



Capacity Building Workshop on Academic Counselling of Open and Distance (ODL) Learners

A Workshop Report

Venue: Durgapur RC, NSOU

Date: 7-8 March 2020

Prepared By:

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Introduction:

The School of Vocational Studies, Netaji Subhas Open University has been working with the Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA), New Delhi on a joint project entitled “*Increase Access and Improve Institutional Capacity for Sustainable Development through Vocational Education and Training*” since the year 2017-18. The objective of this three-year project is to increase enrolment in different vocational courses of the university so that the disadvantaged rural people can get access to skill development programmes of this university. In the current year 2019-20 (last year of the project), the School has already organized 2-day Workshop for Academic Counsellors at University Headquarters and a job fair at Kalyani RC under the project.

Objectives:

The present 2-day workshop was organized with the following objectives:

- Define the concept of ODL and Discuss development of Distance Education (DE)
- Explain the nature, characteristics and importance of Learning Materials (in different format) in Distance Education
- Discuss importance of learner support in distance education and Differentiate between counselling and tutoring
- Organize student support using various modes (face-to-face, online, using audio-visual media, computer etc.)
- Conduct academic counselling sessions in learning centres/study centres
- Write tutor comments on the assignments responses
- Use ICTs for student support, Use OER for teaching and learning and Create and search educational resources on the Web

Participants:

40 (34 Male and 6 female) academic counsellors including the newly recruited faculty members of the university attended the workshop and participated in the hands-on training.

Day One (07 March 2020):***Inauguration***

Shri Prosenjit Bhattacharya, Dy. Director, Durgapur RC welcomed all the participants and the resource persons on behalf of the Regional Centre-Durgapur, NSOU. Shri Bhattacharya congratulated the SVS-NSOU & COL-CEMCA along with all the colleagues both academic and non-academic staff for organizing such workshop at the Durgapur RC.

Professor Anirban Ghosh, Project Director, NSOU in his address, described the objectives and the outcome achieved so far during the first two years of the project. Dr. Ghosh elaborated the intents and activities to be carried out in the present year i.e. 2019-2020. Dr. Ghosh continued his speech with understanding the concepts of counselling, how the distance learners can be supported, significance of counselling in Distance Education (DE), and for whom it is required etc. Dr. Ghosh elaborated the use of media in counselling for distance learners to reach the mass. He mentioned that technology has enabled the teachers to transmit more information to a larger number of learners facilitating personalised learning. Prof. Ghosh in his address mentioned

the major challenge of ODL system which is to reach to the mass. The educational contents, i.e., the academic resources which are developed, are mostly in print-form which involves huge cost as well as huge consumption of paper. However, the e-content (which is non-print version of the study material) may be a solution for many challenges. Now, it may be appropriate to say the ODL as Open and Digital Learning. The advancement of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has brought new opportunities to restructure the teaching-learning process. He mentioned how NSOU is trying hard to cater the needs of its learners. NSOU with support of CEMCA has developed the NSOU-OER repository on DSpace platform for its academic resources.



Dr. Manas R. Panigrahi, Sr. Programme Officer-Education, CEMCA introduced the theme and highlighted the objectives of the present workshop. He also elaborated the learning style and learners' attitude in the 21st Century. Smt. Kasturi Sinha Ghosh, Co-Project Investigator proposed vote of thanks at the end of inaugural session.



1st Session

The first topic that Dr Panigrahi covered was 21st Century Learners of Distance Education. He mentioned that learners engaged in ODL method have varied age groups, employment status and learning style. He showed a comparison between formal mode of learning and distance learning where he mentioned that in the former scenario, learners do not have the power to decide when to attend classes and learn as per their comfortable time and situation but in the latter case, learners have the full authority to decide the mode and timing of learning. He explained why 21st century learners are getting keen to join distance mode of learning as they can collaborate with other learners and learn and most importantly, they experience learning by doing in this mode. Learners in this ODL system know where to get the correct information, develop multi-cultural awareness among themselves and have benefit of peer learning. Dr. Panigrahi mentioned about the learning skills in 21st century, comprising creative and critical thinking. He discussed about the various features of adult learners, which include, identifiable purpose, earlier experience, flexible to the changes in the system and most importantly know the value and importance of sincere education. He also discussed about the implications for distance learning where self-learning materials are provided, massive use of emerging technology and academic counselling are taking place. He concluded this session by discussing about self-directed learning, which means learners should take individual interest, diagnose learning needs, develop learning strategies and be able to evaluate their own outcome.

