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About the Journal

The International Journal of Open Schooling (IJOS) is an international, peer reviewed journal. The Journal provides the academic fraternity, researchers, professional, and practitioners an opportunity for the submission and publication of original high quality empirical research and theoretical papers, case studies, literature reviews and book reviews pertaining to innovations in the open schooling system to explore diverse learning cultures and connect us with the benefits and limitations of Open Distance Learning which have not been published or considered for publication elsewhere.

The Journal is published by National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS), national level secondary education board in India under the Ministry of Education, Government of India and the largest open schooling system in the world with a cumulative enrollment of 3.5 million (approx.) and approximately 0.5 million learners every year.

The 21st century technological advancements and innovations have made education and learning a level playing field with more equitable and accessible quality education to a large section of society leading to a paradigm shift in the domain of Open and Distance Learning. The virtual and AI augmented learning along with other innovative measures has connected a vast multitude of learners, facilitators and experts in the process of teaching and learning. Recent trends in learning have made virtual learning indispensable with the adoption of the cutting edge technology. However, it would not be a boast to mention that open schooling has always created a stir by adopting various pioneering measures in the field of education to make the learning process all inclusive and accessible by reaching the unreached in every possible way.

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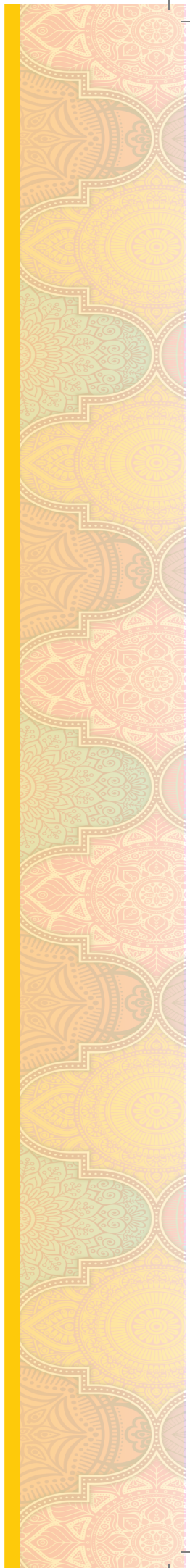
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Contents

Editorial

- Paradigm Shift in Open Schooling- Open and Distance Learning (ODL): Bringing Learning to People 1
-Dr. Sayyada Aiman Hashmi
- Open Schooling for Systemic Resilience 15
-Dr Tony John Mays
- Learners' Perceptions about Teaching Methods and Technological status in Bangladesh, India and Nepal : Policy Recommendations for Bangladesh Open University 31
-Md. Abdus Sattar, Dr. Iqbal Husain
- Handling Student Grievances in Distance Education: A Challenge or Opportunity? 45
-Siran Mukerji, Anjana, Amit Kumar Jain
- Teachers' Perceptions of the Effectiveness of Remote Learning Materials on Causing Self-Learning during the Covid 19 Lockdown in Uganda 65
-Dr. Jonathan Mugenyi
- The Catalytic Role of Digital and Online Learning in the ODL institutions of Assam: The Case of KKHSOU and GRC, IGNOU 79
-Ritimoni Bordoloi, Prasenjit Das
- The Transition from Face-to-Face (f2f) to Remote Proctoring Examination: Evidence from Bangladesh Open University (BOU) 93
-Kazi Sharmin Pamela
- From Emergency Remote Teaching to HyFlex Teaching: Are Openness and Flexibility the New Normal? 109
-Rikisha Bhaumik
- Transforming Education with a Blended Learning Model to Overcome the Digital Divide 127
-Dr. Ritu Bakshi, Dr. Udayana





