculty/staff members and students technology-oriented?, etc.
- **Campus discipline:** How often has the institution to grapple with industry actions or disturbances of classes? Are there confrontations between students and staff members or among them? How many times have interventions of law-enforcers been sought? How fair are the proctored examinations, and have they been conducted without difficulties?

Obviously, the categories listed above are illustrative of the common elements that contribute towards interpreting quality and framing quality-auditing policies/procedures with regard to place-bound education.

While some elements under each category listed above represent the quality accrediting agencies will look for, some others satisfy the quality criteria set by the institutions themselves to the extent that they are in synchronization with their established value structures. Seldom, if any, however, do institutional policies on quality address/accommodate the concerns of students. In other words, the parameters accrediting agencies, governments, etc., tend to employ to assess quality need not necessarily be the same as those the practitioners or learners hold, and vice versa. Not only must, therefore, institutions put in place proper mechanisms to look into this anomaly in the prevailing approach to quality, but also put an end to applying the quality criteria evolved for campus education to Open and Distance Learning (ODL) and this assumes importance in the GATS context.

2.3.2 Traditional ODL

Myopic is how one would tend to describe the so-called vision of those who, over the decades, have been taking upon themselves more

often than not by political design the responsibility of shaping up our educational system. The fall-out of which is a subversive process of institutionalizing mediocrity, be it in the appointments student exit policies, etc. What we have now, as a result, is a badly mauled academia that is exposed to be unabashedly scavenged on by many, including the powers that be, in the absence of a robust mechanism to keep them at bay. Despite the cries of foul play by a section of the educational stakeholders such as students, parents and employees, it is ironically business as usual as far as the academic and governance structures of higher education are concerned.

This clearly warrants, among others, socially-relevant curricula and educational systems that cater to the lifelong learning needs of those who aspire for it. Until education is freed from the tyranny of distance in terms of space, place, time, finance, gender, religion, age, academic qualifications, community, caste, communication, study pacing or learning pace, time, duration, etc., can an educational Renaissance of sorts that is required be possible. Put differently, freedom from traditional learning barriers is imperative to achieve inclusive education, i.e., greater access to and equity in higher education. It is in this context that we consider ODL a socially credible system of education.

By traditional ODL is meant the educational environment which is predominantly print-based. While categories such as physical plant, learning contexts, institutional reputation, etc., can be seen as contributing to evolving the quality criteria for traditional ODL, as is the case with campus education, quality indicators do differ. Listed below, for example, are some of the concerns that represent the quality indicators of traditional ODL, most of which remain inessentials in the context of campus education:

- **Learning materials:** How to judge the difficulty level of the learning materials? Is the content dense? Are the materials designed in such a way as to facilitate self-learning? What are the criteria to judge the self-learnability of the materials? Who judges it and how? Are there developmental or self-assessment questions embedded in the materials? Do they contribute to learning? Do learners get feedback on these questions, how and how soon? Is the material learner-active? Is the presentation lucid? Are the materials subjected to peer-review? How effective is the layout (in case of print materials) or format (in case of digital materials) in terms of facilitating learning? Do the materials have illustrations, different colour, simulations, visuals, etc., to make the learning process enjoyable?
- **Materials despatch:** After registration, when do learners receive the materials? Where do they collect the materials? Are the learners informed of the material-dispatch schedule? What is the mode of dispatch – ordinary mail, speed post, registered post, courier, by hand or any other? Where, and when, can one buy the learning materials for personal use?
- **Continuous assessment (e.g., assignments):** What is the purpose of assignments? Are the assignment questions clear and unambiguous? Are the instructions to learners clear? What should be the type/level/format of questions? Does it contain any marking scheme? Who marks the assignment responses? Is there any scope for monitoring assignment evaluation? When do learners get the feedback from the markers/tutors? Is there any rationale for the turn-around time?

- **Academic counselling:** Are the learners/tutors aware of what is expected of them in an academic counselling session? How are these sessions made available – at a distance or face-to-face? How far is the sites/classrooms, where these sessions take place, from the learners' homes/workplaces? What may be the opportunity costs for attending these sessions? Is attendance in these sessions mandatory or optional, and what is the rationale – content requirement or any other?
- **Resources:** How do distance learners access the library books/journals, etc.? Do learners have access to electronic media, etc., if they form part of the programs?

The crux is that the key quality indicators one uses to assess campus education cannot *ipso facto* be used to assess traditional ODL, primarily because the teaching/learning processes involved in both the modes are markedly different from each other. Policy makers/administrators, and others concerned, must recognize this difference, and accordingly frame policies on the quality of traditional ODL.

To extent this argument further, the indicators one uses to assess the quality of traditional ODL will prove to be inadequate to assess that of online learning, though the categories may remain the same.

2.3.3 Online Learning

The five key indicators of quality that characterize online learning are:

- **Learning design:** Contexts, including needs, goals and environments of learners, the subject matter, intended learning outcomes, instructional technologies, etc., must determine the online learning activities. Components such as clear statement of intended learning outcomes, appropriate selection and application of media, learning activities responsive to the learning needs of individual learners, learner autonomy in terms of time, place and pace, team approach to content creation and continuous evaluation for effectiveness, etc., thus, constitute this indicator.
- **Learner support:** An effective learner support services system must be in place to enable the learners to optimally use the available resources. A learner support structure that helps learners in accessing a wide range of required information, various resources including library and other technical facilities, learning assets to suit their learning styles, etc., thus form this indicator.
- **Institutional commitment:** Online learning policy must be an integral part of an institution's overall policy framework. This indicator accordingly comprises the extent of administrative and financial commitment institutions make towards online learning, including the maintenance of programmes, research, staff development/promotion and the equitable treatment of learning done on-campus and at a distance.
- **Learning outcomes:** Online learning programmes must organize learning activities around demonstrable learning outcomes, assist learners to achieve these outcomes, and assess learner progress by reference to these outcomes. The focus of this indicator is thus on the key functions of learning outcomes in the overall design.

- **Technology:** A technology infrastructure plan defining the technical and related requirements needed to support the learning activities must be in place. Addressing to matters such as security to ensure the integrity and validity of information shared, the level of interactivity among all elements of a learning environment, the availability, accessibility and equity of technology being used/contemplated, the code of conduct in the use of technology, etc., thus form this indicator.

These categories are deceptively identical to the ones listed in the context of campus education and those implied in the context of traditional ODL. Significantly, however, the concerns expressed in terms of indicators in the context of online learning are close to traditional ODL but are markedly different from those of the campus education. It is evident that the underlying quality concerns of both the online and traditional ODL contexts are analogous insofar as they deal with the basics of instructional design and student learning. Obviously, that which distinguishes them is the indicator pertaining to technology, i.e., the learning environment.

The foregoing discussion unequivocally points to the following facts:

- Key quality indicators do differ, depending on whether the educational system is place-bound learning, print-based ODL or online/distributed learning, in spite of the fact that the end-goal is to foster and facilitate effective learning. It is imperative for institutions to recognize this variance and accordingly accommodate appropriate quality indicators, if their quest for quality maintenance and improvement is to be accomplished.
- An application of key quality indicators evolved to assure/audit the quality of ODL environments to campus education will help improve the quality of the latter, as the focus of the former is inherently more on learning/learner than on teaching/teacher. But the reversal, which is the current practice, will do more harm than good.
- Key quality indicators generally accommodate the concerns of institutions/accrediting agencies and, more often than not, skirt around those of learners.

To frame a robust policy of quality assurance and audit, no matter what the learning system is, the mindsets/attitudes of policy makers/administrators must change in such a way as to recognize that:

- Learner concerns are the core of the policy. In any learning context, some learners do well and get through the system successfully and some others will not. In other words, learners can be successful despite a bad system, and similarly they can be unsuccessful despite an excellent one. The crux is that success or otherwise largely depends on the amount and the nature of efforts learners make for learning, and the teachers can only be 'guides on the side'. (And, this indeed is the underlying philosophy of distance education). Precisely for this reason, pass-rates of learners, for example, can be just one, but a weak, parameter/indicator to measure the quality, success or reputation of an institution. What institutions must be striving for, therefore, is to provide learning experiences that make learners feel that they do spend quality time at the institution during their academic journey, and will cherish it in future. This should be the driving force behind any policy on quality.

