Teacher Education: The Role of Open and Distance Learning

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Abstract:
In recent years the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) has convened an annual meeting with partner agencies working in the field of teacher education. Its purpose is to share updates on our activities and to explore ways of expanding and improving teacher education, notably through the use of new approaches and technologies. The Centre for Open and Distance Learning has been established to facilitate the Internal Faculties in launching and managing their programmes using distance mode with a view to increasing access to university education and provide equity in higher education to the learners all over the country. The operational strategies that have been set up involve collaborative arrangements between the CODL and the Internal Faculties in the development of Study Materials and Learner support Services for off-campus students. The professional in open and distance learning are availed by the Centre to serve the Faculties as trainers while the Faculties provide academic expertise who are facilitated through participatory methods involving application of knowledge, skills and strategies to develop study materials in their respective subjects. The article then presents the results of an evaluation of the above programme. On the basis of survey findings, it is argued that distance education programmes that are well designed and efficiently implemented can provide an effective, flexible alternative to the traditional approach to in-service teacher education.

I. INTRODUCTION

Learn about the education and preparation needed to become an online teacher. Get a quick view of the requirements as well as details about training, job duties and required skills and tools to find out if this is the career for you. To become an online teacher you have to have an advance degree. Salary, job growth projections, and job duties also matter when deciding if you want to pursue this career. In order to teach at the postsecondary level, teachers must typically hold either a master's degree or doctoral degree in the field of study in which they wish to teach. The level of education required typically varies between a 2-year college and a 4-year university. In addition to the basic requirements for teaching at the postsecondary level, these professionals need a comprehensive knowledge of Internet resources and how to use them. Like traditional teachers, online teachers must incorporate engaging, active learning into their lesson plans and course material. There are educational programs that offer courses or certificates in technology-based learning for specialization in online teaching. Some skills that these courses or programs emphasize for online teachers can include student group work, online assessment, copyrighted material, Internet resources and course mapping. Online teachers should also be open to feedback from their students. Some online teachers survey their classes to find out which activities, assignments or projects were most effective for learning. Any meaningful communication is an education, if it is written or produced in multimedia or in multiple media; then it is called Open and Distance Education we are going to discuss the role of a teacher in the open and distance education system of today. Open and distance learning is a fertile land for innovation, experimentation and creativity, where the role of the teacher is central to the creation of knowledge in a knowledge society. Here, we shall make an attempt to explain what a teacher does in ODL system and how the teachers teach when there is no face-to-face teaching.

Open and distance learning for teachers
It is dif cult to de ne the nature and scope of a teacher in open and distance education. Teachers in distance education perform complex activities both individually as well as in a team. It is said that in face to face education system, the excellence of the teacher is recognised, where as in the open and distance education the excellence of the team is recognised. The individual excellence of a teacher combined with the team excellence is imperative in open and distance education system. In this scenario, the ODL teachers perform a variety of activities related to academic, administrative, training functions and work individually and as a member of a team.

Distance Education and Face-to-Face Education
One can ask the question if distance education per se can ever be equal or superior to education provided in universities and higher education institutions. opined that there is no significant difference between the learning outcomes of traditional and distance education programmes. The very fact that many leading universities are offering their educational courses through distance education mode and are offering the same degree that they award to other students indicates that the academic community by and large has come to accept the equivalence of distance mode of education with face to face education provided in higher education institutions. In this regard, mention may be made of the study by Shachar and Neumann (2003) who compared the traditional with distance education in terms of academic performances through meta analytic study and found that in two thirds of the cases, students taking courses by distance education outperformed their student counterparts enrolled in traditionally instructed courses. The purpose of their research was to provide an answer to the “quality question” of distance-learning programs, especially to find out if there is a difference in the quality of DE programs relative to traditional Face to Face programs. Their findings clearly showed that the

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DE students' performance was significantly superior to those of students studying under traditional or face to face method. Based on the study's results the authors argued that DE should be accepted as a respectable and feasible option for education.

**Definition and Characteristic Features of Distance Education**

Distance Education or distance learning is the education of students who may not always be physically present at a school. Courses that are conducted (51 percent or more) are either hybrid, blended or 100% whole instruction (Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Distance_education), wherein students can study in their own time, at the place of their choice (home, work place or Study centers/learning centre), and without face-to-face contact with a teacher. Moore (1991) defined Distance Education as a learning system where the teaching behaviours are separate from learning behaviours. In this, the learner works alone or in the group, guided by study materials. These students do have an opportunity to communicate with a tutor with the aid of one or two more media – such as correspondence, telephone, TV, Radio etc. Teaching role is shared and different study situations are possible for the learner. Moore's definition of Distance Education highlights 3 elements:

(i) separation of teaching behaviours from learning behaviours

(ii) the use of technical media and

(iii) the possibility of 2-way communication.