2nd Session

The session started with a video presentation by Dr. Srikanta Mahapatra, Vice Chancellor of Odisha State Open University. In the video, Dr. Mahapatra discussed the ODL method where he mentioned that the concept of open learning and distance education system focuses on open access to education and training to make the learners free from the constraints of time and place, and offers flexible learning opportunities to individuals and groups of learners. The new ODL system is growing fast because of the development of Internet-based information technologies, and the World Wide Web. The concept of ODL came from idea where the learners and the teachers cannot be in the same classroom and they are separated by some geographical distance. The distance education is not a new concept. In the late '80s, at the University of Chicago, the first launched major correspondence program in the US in which the teacher and learner were at different locations. It is addressed to a wide range of potential partners, governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, specialized institutions, associations, industrial corporations, telecommunication companies, and others interested in this field, to seek their cooperation in meeting today's education and training needs, through open and distance learning. He also mentioned about NAAC (National Assessment and Accreditation Council) assessment of these ODL institutions.

3rd Session

The video was followed by another lecture by Dr. Panigrahi on Academic Counsellor. The lecture primarily focussed on the role of an academic counsellor as someone to recognise and articulate the context of learner's problem and find solutions. He mentioned that the task of an academic counsellor is to answer learner's queries about the system, negotiate with the institution on behalf of learners when problems occur, induct new learners into the course, advise learners on course choice, give guidance on problems of an administrative nature such as fee payment, late submission of assignment and also help learners overcome personal problems hindering their learning. He mentioned that there are three stages in the counselling session. In the pre-counselling phase, the counsellors are advised to listen attentively to the problems

of the learners and to identify the root cause and thereby provide appropriate counselling session so that the learners are able to have a refreshed mental set up. The counsellors are also requested to evaluate the learners' overall performance as a post counselling session. He mentioned that counselling guidebook should be prepared for academic counsellors indicating the role and responsibilities of the academic counsellors. With this, the programme ended as of day one.

Day Two (08 March 2020):

4th Session

Dr. Panigrahi began the session with his lecture on Roles and Responsibilities of the Academic Counsellor in ODL. This lecture focussed on understanding the concepts of counselling and how the distant learners can be supported; significance of counselling in distance education and to realise when counselling is important and for whom. He mentioned that psychotherapy is the basis of counselling, which actually is a part of teaching. Psycho-analysis is the process of probing root cause of any problem at the sub conscious level to lay inner innovation. He mentioned that there can be different ways of counselling like face-to-face, group conversation, telephonic conversation, by letter or by interactive video chat. Counsellors should have four important qualities: warmth, acceptance, genuineness and empathy and his main skills should be listening to the learner's problems and structuring solutions for them. He mentioned the three basic terms that are associated with distance education: teaching which is curriculum centred approach; counselling which is student centred approach and tutoring which is essentially a complementary approach for open and distance education.

The lecture was followed by another video presentation of Dr. Srikanta Mahapatra, where he talked about the duties and responsibilities of academic counsellors. An academic counsellor is responsible for providing educational guidance and assistance for learners by planning schedules, recommending courses and determining appropriate education solutions for different types of learners. They must also follow through and track the advancement of learners. The mission of academic advising is to assist learners in their growth and development by constructing meaningful educational plans which are compatible with their goals. It is a continuous and consistent process which is built upon the basis of frequent, accumulated personal contacts between counsellor and learners. Effective academic counselling is the cornerstone of the academic program of any ODL institution. Excellent academic programs will not accomplish the desired end result if learners are not properly guided and counselled. Thus, academic advising fosters the development of the whole student who is a self-directed, motivated, responsible decision-making.