- One size does not, and will not, fit all. Besides learner concerns, the uniqueness of the learning systems must determine quality indicators. Drawing quality criteria from a system of education that is familiar and proven in its unique context to frame policies for a system that is not only innovative in terms of learning environments but also is still evolving is seemingly less cumbersome and, therefore, may sound legitimate, but will prove to be woefully inadequate to serve the purpose intended. Policy makers/administrators must accept this reality, however established the current practice may be. There is no harm though to adapt existing quality indicators pertaining to such categories as institutional commitment (including finances), technology, student support services (including training), instructional design, development and delivery, learning content, intellectual property policy, faculty and staff support services, equity, evaluation, etc., to suit a particular context.

In essence, the quality of products and services builds and sustains the social credibility of ODL. Let us touch upon these now. But, first, we shall complete Check Your Progress 4.

Check Your Progress 5

Notes: a) Space is given below for your answer.
 b) Check your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

List the factors predominant in assessing the quality of (i) campus education, (ii) traditional ODL, and (iii) online learning.

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2.3.4 Courseware

A major chunk of the course materials of any distance education programme is normally covered by print materials notwithstanding the rapid developments in the telecommunications, computer technology and audiovisual media. Obviously, the distance teaching directorates involve themselves in the production of a large quantity of print materials for various courses. However identical the course content/syllabus may be, each one of these directorate/institutes prepares its own materials in order to maintain its identity and standards.

It should not however, be understood from this that the academic and distance teaching directorates are the sole agencies engaged in preparing

course materials. By implication, these directorates more often than not, might as well depend on outside sources - course writers from outside the directorate structure - for materials. It should be mentioned here that inadequate academic infrastructure is the chief factor which forces the directorates to depend on course materials prepared outside, the directorate system.

Those directorates which have to find course writers outside the system normally pay small and varying amounts depending on the status of the person engaged for preparing the course materials. Eminent persons, who have sound footing in their own field of study, are generally reluctant to undertake this task, either because of the fact that they hardly have any time to spare for such work, or because of the disincentive in the form of trivial remuneration. (Added to this, perhaps, is the fact that a majority of the senior academics feel diffident about *writing* course materials). Consequent upon these facts some distance teaching directorates are forced to depend on mediocre course writers. The courses thus prepared very often fail to bring to light the effectiveness of the print medium.

It would not be difficult to pay decent remuneration to the course writers, if the distance teaching directorates were given adequate financial support, or in some cases, allowed to use the income generated by the directorates for the development of courses and other support services.

Besides print materials, the distance teaching directorates make use of media support - radio, television, video cassettes, etc. In fact, radio talks have been widely used. With the co-operation of local radio stations, the directorates broadcast the lectures of eminent personalities. As far as possible the directorates choose a convenient time for the students to listen to these lectures and benefit from them. But there are limitations.

To serve our immediate purpose, we have identified three major drawbacks

They are:

- i) The specified time for radio talks may not be convenient to a heterogeneous Population.
- ii) However mature/adult a person, 'animation' has a stronger impact on him/her. Radio talks being restricted to an auditory channel may not capture and sustain the attention of the students.
- iii) Being a heterogeneous group the degree of concentration reached by the students may not be identical- a student who has a lower level of concentration cannot play back the talk and thus does not assimilate it at his/her own pace.

Notwithstanding these limitations, we can safely say that, wherever available, distance students benefit from radio broadcasts. What we need, perhaps, is a means to present these broadcasts effectively. We discuss the related issues in detail in ES 318, the course on "Communication Technology in Distance Education".

2.3.5 Learner Services

Compelled by the socio-academic issues of parity, open and distance learning (ODL) *struggled* to remain imitative of campus education. It is time, however, ODL reinvented itself by eschewing the tendency to borrow dysfunctional norms, be they in terms of learning experiences,

quality concerns, etc., from the conventional education systems and by placing learner development first. Accordingly, learner support services must transcend teacher-learner interaction variously called 'counselling', 'academic counselling', 'face-to-face counselling', 'personal contact programs', 'tutoring', 'synchronous learning', 'mentoring', etc., and incorporate elements of activities ranging from the announcement for admission to certification and post-certification, and all the activities in between (Sewart 1978; Murgatroyd 1980; Smith and Small 1982; Daniel and Marquis, 1983; Sewart 1989; Hiola and Moss, 1990; Sewart, 1993, Koul and Asha, 2006; Robinson 2007, Lockwood 2007 and so on).

Past experience shows that within a few years of their existence, ODL institutions invariably manage to standardize and mass produce learning materials. Where ODL woefully fails is to build robust support services system, and no ODL institution seems to be an exception. The relative intangibility of support services is projected as the major factor for its current state of affairs that obviously leave much to be desired. Paradoxically, however, the success of ODL depends largely on the quality of support services. This, despite the fact that quality assurance/auditing processes are yet to come to terms with this reality.

Against the backdrop of differing quality categories mentioned above, let us consider the following factors as typically contributing to the quality of learner services and social credibility:

- **Admission notification:** Clarity, reach, coverage, cost, communication gap between the unit that announces and that which has the responsibility to respond to queries, etc.
- **Post-notification scenario:** Queries through phone, mail, by post, in person, etc., the extent of timely response, clarity in the response, authenticity of the response, transaction time, availability of trained workforce, opportunity cost of students, cost incurred by the university, etc.
- **Application submission stage:** Clarity of content, lack of understanding on the part of students, gaps in the information sought (in the application form), incomplete filled in applications, discrepancy in fee payment, level of support extended by Learning Centres, information clutter in the Prospectus, etc.
- **Screening process at the ODL institution:** Receipt of forms by post (from students/Learning Centres), lack of acknowledgement procedures, wrong delivery addresses (leading to despatch delay), removal and collection process of bank drafts and their entry at the finance unit, routing of application forms to the admission unit, scrutiny for eligibility criteria and data entry, seeking missing details from students, marking of provisional admissions, routing of requests for credit transfer/exemptions to the units concerned, generating student identity (ID) cards, possible errors in spelling, medium of choice, ID number, course/programme code, address, etc., routing the list (soft or hard or both) of eligible candidates to learning materials unit, sending the ID cards to Learning Centres/students, time lag in sending the ID list/card, etc.
- **Issuance of student identity (ID) cards:** Malpractices/illegal demands made on students, closure of Centres without informing the university, return of ID cards back to the university, student query through various mediums, creating appropriate response channels,

delay in responses and follow-up queries from students, delay on the part of the post office, courier agency, etc.

- **Issuance of learning materials:** Availability of adequate and adequately trained workforce, adequacy of space for materials storage, lack of ready-availability of learning materials, maintenance of database, demands from students/centres for replacement of books (due to soiled, incomplete, wrong medium or course, etc.), etc.
- **Post-dispatch of learning materials:** Students changing the course/medium, loose organization of queries relating to replacement of materials/reallocation of courses/ID cards, etc., late query from students without the required enclosures (fee, books/ID for replacement), etc.
- **Face-to-face classes:** Inappropriate scheduling at the centre/university, time taken for the schedules to reach the students, centres ignoring the university's stipulation, nature of classes (timings, duration, space, etc), quality of the classes (qualification of resource persons, time for interaction), lack of student attendance, lack of means to get student feedback from students, etc.
- **Two-way communication/continuous assessment channel:** Relevance of assignment questions, time taken for them to reach the students, time given to students for their responses, unclear instructions regarding response submission date and place, lack of acknowledgement channel, lack of means to avoid student copying, space to store the assignment-responses, lack of means to return the responses after tutor-comments/grading or marking, availability of trained workforce, delay in the dispatch of assignments for marking, delay in collecting the assignments after marking, delay in entry of marks in the system, delay in routing the marks to the examination unit, delay in entering the marks in the system at the examination unit, requests for resubmission, marking of resubmitted assignments without proper authority, publishing of results without assignment marks, student queries (angry to anxiety in tone), insufficient response channels, communication gaps between the examination unit and that concerned for responses, etc.
- **Examination schedule:** Time lag in scheduling, delay in the issuance of hall tickets to students, notification of the schedules on the media, clarity of the schedule, etc.
- **Post-examination:** Collection of answer papers and their distribution for marking, collection of marked papers, entry of marks on the system, ranking (after collating the marks obtained for continuous assessment and examination), creation of certificates and mark sheets, arrangement for convocation, post-convocation activities (e.g., arrangement for issuance of duplicate mark sheets/certificates), etc.