Editorial

Learning is synonymous with human existence and has been leading social evolution since time immemorial. Education over the years has seen many shifts and developments due to challenges, needs of the time, and peculiarities. ‘Open Distance Education’ has come to the forefront in many developing countries of the world, due to the increasing number of challenges being faced by these countries, primarily in terms of infrastructure, congenial environment required for effective teaching-learning processes, teacher supply, and technology. ‘Open Distance Education’ is a term best used to describe the system in which courses/subjects are designed flexibly to meet the individual requirements of learners while trying to remove barriers that prevent participation in traditional courses (Otto Peters, 2001). Open Distance Learning (ODL) has opened up a whole new world of possibilities for students who would otherwise not have had access to any educational resources. ODL reaches a more extensive group by offering a flexible choice of subjects, learner-centered paces, and places. This has resulted in students’ roles from passive to highly interactive in the distance learning mode of education. It has been a major game-changer in the way education is imparted, and it is becoming increasingly popular. The advent of the 21st century, with its technological advancement and innovations, has opened new arenas in education.

It is in this context, the present issue of the “International Journal of Open Schooling” discusses the history of open schooling in India and some related areas in the field of open education, which could be directly or indirectly related to today’s concerns. The issue starts with covering the topics like Paradigm Shift in Open Schooling, Handling Student Grievances in Distance Education, Learners’ Perceptions of Teaching Methods and Technological Status, and Open Schooling for Systemic Resilience and later on shifts towards HyFlex mode as the Covid-19 pandemic has a great influence in the education sector too. The journal will also unfold discussions on some important thematic areas of open education in the post-pandemic period i.e. From Emergency Remote Teaching to HyFlex Teaching, Teachers’ Perceptions of the Effectiveness of Remote Learning Materials on Causing Self-Learning during the Covid 19 Lockdown, The Transition from Face-to-Face (f2f) to Remote Proctoring Examination, The Catalytic Role of Digital and Online Learning in the ODL institutions and Transforming Education with a Blended Learning Model to Overcome the Digital Divide. The Journal may act as a reference for all concerned stakeholders on post-pandemic recovery of the education system with a focus on building an equitable, inclusive, and holistic education system.


Dr. Sayyada Aiman Hashmi in her article “Paradigm Shift in Open Schooling - Open and Distance Learning (ODL): Bringing Learning to People” tries to find out how ODL caters to the needs of a learner and its flexibility to incorporate the changes offered in lesser time

than the regular schools with reference to NIOS. This article discussed the paradigm shift in open and distance learning highlighting the past scenario of the ODL, the present scenario and the future developments that are expected to occur. The article also finds the role of the ODL during Covid19 pandemic, when the situation shifted the entire education system into a virtual distant mode, and further, how the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS), an ODL system in India, incorporated various media tools to reach the learner in the remotest part of the country during complete lockdown marking a tremendous shift in less time. Author concluded that ODL has to research and incorporate the other shifts suggested by NEP 2020, i.e., collaborative education, incorporating independent practical work, promoting creativity and innovation; out of the box approach thinking skills by exploring the present paradigm shifts and required shifts in the ODL.

Tony John Mays in his article “Open Schooling for Systemic Resilience” argued that there is ample evidence to support the value of open schooling as a key strategy for educational system resilience. We cannot reach all learners in need of schooling using bricks and mortar provision alone. Appropriate use of appropriate technology for context can help us not only to reach the unreached but can also help us to make the whole education system more resilient by ensuring continuity of learning when physical schooling is not possible due to pandemics, climate emergencies, conflict or other reasons.

Md. Abdus Sattar and Dr. Iqbal Husain conducted a study on learners, teachers and academic officials from open universities of Bangladesh, India and Nepal. The study “Learners’ Perceptions about Teaching Methods and Technological Status in Bangladesh, India and Nepal: Policy Recommendations for Bangladesh Open University” concluded that the ODL institutions of these three countries have their own methods and techniques which are technology-enabled and have converted to ICT based learning in recent years. Bangladesh, India and Nepal are operating their ODL in their own context. Their methods and technologies regarding ODL are effective and fruitful. There are many similarities among the methods and technologies in delivering education in these countries. But in some cases, there is scope of practicing quality ODL systems in Bangladesh which are discussed in the study. The present study is important for Bangladesh to explore the techniques and technologies of India and Nepal for delivering education which will be applicable to Bangladesh. Bangladesh Open University uses several techniques and technologies for delivering education. Still, the adaption of techniques and technologies of India and Nepal will help us to modify the policies of open and distance learning in Bangladesh.

