

## Role of teachers at in-service teachers training through ODL system: Some issues

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### Abstract

Reported is the study of the role of the teachers at in-service teachers training through ODL system. In this paper researchers' main focus area is to analyse the role of the teachers in present scenario of teachers training courses as well as quality assurance in the teacher training courses. The researchers raised some issues regarding teachers training through ODL system. The researchers highlighted that teachers training course through ODL mode would be better and qualitative if some steps regarding quality assurance be maintained and follow up. Especially no. of PCPs and workshop hour should be strictly maintained in respect of quality and teachers support should be mandatory to the teacher-learners.

**Keywords:** role of teachers, in-service teachers training, ODL system

### Introduction

Education in modern times is changing rapidly due to rapid changes in society. India is a democratic country. Every citizen has the right to get education from the primary to the university level. The state must fulfill the needs and aspirations of the people for acquiring education. But India, a developing country, cannot afford all people to enter into the door of higher education because it is colleges and universities have no place for them Moore (2003) [3].

The introduction of education through correspondence helped to some extent to reach the students who could not attend regular classes. However, the demand for teachers training could not be fulfilled through correspondence Courses Institutions (CCIs). It needed a long-term and effective strategy. Thus it was the right juncture of time that the open learning system entered the scenario. To provide opportunities for higher education to those who have been deprived from it due to social and economical reasons is one of the major objectives of ODL institutions. To reach the unreached, a flexible and open education system was established in India first in 1982 at Hyderabad (Now called Dr. B. R. Ambedkar Open University) and in 1985 by an Act of Parliament – Indira Gandhi National Open University. In West Bengal also Netaji Subhas Open University was founded in 1997 for imparting distance education offering courses in different disciplines of taught graduate and post-graduate study. (In 2006, it received Excellence in Distance education award (EDEA) from commonwealth of learning (COL) for institutional excellence. As per RTE Act, (2009) all the teachers should be trained at upper primary level within 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2015. To implement this West Bengal Govt., Initiated in-service teachers' training through ODL system NSOU as nodal agency from 2013 and Govt. of West Bengal, Dept. of Higher Education signed a MOU with 183 teachers training colleges.

The success of ODL system depends on what role does the teachers play. There is no denying the fact that the role of teachers in ODL system is different from the role of conventional system as in ODL system learners stay distance places/ the distance is from institutes from teachers, from learners also. (The paper sets to explore the role of the teachers to bridge various gaps in ODL system and to provide quality assurance also)

### Objectives

1. To study the teachers role of ODL mode learning system
2. To study the quality of in-service teachers training through ODL

### Teachers challenging role for the quality assurance of ODL system

One important characteristic of ODL is that teaching and learning are carried out in a situation where teachers and distant learners and in terms of time. But it goes without saying that understanding the importance of teacher roles and identifying the necessary tutoring skills is paramount for the success of ODL. ODL recognizes the role of the tutor and also takes into account that there is a crucial interdependent relationship between teachers and learners. This ongoing relationship increases learning and helps students to articulate their learning needs thereby acquiring the skills of reflection and independence. Within this relationship, teachers facilitate and guide the learning process of their students so that learners gain knowledge and understanding. To achieve this, teachers develop and practice a multitude of skills and strategies Moore (2003) [3]. Therefore well-planned tutoring activities help distant learners to feel that they are in a safe learning environment in which they ask questions, reveal their understanding in PCP classes and explore new dimensions of their studies. So in ODL mode teachers play

multifaceted role for its success:

#### a) Teacher as a coach or mentor

ODL system has entered into a period in which education is regarded as a commodity. The price tag attached to it is determined in part by tutoring as an important learners support service in an ODL environment. This system asserts that a teacher in an ODL situation provides developmental feedback and may also act as a coach and mentor, by certifying to the educational that their students have acquired certain skills to the specified level Rumble (2000). The teacher, by virtue of his or her involvement in the teaching of the ODL course, may become an external peer reviewer of the course material. This is because it is the teachers' duty to facilitate the learning process such that the material becomes clearer and successful in meeting the needs of the students. In Nemati (2008) [4] cites the following as important characteristics of a good DE mentor.

1. Be friendly and approachable.
2. Plan carefully around students' needs, preparation thoroughly and know his or her subject content well.
3. Facilitate learning and help learners with academic and technological support in the related course of study.
4. Mark assignments properly and give high quality feedback to students.
5. Communicate, guide and counsel learners regularly in their studies and even in their private affairs.
6. Assist DE students to develop time management and study skills.
7. Know that students are unique and that they are autonomous learners.

#### b) Teacher as a Planner in ODL environment

Now a day's serving the client has become the dominant principle in many spheres, such as education sector. The central questions that lie at the heart of the planning stage of the organization of tutor support and yet it is often ignored by curriculum designers. ODL system that starts with the production of courses materials in whatever medium can also ignore on important ways, the consideration of who their students are that is the target group. Understanding the target group, their social background, their level of maturing, their average age, their level of understanding, their technological skills are of paramount importance on the planning of tutor support in an ODL context.