In the absence of a robust learner support policy, the current practice of learner support services in many ODL institutions is characterized by a tedious process-cycle that is tenuously coordinated, resulting in avoidable delays.

Descriptors of quality indicators

Some of the generic elements that could be taken as descriptors of quality indicators in this context include the following:

- **Reduced waiting-line or queue:** Whether it is a gas station, a fast-food or supermarket cash counter, a cinema or an airline ticket counter, a bank or post office, a doctor's or lawyer's office, or at a traffic signal, we as customers/clients generally expect that our transactions should be the first without having to wait on a queue. In case, the waiting-line is long, we either wait restlessly cursing the organization or the person in charge of the counter or/and another customer/client at the counter or we simply walk out and look elsewhere for the services. We may lose nothing in the bargain, or the loss is affordable. However, working as they do in an age in which monopoly is looked down upon, alternatives abound and competition is high, most organizations want to retain their customer/clients. To ensure their loyalty, one of the measures they take is reducing customer waiting-line. It is also customary in business processes, to assess wax and wane periods when the queue is relatively more or less, and accordingly re-deploy personnel. On parallel lines, learner-centredness being the underlying orientation of ODL, it is imperative for ODL institutions to pay attention to, and put mechanisms in place for reducing the turnaround time of the institution-learner transactions, be they for registration, admission, delivery of materials, examination results, etc. Intra-institutional waiting-line (i.e., among clients within an organization) usually contributes to the transactional waiting-line between the institution and learners. For example, in the ODL context, the initial delay in the supply of subject content creates a painfully long waiting-line for materials production and their subsequent delivery/consumption.
- **Single-counter operation:** Suppose that we want to withdraw some cash, transfer money from the savings to the chequing account and take a bank draft. What would we prefer to have – three different counters, or just one – to complete these transactions in a bank? Most probably, a single counter. Or, if we were at a fast-food joint, we would rather pick up our choice of meat, fries and drinks and pay for them at one counter, instead of going to three different ones? For the benefits of customers/clients, most banks, joins etc., do have single-window operations. Admittedly, the intention is not to trivialize an educational endeavor by comparing it with a fast-food joint, but the value that a single-counter operation adds to customer/client service cannot be downplayed. If learner support services units in ODL institutions are to serve the single-counter operation, they should obviously be equipped so.
- **Delivery of quality-response:** By quality response is meant a response that satisfies the student. At one point in time or another, we may have come across situations where our queries get a mumbled response leaving us wondering whether or not we got the required response. If we insist for a proper answer, either we get it or we get a lecture on the virtues of being patient or a stern discouraging look or whatever to that effect. What is our state of mind in these situations? On very many occasions, in the absence of proper management of student services, it is not quite unlikely that distance learners grapple with unsatisfactory response from the institution, and this accentuates their feeling of isolation. For example, when distance learners demand to know when they are likely to get course materials, can virtuous institutions give them an absolute date, and actually deliver the materials on the date? Can institutions prepare a master schedule for materials dispatch and make it part of the information brochure in

print or otherwise? At the outset, however, why should learners ask for a dispatch date, unless materials are delayed? Then, the question is why are materials delayed? In other words, for giving a satisfactory response to student queries, the whole organizational machinery must be well-oiled, not its parts alone. The whole is more than the sum of parts, and if this is not acknowledged, the resultant evasive responses to student queries are inevitable.

- **Availability of services required:** Institutions must be clear as to what they would offer to learners in terms of services. Different clients come to a post-office for different purposes. One can, for example, go there to take an international money order in a foreign currency. If this service is not available in a post-office, the client may go to a bank. What has it got to do with ODL institutions? In many ODL institutions in developing countries, face-to-face sessions form part of the instructional system. At some institutions, attendance in these sessions are mandatory and at others, optional. Face-to-face sessions are also used for different purposes, e.g., actual teaching of the kind that takes place in traditional classrooms (though that is not the intention for which these sessions are instituted in ODL), social activity, practicum or lab experiments. Suppose in a situation where the face-to-face component demands compulsory attendance, some learners, for reasons of ill-health, travel or a personal tragedy or some such, are unable to make it, are there alternatives provided for them to catch up with their peers? Making course materials available in different media, including the web, to suit different learning styles can be another example.
- **Client preparation:** When a product or service is introduced in the market, more often than not, awareness programmes are implemented to orient the potential customers/ clients. On some occasions, 'user guides' are produced in glossy papers with attractive designs, etc. However, many of us may have come across situations where we could not make a sense out of these materials. Or, we use only a few facilities that the product or service offers, and we never bother the rest because either we do not need them or we never come to grips with them, in spite of reading the guide that is supposed to help us derive the optimal benefit from the product or service! Similarly, in many ODL institutions, reams of materials are produced with the assumption that these help learners understand the content. But the question is, are they really? Proper learner preparation, in addition to printed or electronic materials is imperative, if learners are to derive the intended benefits from the distance mode of learning. We are aware of learner induction programmes that purport to introduce learners to ODL, but in a majority of cases, these are used as a desideratum or as an inevitable ritual.

In order to streamline the activities more efficiently and effectively, however, ODL institutions could embark on a relatively lower-cost networked environment that is more context-specific than a proprietary lone.

Benchmarks

Benchmarks in the context of support services are a good idea, but are yet to be evolved. The table given below illustrates some of the issues that need to be looked into for building quality standards or benchmarks:

S. N.	Areas	Quality Indicator	Quality Descriptor
1	Admission/ Registration	Simple procedures are in place Admission/ Registration throughout the year	Programme-wise (to the point) Prospectus in print and on the web) is available Simple (easy to fill-in) application in print and on the web is available Mechanisms are in place to keep the time between application and registration (including the distribution of Smart Learner Card) at the maximum of one working week A system for the acknowledgement of the receipt of application from the learners is in place (irrespective of the medium chosen for application)
2	Learning Materials Production – Print and Electronic – and Course Delivery	Materials are designed in self-learning format following sound instructional designs/theories	Quality Assurance Team is in place (pilot, continuous assessment rating, course credit rating, number of face-to-face classes required/assignments, etc.)
3	Learning Materials Distribution	Learning package(s) given (in person) to the learner on the date of getting full-registration	Courses are launched after ensuring materials are available. Distribution Centres across the Districts are in place
4	Assignments (as a tool for both distance teaching and continuous assessment of learner performance) Project Works (for evaluation and feedback)	Learning package contains assignment questions and last date for submission Indication of the date of reception of feedback from the mentors (i.e., the commented and graded/marked responses) The institution has the database of mentors.	Training is imparted to part-time mentors Mentors are deployed on University payroll Collection Centres across the Districts are in place The turnaround time for feedback on assignment responses is fixed (i.e., enough time between two assignments, if there is more than one assignment) Arrangements are in place to send/give the commented upon and evaluated responses. Staff Mentors are available for quality check Rule book for mentors containing details of feedback to be given, etc., is available.
5	Face-to-face Classes	Learning package contains the schedule for face-to-face classes The institution has the database of teachers	Classes are not compulsory Training is imparted to part-time subject teachers Trained teachers are available on University payroll Classes are arranged at convenient timings/locations at established tertiary institutions (in the evenings, on weekends, etc.) Rule book for teachers containing rules of engagement is available.