5th Session

The video was followed by a video conference presentation by Dr. Barnali Roy Choudhury, Assistant Professor of Library and Information Science, NSOU. Her topic of discussion was Openness in Open and Distance Learning system. She mentioned that Open Universities across the world (generally) accept all kinds of learners, irrespective of their performance in formal education. Since the nineties of the last century, several organizations worked on the development and distribution of free educational contents. These contents were termed Open Educational Resources. Open Educational Resources (OERs) are any type of educational materials that are in the public domain available with an open license. Anyone can legally and freely copy, use, adapt and re-share these open materials. OERs range from textbooks to curricula, syllabi, lecture notes, assignments, tests, projects, audio, video and animation (UNESCO, Paris). This is how openness is achieved in open and distance learning. She gave a detailed explanation as to how get access to OER through NSOU website.

6th Session

Dr. Panigrahi conducted several activities with the participants. For the first activity, all the participants were divided into groups of 5 members each and then each group was asked to prepare a presentation by pen-paper thereby, highlighting the three stages of counselling: pre-counselling, counselling and post counselling. After this, the groups were asked to present their work in front of all the other participants, where one member from each group had to present the group's work. In the second activity, all the participants were provided with papers where they were asked to write in two or three lines about their experience in this workshop and what more do, they expect from these workshops in future.



Among other participants, Sri Sudarshan Roy, Assistant Professor of Commerce, Shri Monojit Garai, Assistant Professor of Social Work, Smt. Priyanthi Bagchi, Assistant Professor of Economics actively participated in the interactive and hands-on training to make the programme a grand success.

The 2-day workshop ended with distribution of certificates.



Participants of the Workshop

Workshop Schedule
Workshop for Academic Counselling for Open and Distance Learning
(ODL)
Learners held on 7 – 8 March 2020

Date/Time	Activity	Resource Person and material support
Day-1: 7/3/2020		
10.00-10.30 hrs	Registration	
10.30hrs-11.15hrs	Opening Session: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction by: Smt. Priyanthi Bagchi, Assistant Professor, Economics • Welcome Address by: Sri Prasenjit Bhattacharya, Dy. Director, Durgapur RC • Address by: Professor <i>Anirban Ghosh</i>, Director, CIQA & Director (i/c), School of Vocational Studies, NSOU • Address by: Dr. Manas R. Panigrahi, CEMCA, New Delhi • Vote of Thanks by: Mrs Kasturi Sinha Ghosh 	
11.15hrs-11.30 hrs Tea/Coffee Break		
11.30hrs-12.30 hrs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to the workshop • Participants' Expectations from the Workshop • Open and Distance Education (DE) in 21st Century 	Dr. Manas R. Panigrahi
12.30hrs-13.30hrs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nature, Characteristics and Importance of Learning Materials (in different format) in Distance Education 	Do
13-30hrs-14:30hrs LUNCH		
14-30hrs-15:30hrs	Roles and Responsibility of the Academic Counsellors in ODL	Do
15:30hrs- 15:45hrs Tea/Coffee Break		
15:45hrs-17:15hrs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 21st Century ODL Learners and NSOU Learners • ODL Counsellors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Counselling in Distance Education ○ Designing of Counselling Sessions NSOU Perspectives) 	Do
DAY-2: 8/3/2020		
10:00hrs-10:15 hrs	Introduction to Day-2 and Planning the work for the day.	Dr. Manas R. Panigrahi
10:15hrs-11:15hrs	Technology in Distance Education: Moodle LMS, MOOC, e Content through skype	Dr. Barnali Roy Choudhury

11:15hrs-11:30hrs	<i>Tea/Coffee Break</i>	
11:30hrs-12:30hrs	Organize student support using various modes (face-to-face, online, using audio-visual media, computer, LMS, etc.) and OER Repository Hands-on Activity: NSOU OER Repository	Dr. Manas R. Panigrahi
12.30hrs-13:30hrs	Assessment of ODL Learners at NSOU	Do
13.30hrs-14.30hrs	<i>Lunch</i>	
14:30hrs-16:00hrs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to OER: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OER Search, find and integration to develop new OER materials • OER Search and reuse to develop new materials Hands-on Activity	Do
16:00hrs-16:30hrs	Closing and Way Forward	Shri Sudarshan Roy

List of Participants
Workshop for Academic Counselling for Open and Distance Learning
(ODL)
Learners held on 7 – 8 March 2020

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