#### c) Teacher as a counselor

As a counselor a teacher in ODL system should be flexible, trustworthy, approachable and well organized. He should also help learners with social challenges. It is a fact that in ODL the clientele is quite diverse, and as such would bring with them unique social challenges. These diverse learners will in turn look up to the tutor for help. The tutor will have to come in to assure learners that all will be fine and this has to be done in a manner that will be acceptable to the learners.

#### d) Teachers' role as an assessor

As an assessor the teacher in ODL system has to mark the learners' assessment and provide meaningful and helpful guidance and feedback. The teacher in ODL should help the learners understand why he or she has not attained the

maximum marks possible. This has to be provided through a positive feedback that will also help motivate the learner Thorpe, M (1998) [6]. In some cases, the tutor should even provide the correct answers where the learner has failed. This can be done by giving a summary comment next to the interim mark. The feedback provided in assignments should provide constructive dialogue that can help the learners learn from the assessment. In this way, the tutor would be prompting both learning and learner success. Learners' efforts should be praised at all times as this can be a great motivating factor.

#### e) Teacher as a quality maintainer

Quality is a key word in the present global society and open and distance mode is not exception in this regard. To maintain this quality, a tutor must represent the institution well, by knowing all procedures related to the course and attendance of tutorials. He/she should understand the scope of responsibility and activities they are contracted to perform, whether a marker, tutor-coordinator or any other. He should prepare well for each contact session by being familiar with the student list, study materials, assignment and related documents. He should show professional commitment by modeling the standard set for learners. The tutor's appearance and communication style should reflect respect for community and cultural expectations. The tutor should give feedback to the institution preferably through written report, highlighting any problem that both the tutor and the learners encountered, and walking an extra mile for the college, as well as for the learners by suggesting possible solutions or interventions. He must keep records of attendance, enquiries assignment marking, contact details of fellow tutors, and all correspondence with learners as well as with the institution.

#### f) Teacher as a modern technology supporter:

As a member of the global community a tutor in ODL system should use different sophisticated forms to offer their learners tutorial support. These include media based tutorials where forms of information technology can be used Radio, Telephone, television, cell phone and other gadgets can all be used to facilitate media-based tutorials. E-mail is yet another powerful tool to be used. This is an electronic correspondence which can be quickly received and revisited. It can only be suitable for places with internet connection.

#### g) Teachers role as a Tutor

The role of the tutor in ODL mode is substantially different from a traditional teaching role, in that it is more of a 'pastoral' and guidance role, rather than a direct teaching role Ansari (2002) [2]. A more in- depth awareness on the part of the tutor is required, concerning factors,/obstacles which may affect a students' ability to study and work at the same time, as well as knowledge and advice on dealing with there. He should faster collaborative learning and support in small groups. He/she should help the learners the need regarding the different study units they may be working on during PCP the tutors help the learners to become aware of how they can contribute to their own learning. He/she should be able to effectively communicate with the feedback he /she provide as well as to acknowledge the learners diverse views.

### Some issues raised in ODL system

#### a) PCP programme

In ODL system personal contact programme is a platform where distant learners get their teachers/counselors in face to face situation. As per the norms of ODL B. Ed., NSOU only nine (9) PCPs were given for common course (CC).

But the number of PCPs is not sufficient to fulfill the demand of the distant learners as well as quality of learning. So the interested learners did not get sufficient hours to clear their doubts at PCP classes.

At the same time, another scenario was seen in PCP classes that most of the distant learners did not attend PCP classes as it is not mandatory in ODL system. So those learners did not get their teachers for clearing their doubts and other helps. They totally depend on only self-instructed study materials. So a gap was made as they had been deprived of their teachers for valuable interaction. In this regard, quality of teaching had failed to fulfill in this PCP programme.

#### b) Workshop related activities

For workshop related activities only eight (8) days have been introduced in ODL system. But only eight days are insufficient to maintain the standard of those activities like action research, micro teaching, seminar lecture, lesson plan preparation, teaching aids development, and school-based activities etc. In teachers-training courses how to teach is very important. So lack of hours in workshop activities did not maintain quality of teaching learning.

#### c) Evaluation system

In any education system ultimate goal is no doubt evaluation. In ODL system central assessment, Term-end exam and practical oriented activities are considered for evaluation system. But it was seen that many learners did not invest minimum time and energy to maintain their practical oriented activities like forming practical exercise books, preparing TLMs etc. in term end examination also most of the learners' main target is to get pass marks. In many cases evaluators give pass marks for kind consideration. So quality of evaluation system did not maintain due to lack of strictness of evaluation systems.

### Conclusion

The present study is to highlight the role of teachers in ODL learning system and to maintain the quality of in-service teachers' training in West Bengal through ODL. After assessing many factors the researchers found that in most of the cases quality did not maintain due to lack of time, proper motivation and other socio-economic factors. In this respect, the researchers recommended a few suggestions for the betterment of the in-service teachers' training through ODL system.

- No. of PCP hours should be increased
- PCPs should be mandatory for all distant learners.
- Workshop hours should also be increased to maintain the standard of workshop activities.
- Emphasis should be given on qualitative TLMs and use of multimedia approach in workshop hours.
- Follow up programmes should be maintained regularly so that in-service teachers maintain their different skills in their classroom situation after completing their ODL teachers training.

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