Basic Issues of Open and Distance Education

6	Synchronous Sessions	<p>The package contains (depending on the requirement of the Course) the schedule for synchronous sessions</p> <p>ODL institutions have the required infrastructure (technology and personnel)</p>	<p>Training is imparted to full-time ODL teachers</p> <p>No. of sessions specified for each teacher per Course</p> <p>Learning Centres are available across the Districts</p> <p>Recorded sessions are used subsequently as asynchronous materials (to downsize the synchronous sessions or to diversify them)</p>
7	Asynchronous Sessions	<p>Learning materials, assignments, sessions, etc., are available online</p> <p>ODL institutions have the required infrastructure (technology and personnel)</p>	<p>Mechanisms are in place to incorporate feedbacks from the learners</p>
8	Learner-Query Response	<p>Learners get/access the information required without any difficulty (in person and at a distance through emails, posts, faxes, telephones, etc.)</p>	<p>24/7 help-desk is available</p> <p>Touch screen facilities are available at convenient locations (at Learning Materials Distributions Centres, Assignment Collection Centres, Post Offices, Banks, ATM shelters, Railway/Bus stations, Airports, etc.)</p> <p>Portal/Web Sites contain as much information as possible</p> <p>Mechanisms are in place for data maintenance</p> <p>A Query Management Cell (QMC) is available at the Headquarters</p> <p>Learner Query booklet in the form of FAQ is available (Queries include common as well as specific, e.g., credit transfer, course exemption, scholarships, etc.)</p>
9	Institutional Commitment	<p>Evident policy shift from materials production to learner services</p> <p>Sufficient infrastructure and budget (e.g., about 1/3 of the Course fee income) for learner support services</p> <p>Robust digital policy</p> <p>Changes in institutional structure and reporting arrangements</p>	<p>Involvement of academics in the selection of mentors, etc.</p> <p>Involvement of academics in suggesting the number of sessions/classes per Course</p> <p>Involvement of academics in suggesting the areas for discussion during the classes/sessions</p> <p>Involvement of academics in handling synchronous sessions</p> <p>Establishment of a robust Centre for Learner Support Services as a single-window operation for learners with the QA Team (which liaise with Academic Schools, Materials Production Units (print and non-print), Learning Centres, etc., on a continuous basis) Policy books are in place</p>
10	Examination (theory and practical)	<p>Learning package contains the schedule for examinations (in the evenings and on weekends)</p>	<p>Examination Centres are available</p> <p>Rule book to conduct exams is available</p>

Seldom do institutional policies on quality, if any, address/accommodate the concerns of learners. Generally, accrediting agencies are “hesitant to look at course quality, a primary point of interest for consumers. There are indeed practical problems – primarily insufficient resources – to implement these finer levels of quality assurance. If we agree that the course needs to be added as a unit of analysis, how do we construct a quality assurance process that is doable?” (Twigg, 2001). In other words, the parameters accrediting agencies, governments, etc., tend to employ to assess quality need not necessarily be the same as those the practitioners or learners hold, and vice versa. Not only must, therefore, institutions put in place proper mechanisms to look into this anomaly in the prevailing approach to quality, but also put an end to applying the quality criteria evolved for campus education to ODL. Exploiting the potential of emerging technologies, ODL institutions must embark on learner support service solutions, besides refocusing and accommodating the consequential institutional restructuring process.

2.4 SOCIAL JUSTICE

Open and Distance Learning (ODL) has been, and to a certain extent still is, considered an alternative or a complementary to the face-to-face educational set up. In the 1980s, people who were skeptical of the concept of ODL and were staunch believers in the physical contiguity for learning transaction to take place, vehemently opposed the concept of ODL and considered it a second-rate education, at best. Though many of these skeptics later became converts, having understood the inherent socio-academic strength of ODL, some still do not want to be convinced.

Then there were moderators in the 1990s, who believed that ODL, if implemented properly, would certainly help increase the access to higher education. And, considering the student profile, they accepted that ODL is a complementary system as it provides tangible provisions for retraining and continuous professional education, which are very vital, given knowledge explosion. These beliefs coexisted and perhaps they still do.

However, with the phenomenal growth in the Internet/Web technologies and other ICTs in capturing, storage and retrieval of the teaching-learning processes, people who are technology savvy and those who earlier dismissed technology as a manifestation of neo-colonization saw a convergence of face-to-face education and ODL. The changing demography, globalization, the demand of knowledge workers, etc., are in turn changing the learner profiles in ODL (see Unit 4 of this Block for a discussion on the subject). The learners in ODL no longer are the typical persons who ‘missed the bus’, as the cliché goes. ODL caters to a mixed group of learners comprising those who are fresh from school education, who are gainfully employed, who look for non-credit Programmes, etc. What this means is that the contribution of ODL in accelerating the access to and assuring quality in higher education is getting acknowledged. By extension, the social credibility of ODL is firmly placed.

The significant trends in Open and Distance Learning (ODL), a powerful weapon for mass instruction, can be grouped under the following two symbiotic, mutually-supporting categories:

2.4.1 The Question of Access

Across the ODL spectrum, a primitive interpretation of social justice seems to historically prevail. Considering the fact that ODL was, by and

large, conceived more as a vehicle for accelerating the access to tertiary/higher education than as a system with huge potential to deepen the quality of higher education while simultaneously widening the access, particularly in the context of the developing economies of the world, a broader interpretation of social justice insofar as ODL is concerned did not occur. Thus, ODL has been and unfortunately continues to be associated with access or quantity, and in the process the issue of quality was relegated to the background.

Though indisputably important, access alone is not enough to achieve social justice in terms of equity – quality of learning and quality of life. That is to say, the enthusiasm to improve the access to higher education will prove to be misplaced, if it is shorn of quality and, by extension, human development that singularly determines the degree of social justice achieved. This exactly is the reason why ODL systems, particularly in India, conjure up an unenviable image of mediocrity among the enlightened. More often than not, the major stakeholders such as the government, the academia, the employment market, etc., see them as a manifestation of institutionalized mediocrity.

Besides the abysmally poor performance of some of the institutions that embark on ODL systems with the primary purpose of generating revenue, the other main reason for looking down upon ODL is the ‘culturally induced bias’ that on-campus education is superior because the physical contiguity that exists between the learners and teachers encourages learning. The impact of this deep-rooted myth is such that it is not uncommon to preposterously apply quality parameters that are pertinent to on-campus environments on ODL. Indicators of quality should, by all means, reflect the quintessence of the system under consideration. Based on the familiarity with the classroom education, the customary standards such as the physical plant (campus), number of faculty members, learning environment, resources such as playground, Internet/Wi-Fi connectivity, physical/digital library, audio/visual studio, cafeteria, etc., the status of council members, teacher-learner ratio, annual learner intake and exit rate, effectiveness of parent-teacher association, on-campus discipline, etc., that are used to gauge the quality or otherwise of the conventional education system are unabashedly applied in the context of ODL. Does one size fit all?

This should not be, however, construed that the on-campus parameters of quality could not be used at all in the ODL context. What is actually meant is that the degree of application differs and that on-campus parameters alone are insufficient to ascertain the quality or otherwise of the ODL systems. Conversely, in their enthusiasm to be treated on a par with the classroom education, ODL institutions often fashion their programmes after those available face-to-face. This is quite unfortunate for obvious reasons: the properties of chalk and cheese remain what they are, packaging notwithstanding. However, the academic benefits that could accrue by dovetailing these systems cannot be disputed. With the emerging information and communications technologies (ICT), a sense of fusion or convergence of these systems has already been sporadically achieved, and the resultant robustness of the products and services ably addresses the issue of social justice.

2.4.2 Quest for Social Justice

For the purpose of this Subsection, we shall touch upon the case of India. (You may like to reflect on this with reference to your own situations).