While in normal face to face teaching, the teacher's preparation is done apart from the students whom he teaches; in Distance Education both preparation and teaching are done apart from students. It is a multidisciplinary field that has reacted to the many new technological changes that have occurred over time, and as pointed out by Bozkurt et al., (2015), it is still evolving and orienting itself to fulfill the demand for application of new technology to distance education. It is considered to be a hybrid or blended course or program when a physical on-site presence for any reason is required including the appearance of students at examinations.

**Distance Education for Teacher Training focuses on the following areas:**

- Modes of distance education—types of distance-based delivery systems and their strengths and weaknesses from print to digital gaming to online learning to mobile technologies
- Models of distance education for teacher training programs—actual examples of various programs from each continent
- Methods or best practices necessary to develop a high-quality distance education program

Unlike most distance education books, this guide focuses less on policy and funding, and almost exclusively on building high-quality teaching and learning within a distance-based system. With over 200 web references to existing programs and technology tools; an annotated reference section of distance-based resources; and an extensive glossary of terms and bibliography, this guide is a valuable resource for those interested in not just distance education but technology and professional development.

Broad Functions of a Teacher in ODL System A teacher performs complex activities in the ODL setup. The teachers are expected to play multiple roles in open and distance education

**Course team coordination:**

- Discipline coordination;
- Programme/Course coordination;
- Curriculum development and instructional design;
- Competence in preparing self-instructional material;
- Organizing and controlling delivery of programmes and services;
- Pro ciency in the application of multi-media technologies;
- Tele-counseling

One major criticism against the ODL teachers is that they perform a generalist job rather than a specialist one. Secondly, they are alienated from their peer groups (other subject or discipline experts). It is also alleged that in comparison with their peer groups, they appear to be de-skilled. Another criticism is that “the faculty in the distance education is not highly motivated and has become a junk over the years”. This criticism is not valid and cannot be used to compare a teacher in a distance education system with a teacher in a face-to-face education system. When compared with face-to-face education system, distance education should be viewed as a paradigm shift. In fact the ODL system has made at faster pace due to which its program me content and delivery is more contemporary than that of face to face education systems.

**Broad Traits Of A Distance Teacher**

As has been stated earlier, the distance teacher is involved in complex activities and multiple tasks, which are both of academic and an administrative nature. According to Garg and Parakh (2005) a distance educator has to undertake multifarious activities, which require inter-personal communication and organizational skills, apart from proactive attitude towards change.

**The following traits are most essential in a distance teacher:**

Flexible mindset to work with different people.

Passion for distance education.

Good interpersonal skills.

Desire for constant updating of knowledge as a knowledge worker.

Respectful for opinion and knowledge of others.

Positive attitude for change.

Able to work in a team.

Usage of media and technology for supporting isolated learners learning.

Flexible, accessible, and equitable are not preaching tools but are essential practicing tools of a teacher in ODL.

Sound knowledge of the discipline and distance teaching techniques are a must.

Excellent command over language, good communication and intra-personal skills.

Familiarity with copyright /Intellectual Property Right (IPR) provisions.

**II. CONCLUSION:**

These collaborative arrangements will increase access to higher education make significant contribution in the realization of
educational Millennium Goals in Kenya where only 20% of all those who qualify obtain admission in the public universities. In conclusion, it can be said that the Distance Learning system of education is being more popular around the world and in India day by day. Use of updated communication technology is making the methodology more attractive to the learners. In spite of its remarkable success, one can still find some constraints in this learning system. To remove these constraints probable suggestions are given. It has been suggested that Government should think such policy which will be able to remove technophobia from all students in school level. Suggestions are also given to open at least one State Open University through which learners can study in their own language. To encourage economically poor students, suggestions are given to arrange for financial help in the form of stipend / fee concession or one time gift to the students performing good result in the 1st semester. Finally to develop personality of distance learners it has been suggested to incorporate programs like NSS, NCC etc

III. REFERENCES


[3]. Changing Role of Distance Teacher: March towards Multi-Skilling in Four Decades of Distance Education in India, Viva Books Private Limited New Delhi edited by Suresh Garg & et. al.