About half a century ago, when ODL was introduced in its earliest avatar as correspondence education in India, the purpose seemed to be to provide continuing education to teachers as well as to increase the access to higher education. With the emergence of open learning in the 1980s, the access angle also gained currency and it was projected in the successive Five Year Plan documents that each Indian State would have an Open University and that the share of distance learners in the GER by 2012, i.e., by the end of the 12th Five Year Plan (2007-2012), should be about 40%, etc. Thus, 'access' was predominant in the ODL discourse in India, and, perhaps, rightly so, as the prevailing situation warranted so. However, with the phenomenal growth of the ICT since the mid-1990s and the whole new perception this brought with it on every aspect of life including education, the quest for quality and, by extension, access for success is beginning to dominate the ODL scene. Mere access to higher education, as it obtains today, turns out to be a politically correct populist measure, but access without paving the way for improving the quality of life is socially and economically unproductive. If the earlier discussion on the use of ODL for revenue generation is of any indication, even the noteworthy access angle becomes subservient to finance.

The government seems to approach ODL rather reluctantly and this could be attributed to the lack of a genuine ODL roadmap to achieve social justice, i.e., improving the access to quality higher education and quality of life.

2.4.3 Reflections

In a vicarious way, ODL addresses itself to the 'bottom of the pyramid' - a concept propounded by the legendary management guru C.K. Prahalad that revolutionized the field of marketing management. Though this concept does connote 'mass', dilution of quality of products, processes and services was neither intended nor contemplated. This cannot, however, be said of ODL. Nonetheless, it is not impossible for open and distance learning institutions (ODLIs) to build and maintain quality of their offerings by periodically overhauling curricula; re-drawing staff development activities; carrying out relevant research studies; making available quality learner support services, etc. For example, they could embark on multifarious learning environments to cater to differing learning styles, bring relevant and current information/knowledge to the doorsteps of learners, address the learning needs of the differently-abled, etc., by harnessing the potential of technologies including information and communications technologies (ICT). With the world community fiercely embracing Free/Open Source Software (FOSS), Open Educational Resources (OERs), etc., ODLIs could extend a helpful arm to deeply bury the clichéd digital divide arguments and bring to life the hitherto dormant phenomenon of digital dividend. The proposition put forward may smack of contradiction, but the fact remains that the problems created by technology could be solved only by technology.

Wriggling out of the stereotypical academic trap, which many of the existing ODL institutions currently find themselves in, they must reflect on their social contributions and make concerted efforts to re-invent themselves, and the resultant new avatar should ably address the issues of social justice beyond access. However, the role of ODLIs in bringing about social justice in education is limited, though sufficiently important. Granting that ODLIs could bring forth positive changes within their environments to meet the demands of social justice, what worth would

they still be, if they continue to receive flak out of socio-political apathy? ODLIs, in isolation, cannot achieve social justice: they need to carry with them the entire social milieu in which they operate.

Able addressing the issues of socio-political apathy, academic credibility, etc., thus, becomes imperative, and this could not be done without intense engagement of the pillars of democracy. This, when occurs, will result in robust ODL policies, achieving inclusive quality higher education and thus social justice.

Course correction steered by out-of-the-box thinking, far from the sickeningly dominant business-as-usual attitude, is imperative, should higher education in general and open and distance learning (ODL) in particular achieve social justice in terms of human development, i.e., improving the quality of life of people. Radical changes in such areas as governance, administration/management, funding patterns, faculty hiring, curriculum framing including instructional design and learner support systems, etc., therefore, are warranted in the context of ODL to make it sufficiently robust in order to be increasingly responsive to the learning needs of the society in which it operates. Are we prepared for, or at the least, inclined towards radical changes? With the emerging geopolitical scenario; ever-increasing digital societies that serendipitously flatten the world; emergence of new economic superpowers in the global South, etc., and their impact on demography, culture and particularly higher education, ODL has to, of necessity, come under the reformist scalpel to flush out some of its burdensome traditions.

Making education accessible is one thing, making quality education accessible is quite another, and it is the latter that will complement the social justice exercise undertaken in the education sector with the advent of the ODL in India about half a century ago. We should therefore interpret social justice, as it pertains to ODL, against a broad canvass of quality human development, of which access is but a part.

Check Your Progress 6

Notes: a) Space is given below for your answer.

b) Check your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

State the meaning of social justice in the context of ODL

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2.5 LET US SUM UP

We discussed the academic and social relevance of an educational system and the normal criteria within which it operates. We also identified four major aims that characterize the functions of an educational system. The aims we identified are: to impart skills, to develop the powers of the mind, advance knowledge, and promote a secular view among the people.

We then evolved a more valid perspective of distance education and considered its legitimacy with reference to that perspective. Having given the perspective, we discussed comprehensively whether or not distance education fulfills each of the educational criteria mentioned above. We eventually draw the conclusion that distance education does fulfil the criteria satisfactorily.

2.6 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: POSSIBLE ANSWERS

Check Your Progress 1

An education system should be able to:

- i) Give instruction in skills,
- ii) develop the powers of the mind and bring about a cultivated society, advance knowledge, and
- iii) transmit a common human culture and thereby instill a secular view among individuals.

The present social situation suggests many more criteria, for example, social and economic relevance of education, education to bring about equity, etc.

Check Your Progress 2

Distance education provides an opportunity for updating. Information and life-long education. It, thus, promotes one's professional attitude towards one's social roles and leads to improved awareness in the learner. This awareness, in turn, leads to a shared improvement and the transformation of the society as a whole.

Distance education encompasses three domains (i.e. cognitive, psychomotor and affective) which subsume skills of learning.

- i) Cognitive domain: Access devices, i.e., glossaries, exercises, etc., which predominate in distance teaching materials help to develop independent reading and the comprehension skills of the students.
- ii) Psycho-motor domain: Distance education takes care of this domain by providing the students access to laboratory facilities - especially for science subjects.
- iii) Affective domain: The demands of this domain are met through personal contact programmes, counselling; tutor-comment, audio/video programmes, computer aided learning and by adopting a personalized approach in the design of course materials.

Check Your Progress 3

By providing educational opportunities to a majority of the population, distance education brings about de-elitisation of the educational process. Thus, its wide 'coverage' ensures the spread of rationality and a common human culture based on values that arise out of learning - this is a positive move towards the creation of a learning society

Check Your Progress 4

Though the factors indicating quality of campus education, traditional ODL and online learning environments overlap, a few factors stand out from the rest in each of these environments as presented in the table below:

Campus Education	Traditional ODL	Online Learning
Physical plant (Campus)	Learning materials	Learning design
Institutional reputation	Materials despatch	Learner support
Student entry/exit	Continuous assessment	Institutional commitment
Learning environment	Academic counselling	Learning outcomes
Campus discipline	Resources	Technology

Check Your Progress 5

The expression 'social justice' generally takes the meaning from the context in which it is used. Accordingly, in the context of ODL, we could describe social justice as being able to provide increased access to quality higher education and improve the quality of life.

Check Your Progress 6

About half a century ago, when ODL was introduced in its earliest avatar as correspondence education in India, the purpose seemed to be to provide continuing education to teachers as well as to increase the access to higher education. With the emergence of open learning in the 1980s, the access angle also gained currency and it was projected in the successive Five Year Plan documents that each Indian State would have an Open University and that the share of distance learners in the GER by 2012, i.e., by the end of the 12th Five Year Plan (2007-2012), should be about 40%, etc. Thus, 'access' was predominant in the ODL discourse in India.

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UNIT 3 EMERGING NEW LEARNER IN GLOBALIZING ERA

Structure

- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Who are Old and Traditional Learners?
- 3.3 Emergence of New Learners: the Concept and its Implications
- 3.4 Learner Models
 - 3.4.1 Collaborator
 - 3.4.2 Free Agent
 - 3.4.3 Wise Analyzer
 - 3.4.4 Creative Synthesizer
- 3.5 Impact of Information and Communication Technologies
- 3.6 What is the Implication of this for ODL?
- 3.7 Traits of the New Learners
- 3.8 What are the Instructional Implications?
- 3.9 Let Us Sum Up
- 3.10 Check Your Progress: Possible Answers
- 3.11 Glossary
- 3.12 References

3.0 OBJECTIVES

After studying this Unit, you should be able to:

- Define who new learner is in the ever changing society;
- Explain the learner models in the 21st century;
- Study the implication of new learners in the context of ODL?;
- Identify the Traits of the New Learners; and
- Relate the Instructional implications.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

A new learner is emerging concept in the globalizing era, life long learning is essential feature of the globalizing era. Here in this unit we are going to explain 'New learner' in the changing process of society, change denotes to a paradigm shift, here we shall also discuss what is Paradigm shift? The paradigm shift has been defined as change; Paradigm shift denotes change; change is inevitable and the only factor in all walks of life. Paradigm shift is universal in all spheres of human life, not exceptional to teaching learning process. In any social transformation, change occurs, the change with special reference to education in the 21st century is very important. Here, in this unit, we will discuss, with the educational influence, how vocations changes in to occupations and further occupations in to professions. Every change would take place in the society with a change in the culture and live styles of people: it demands new occupations and professionalism, with new skills; new culture and attitudes will emerge. In the whole process, here we are going

discuss, how ODL facilitate education to 'new learner with continuing life long education' and the traits expected by the new learners and what are the major implications of the instructional implication of the open and distance education are discussed in this unit. We will also discuss, what could be the profile of a 21st century learner in this changing world? Over time the learner has been the explorer of new knowledge, with the rapid changing society and its knowledge base and skilled has been its multiplier effect. . In the 21st century, challenges and demands of learning are increasingly expanding and frequently changing. It is in this context that we postulate, in this Unit, four models of the 21st century learner and analyze their approaches to learning and finally expected traits of the new learners. It provides a practical example of new styles of learning and considers the implications of these emerging learner models for development in higher education in general and ODL in particular. Otherwise, it can be attributed to new learning by 'new learner' in the changing process of society and its demands.

3.2 WHO ARE OLD AND TRADITIONAL LEARNERS?

One can be categorized 'old learner' is one, who strongly believe that education for social, economic change and it is a cultural process and transformation. He/she least bother for the market and technology otherwise he/she may not be aware of the market and techno-managerial issues and implications of education. In the historical process the olds learners associated with religion and culture and maintain retain the socio-cultural process. The final product of education is maintenance of culture and social order. The society was mostly divided in to functional division basis and status was retained through education. Education for all, educational equity, flexible practices access to wide source of knowledge is not gained movement in the traditional learner and learning style. Even, if we observe equity principle in education, no where appears in any religion, equality of opportunity is the democratic principle which was not followed in the traditional societies. The 'new learners' are democratic, secular, socialist, republic governors' under legal constitutional status, longing for equity, accessible to people and places, flexible in their approaches, he or she longing to acquire knowledge seamlessly, and more adaptable to changing times and space.

3.3 EMERGENCE OF NEW LEARNERS: THE CONCEPT AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

Post- colonial states are modern states. Those are the countries liberated from the colonial rule broadly called as developing societies /nations; they are namely Asia, Africa and Latin America. They are liberal, sovereign, socialist, secular, liberal, democratic states. Longing for equality to its citizens is the basic principles of modern democracy. Universal educational access to its citizens and educational for all is the agenda of modern democratic state and its policy. The same latter and spirit expressed by Prof. Ram Reddy, when he was convincing the open and distance education. In his words "Democracy in politics and Elitism in education do not go together". He meant that democracy will assert with education to all. In the modern globalizing era education has become borderless and seamless and life long learning, continuing and life long and self-learning is the order of the day.

Emergence of open and distance education paved way for life long education and it can be attributed to emergence of 'new learners'. Distance education as discussed earlier, is a new career avenue for the teachers and the learners in the globalizing era. New Learner needs to be understood in terms of ever changing society, every change denotes to a shift in the existing beliefs, practices, it is otherwise called paradigm shift, paradigm denotes the change; change is the only constant factor in all spheres of public life where education is not exceptional. New learner is gaining movement in the liberalization, privatization and globalizing era, particularly in the knowledge societies. The capacity building among the people is very important in the changing society. The capacity building is mostly the capacity sharing activity. As such it is said that today's trainee is tomorrow's trainer. Each one teaches one is old saying, the new saying is multiplying effect of training, i.e., One, one + eleven (it is the synergy). It is appropriate to quote here that " In this age of knowledge is the intellectual capital-trained man power-rather than financial and physical capital, which will give the society strength and prosperity when knowledge educated people become important strategic resource for development." for 20th century. (Venkateswaran. S. 2000). Hence, it is always emphasized that capacity building is a capacity sharing activity in the globalizing era of education.

The rapid expansion of knowledge is paving the way to continuing education and self directed learning. All the societies are rapidly changing. Changing society's demands change in occupational, cultural, skills developing patterns and perception in their mindset, in this process, traditional vocations would give way to new occupations, new occupations would give to professionalism, for example, the traditional people used to clean house, roads and airports with traditional broom, where as, the modern technological era; the broom has been replaced by the vacuum cleaners. The attitude of the operator of the broom and vacuum cleaner, demand totally different mindset and behavioral patterns. The educated behaves more gently and sophisticatedly, which is demanded behavioral and attitudinal changes while dealing with their clientele. Above, the process creates 'a sense of dignity of labour' and gives respect of all occupations and professions, this, we would witness in the developed societies, it is a transformation from vocation to occupation and further to professionalism. Technology enabled a paradigm shift in traditional vocations and gives a way to new systems of occupations, the traditional crafts has replaced by modern gadgets, which demands education and culture, attitudes /mannerism. These processes cannot be stopped. It is a necessary, but for some people it appears to be evil, agree to disagree, one can call the process is a necessary evil in the paradigm shift. Traditionally education served as a social and cultural force but the modern education, especially in the technological era, it is serving as a productive force and also techno-managerial skills dominates all spheres of public life. It is due to silicon revolution that had taken and reshaped all the spheres of life in modern societies. Today in the era of blended learning atmospheres, particularly in the developing societies, we find bullocks and air crafts are going together.

When we refer to content and purpose of education, the teaching learning process has also undergone sea changes. According to Peter Ducker, 'the present society is a knowledge society', where educated people, traditionally they were called "elites" (chosen few), in the modern times they are called 'knowledge workers', they contribute their knowledge and skills to the knowledge societies. Most of the educated people are

playing the role of 'knowledge workers in the knowledge society'. Here, education is being played as an effective instrument of socio economic change. People are willing pay their live saving for two sectors, they are namely 'health and education'. Education is becoming an important investment for the all sections of the society. *"It is the productivity of the problem that counts and that in turn depends on their ability to gain knowledge, create knowledge and transform knowledge in to wealth "(IDEA- Kulandaiswamy 2000).*

As discussed earlier, the role of the teacher has also under a change. The teachers are compared as 'knowledge workers' (Peter.-F-Ducker-1990) in the knowledge society. The changing social order demands a change in teaching and learning and teacher's orientation towards learning the modern teacher is more facilitator than preacher. He aid, advice, guide and counsel in a proper and a desirable direction to facilitate further and life long learning. Further the teacher as a facilitator, allow the learners to undertake innovations, experimentations and explore the creativity of the learners. Most of the centres of excellence institutions are undertaking the same formula in their teaching & learning process. It is always less concept and more experiments and generalizations with experiments.

In the areas of open and distance learning, there is an enough scope to expose mass based/non-conventional/vocational programmes for masses and that would be serious agenda for distance education for 21 century. The role of a teacher is a topic of relevance of the present time. It is in the context of globalization process, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) advancement has paved the way to liberate knowledge from the few elites. The era is the age of access to knowledge, but the demand of the time is to integrate the knowledge with human intellect for human empowerment. In the present day, the demand is not the tones of knowledge but an ounce of integrity. Integrity is the direction and also a view and way of life. Hence the teacher irrespective of his point of view should be open to his point of view and frank in his value framework in order to be clear in his/her framework without confusing others. It is also appropriate to quote *"the modern teacher ought to possess the traits of a cultural teacher to transmit and protect the values of the society. Similarly, to survive in the market, he ought to be competent enough to show a direction to the market with the educational process and also his learners. And finally, he cannot afford to neglect techno-managerial skills which is otherwise called 'as a corporate teacher' "(Satyanarayana.R-2202)*

The present learning environment is one of intricate social activity, rapid communication, action, mobility and change with a huge potential for new knowledge. It should not be a surprise that the nature of learners and therefore learning may still be evolving, changing and expanding quite often. Our 21st century environment is one of rapid communication, action, mobility and change.

Check Your Progress 1

Notes: a) Space is given below for your answers.

b) Check your answers with those given at the end of this unit.

1) Define new learners and old learner. (Answer in about 100 words.)

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2) Comment on the knowledge workers in the knowledge society.

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3.4 LEARNER MODELS

Four dominant learner models have emerged in the 21st century learning context and these are explained below: the models categorized under four models, they are namely:

- 3.4.1 Collaborator
- 3.4.2 Free Agent
- 3.4.3 Wise Analyzer
- 3.4.4 Creative Synthesizer

3.4.1 Collaborator

A collaborator is one for who, networks of knowledge, skills and ideas are the sources of learning. This type of learner:

- seeks out and maintains links and networks
- negotiates and exchanges ideas
- uses new technology to support collaborative work
- contributes and adds value to cooperative learning processes
- also exploits and derives value from them
- Is a team player, able to reach 'win-win' agreements?

What sort of learning environment does the Collaborator require? This learner needs access to knowledge and ideas, especially those of practitioners. This learner needs partnerships and networks from which to profit. This learner needs support for development of people skills and a sense of personal value within collaborative ventures with others.

3.4.2 Free Agent

A free-agent uses flexible, continuous, open-ended and life-long styles and systems of learning to the optimal level. This learner makes full use of continuous, open-ended and life-long styles and systems of learning. This is a learner who is:

- flexible, able to keep pace with change, to take advantage of it
- able too to cope with changing requirements of an unstable job market and of employers who are more concerned with personal transferable skills than with those relating to particular occupations - this learner is not bound to an occupation
- conversant with new technology and therefore not constrained by place and the accessibility of instructors
- independent, self-reliant, using new combined courses of study, rather than those which are profession-related
- able to take advantage of modularity, credit transfer, and arrangements for accumulated learning.

This Free-Agent learner requires opportunity to engage in practical work, to integrate performance and learning. This learner needs opportunity to plan flexibly, to seek out a wide range of sources and use these creatively and effectively.

3.4.3 Wise Analyzer

A wise-analyzer able to gather, scrutinize and use evidence of effective activity and apply conclusions to new problems. The Wise Analyzer is:

- reflective and critical
- skilled at the processes of research, testing of validity and the application of findings
- close to the world of work and opportunities for action research
- able to argue judgments securely
- able to apply and adapt arguments to new contexts and to use them in the management of change.

This learner requires opportunity to analyse and manage processes and to apply analysis to new situations. This learner seeks to pursue initiatives through circular processes of identification, analysis, result, impact and evaluation.

3.4.4 Creative Synthesizer

A creative synthesizer is one who is able to connect across themes and disciplines, cross-fertilize ideas, integrate disparate concepts and create new vision and practice. For this learner knowledge does not rest on particular ways of seeing the world. This learner:

- has new ways of seeing things
- puts aside ideas that learning is linear and confirms to us that everything is inter-related and complex
- Is able to create, investigate and to seize opportunities for development and change.
- Having social, market and techno-managerial orientations to the education in the context of changing society and its demands.

The Creative Synthesizer requires complex and stimulating learning environments, with access to disparate disciplines. This learner needs

opportunities to negotiate across boundaries, together with the framework for creating radical visions and seeing them become real.

Note that there could be more learner models but the rationale behind presenting the models here is to show that as we move from teaching to learning-centred provision, the learner is more central to the higher education process.

As much as the learner is important, his/her learning context is equally important for effective teaching/learning process. Let us touch upon this now.

Check Your Progress 2

Notes: a) Space is given below for your answer.

b) Check your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

Who are self-directed learners? Explain its features.

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3.5 IMPACT OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES

Consequent on the phenomenal growth in information and communications technologies (ICT), information packaging and information dissemination have assumed new dimensions, which in turn have made quite an impact on the way we learn, i.e., the way we access as well as assimilate information. Rodgers et al (2006) reveal that by the time the new generation students reach the age of 21, they would have spent 10,000 hours playing video games, sent 200,000 emails, watched 20,000 hours of television, spent 10,000 hours on mobile phone and 5,000 hours in reading. Note the vast difference in the number of hours spent on new media and reading! They further claim that the trend will continue: children in the age group of 6 and below would spend per day 2.01 hours playing outside and 1.58 hours using computers but they would spend 40 minutes reading or being read to. This has implications for ODL. .

When in doubt academically, where would most of us generally look for answers? It is safe to assume that we would turn mostly to live teachers for answers. However, the 21st century learners, in all probability, would seek the help from elsewhere - the Internet! Instead of considering it an over-dependence on technology or tool, it is time we recognized its capabilities to empower learners to do new things. Today's learners are digitally literate, mobile and regard ICTs not as tools but as extension of their life.

A 21st century learner tends use a combination of sound and image and, to a lesser extent, text to convey a message. In fact, they tolerate text – the

primary medium for traditional academics – and perhaps a live teacher, only when a better option is not immediately available! The hypertext minds of 21st century learners crave interactivity, are good at reading visual images (though weak with reading skills), have strong visual/spatial skills, tend towards parallel processing and inductive discovery, look for fast response times (which some may claim leads to short attention spans.)

3.6 WHAT IS THE IMPLICATION OF THIS FOR ODL?

There seems to be a symbiotic relationship between the growth of information and the development of new technologies. Put differently, the amount of information seems growing almost as quickly as new technologies develop and the vice-versa. We now process more information in 24-hours than the average person 500 years ago would process in a lifetime. By the time, today's kindergarteners complete 12 years of schooling, information will have grown at least seven times, while technological power will have grown itself nearly nine times. In other words, knowledge doubles in almost every year.

With this rate of mind-boggling growth in information/knowledge, is it logical to continue to perpetrate the customary educational practice of memorization of content? Even granting that rote-learning is acceptable (to be fair, it is generally not acceptable even in the 20th century learning environment) with the ever-increasing knowledge base, it is humanly impossible to memorize all the content. Consequent on which, it is imperative for us to refashion syllabi and curricula in such a way as to create situations and allow students to make connections, think through issues and solve problems. Of necessity, therefore, "We must move beyond the old university model where the primary challenge of learning was to absorb a vast array of specific information" (Rodgers, M et al, 2006).

Learning is no longer a one-time affair: it's a lifelong process, a process of coping with changes. The content for learning cannot, therefore, be seen as finite – unlike in the present context. As a consequence, learning the content of a particular lesson/course becomes increasingly less important than constructing it by relating the content to other appropriate content resources. If learning by constructing has become the preferred process, the construct of a syllabus/curriculum must facilitate it. The constructivist approach to framing the syllabus/curriculum thus gains importance among the 21st century learners.

In the main, a 21st century learner lives in a digital world and is alive to the multi-media environment. Little wonder, therefore, they expect a learning environment populated with multi-media content. However, in a majority of the cases, classrooms remain divorced from this environment and the teacher continues to be a dispenser of facts and theories that may be often considered dated, resulting in academic fatigue among learners and teachers alike. ODL contexts are no better. The operations of a traditional ODL institution are seen as an extension of those of the classroom educational set and therefore the teaching/learning contexts as such replicate them at a distance. To be alive to the emerging situation, ODL must evolve and learn to communicate in the language and style of the 21st century learners.

3.7 TRAITS OF THE NEW LEARNERS

When we refer to contest and purpose of education, the teaching learning process has also undergone sea changes. As we have discussed Peter Ducker ideas of 'knowledge society', where educated people, traditionally they were called "elites" (chosen few), in the modern times they are called 'knowledge workers', they contribute their knowledge and skills to the knowledge societies. Most of the educated people are playing the role of 'knowledge workers in the knowledge society'. Here education is being played as an effective instrument of socio economic change. People are willing to pay their life savings for two sectors, they are namely 'health and education'. Education is becoming an important investment for the all sections of the society. It is being invested in to face situation and equally in open and distance educational situations. The tradition of learning society encouraged new learners, they are mostly self-learners, manipulate technology for learning purposes. They are life long learners. The new learner can be broadly identified with the following characteristics:

- 1) S/he is a continuous learner or life long learner.
- 2) Possess flexible/balanced mindset, accessible their knowledge's seamlessly/borderless and longing for social equity in the existing order;
- 3) Belief and faith on open distance learning that it would pave the way for seamless education;
- 4) Sound understanding & application of principles of instructional design and its pedagogy for learning at distance;
- 5) Good public relation skills as one has to deal with a variety of experts— artists, course writers, editors, presenters/instructional designers;
- 6) Sound knowledge of his/her discipline and systemic (i.e. open and distance education);
- 7) Excellent command over language, editing and communication skills;
- 8) Familiarity with copyright/IPR provisions, copy editing, proof reading and other skills in preparation and production of quality materials;
- 9) Possess flexible/balanced mindset, accessible their knowledge's seamlessly/borderless and longing for social equity in the existing order;
- 10) Passion to acquire new skills and constantly update his /her knowledge. S/he always tries to multiplier effect of their knowledge and skills from generation to another generation;
- 11) They are mostly knowledge workers in the knowledge society in the context of liberalization, privatization and globalization context;
- 12) S/he is always and mostly a self-learner, manipulates media and technologies to gain, retain and consolidate his /her body of knowledge;
- 13) They are mostly work in a team and bring out the product or a purpose;
- 14) For them context and purpose of the work situation and meeting its demands are the quality elements;

- 15) In the leadership orientations they always believe that what they have is not important but how they exhibit is more important. It is otherwise relevant to the contest;
- 16) In terms of capacity building process, they always believe that 'capacity sharing is capacity buildings';
- 17) The new learner has no borders of learning, he/she longing for seamless education, knowledge and skills;
- 18) Above all, the new learner is more prone to 'eclectic approach to learning' (i.e. having sound knowledge of everything from all the points of views).

The above issues you read more in MDE-419 course of this programme.

3.8 WHAT ARE THE INSTRUCTIONAL IMPLICATIONS?

Seen against this context and background, it is time ODL institutions embarked on or embraced blended learning environments with dynamic contents. Blended learning contexts will have, among others, just-in-time online as well as face-to-face support in addition to multi-media interactive content. This facilitates a smooth transition from the physical space of a classroom to a virtual space for the teaching/learning transaction.

These new learning spaces provide an array of new pedagogical approaches. Wireless networking provides greater mobility in and out of the classroom. Videoconferencing, online collaborations via whiteboards and virtual discussions through threaded discussion boards, blogs, wikis and chat, all enable learning to happen anywhere, any place. Another pedagogical approach that technology is enabling; the 21st century learner is expecting and ODL institutions must incorporate is collaborative learning through group/team projects. These projects can be developed using multi-media processes and provide a more powerful learning approach than an assignment or term paper – specifically, more authentic learning. In other words, this would certainly help satiate the learners' quest for practical applications in real-world context.

If the 21st century learner is to be satisfied, a concerted effort must be immediately undertaken in the realm of staff development. We need to have a new set of expectations of faculty with respect to their knowledge about, skills in and attitude towards the use of appropriate technologies within the ODL space. It is imperative therefore to foster a technology/digital culture with an emphasis on continuous faculty training, availability of sufficient resources/support and proper rewards for innovation in the creation of technology-rich learning environments.

Check Your Progress 3

Notes: a) Space is given below for your answers.

b) Check your answers with those given at the end of this unit.

- 1) Discuss any three traits of the new learners. (Answer in about 100 words.)

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2) Discuss your understanding on new learners in the globalizing era.

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3.9 LET US SUM UP

New learner is a 21st century learners, He/She are life long learner's strongly believer of flexibility, accessibility, equality and education for all. New learners are modern democratic secular socialist learners aims at life long seamless learning by manipulating technology for learning purpose, above all he/she are self-directed learners in the globalizing era of education. Higher education must both respond to and lead learning trends and aspirations. The future is difficult to foresee, especially as development becomes ever more rapid. Finally, the traits expected by them are universally recognized. Our predictions of models of the learner, and our ability to adapt systems to meet needs for support, will determine how successful higher education can be in meeting 21st century challenges for learning by manipulating both media and methods available and suitable for the new learners in the globalizing era of education.

3.10 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS : POSSIBLE ANSWERS

Check Your Progress 1

1) 'Old learner' is one, who strongly believes that education for social, economic change and it is a cultural process and transformation. He/she least bother for the market and technology otherwise he/she may not be aware of the market and techno-managerial issues and implications of education.

Education for all, educational equity, flexible practices access to wide source of knowledge is not gained movement in the traditional learner and learning style. Even, if we observe equity principle in education, no where appears in any religion, equality of opportunity is the democratic principle which was not followed in the traditional societies.

2) The teaching learning process has also undergone sea changes. According to Peter Ducker, 'the present society is a knowledge society', where educated people, traditionally they were called "elites" (chosen few), in the modern times they are called 'knowledge

workers', they contribute their knowledge and skills to the knowledge societies. Most of the educated people are playing the role of 'knowledge workers in the knowledge society'. Here, education is being played as an effective instrument of socio economic change. People are willing to pay their life savings for two sectors, they are namely 'health and education'. Education is becoming an important investment for the all sections of the society

Check Your Progress 2

The 21st century learners otherwise called new learners, they are independent self-regulated learners who manipulate all the available media for learning purposes. In all probability, they would seek the help from elsewhere - the Internet! Instead of considering it an over-dependence on technology or tool, it is time we recognized its capabilities to empower learners to do new things. Today's learners

A 21st century learner tends to use a combination of sound and image and, to a lesser extent, text to convey a message. In fact, they tolerate text – the primary medium for traditional academics. They learn on their own and access to knowledge and disseminate knowledge with the help of all available technologies.

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) a) He /She are a continuous learner or life long learners.
b) They are mostly knowledge workers in the knowledge society in the context of liberalization, privatization and globalization context.
c) He/she is always and mostly a self-learner, manipulates media and technologies to gain, retain and consolidate his /her body of knowledge.
- 2) New learner is gaining momentum in the liberalization, privatization and globalizing era, particularly in the knowledge societies. The capacity building among the people is very important in the changing society. The capacity building is mostly the capacity sharing activity. As such it is said that today's trainee is tomorrow's trainer. Each one teaches one is old saying, the new saying is multiplying effect of training, i.e., One, one + eleven (it is the synergy). It is appropriate to quote here that " In this age of knowledge is the intellectual capital-trained man power-rather than financial and physical capital, which will give the society strength and prosperity when knowledge educated people become important strategic resource for development." for 20th century.

Unit End Exercise

- 1) Compare the new and old learners in the context of globalization era.
- 2) How different Learner models are useful to understand teaching learning process?
- 3) Define knowledge workers and how they contribute knowledge to knowledge society?
- 4) Describe any five traits of the New Learners and how they empower themselves as self-learners.

3.11 GLOSSARY

Elite	: An acknowledge people with knowledge, skills or chosen few from many
Instructional implication:	Teaching & Learning Implications
Knowledge Society	: 21st century is considered as a knowledge society
Knowledge workers	: Who sells their knowledge and lead their lives.
LPG	: An abbreviated expression for liberalization, privatization and globalization
Multiplier	: Reproduce in large number or multiplied by the existing and goes on
Occupations	: A job
Paradigm shift	: Denotes change (change is constant factor in all walks of lives)
Professions	: A job that needs training and a formal qualification
Synergy	: Cooperation of two or more things to produce a combined effect greater than the some of their separate effect.
Synthesizer	: Combining in to organize the whole
Vocations	: Career for occupation

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