One of the key issues for quality assurance in student support is the timely redressal of student grievances. Accordingly, the University Grants Commission (UGC), a statutory Organization of the Government of India, established by an Act of Parliament in 1956, for



the coordination, determination and maintenance of standards of teaching, examination and research in university education, has formulated and notified on 6th May 2019, a regulation dealing with the student grievances in higher education, the University Grants Commission (Redress of Grievances of Students) Regulations, 2019. The distance education system comprising 15 Open Universities and over 150 dual-mode institutions faces a number of challenges while addressing student grievances. Siran Mukerji, Anjana and Amit Kumar Jain in their study “Handling Student Grievances in Distance Education: A Challenge or Opportunity?” discussed the provisions of UGC (Redressal of Grievances of Students) Regulations, 2019 with special reference to the Open and Distance Learning system; issues faced by the ODL learners; institutional mechanism for effectively handling the student grievances; and challenges of grievance redressal mechanism in these institutions. While attempting to put forth a holistic profile of the grievance handling mechanism of a leading national open university of the country - Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), it has been found that there are mainly six areas where learners encounter problems. The institution has a robust e-grievance handling platform with a well-laid-out mechanism, thus forming a linkage between the present system vis-à-vis regulatory requirements. This study presents a multi-focal institutional dimension where it can be seen that this mega-university is indeed an arena for socio-economic upliftment with an inherent system of support services for the students. The institution fulfills the requirements of the University Grants Commission (Redress of Grievances of Students) Regulations, 2019 and makes efforts to improve the educational infrastructure in such a way that the learners have a seamless sail through this path of intellectual awakening and enlightenment. The changing needs of distance learners and dynamism in the ICT environment is indeed a learning opportunity for the University to ever evolve as per socio-cultural-economic global demands.


The 2020 seven-month COVID-19 lockdown in Uganda led to the introduction of remote learning/self-study materials into the school system. Primary seven school teachers who later received their candidates to prepare them for the end of cycle exams found this problematic. An exclusively qualitative study was carried out to examine their perceptions of the issue by Dr. Jonathan Mugenyi. The study “Teachers’ Perceptions of the Effectiveness of Remote Learning Materials on Causing Self-Learning during the Covid-19 Lockdown in Uganda” acknowledges the fact that remote learning is a very useful intervention to ensure continuity of learning not only in times of disasters like the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown but also as a convenient learning practice. It should therefore be rethought and re-rolled out in all schools and teacher training colleges in Uganda as an immediate intervention. The study indicated that primary school teachers lacked knowledge about the concept of remote learning and could not conceptualize the possibility of effective self-learning. The roll-out has to target school teachers first, to introduce the concept of remote learning, and its usefulness in the

teaching/learning process. Teachers have to be trained on how to develop remote learning materials themselves to ensure its longevity. This calls for the participation of all stakeholders including the Ministry of Education and Sports to work collectively to create an enabling environment for the implementation of remote learning.

There have been several ODL institutions in the Indian state of Assam over the years. These institutions, despite several hitches, have played an important role by establishing a system of education based on the principles of openness, access and equity and rendered significant service to the state by establishing a system of education. Ritimoni Bordoloi and Prasenjit Das documented the benefits of digital learning among the learners of two ODL institutions namely—IGNOU and KKHSOU in their study “The Catalytic Role of Digital and Online Learning in the ODL Institutions of Assam: The Case of IGNOU RC and KKHSOU”. The study concluded that by considering the flexibility and mobility of technological insertions in the teaching-learning environment, one could perhaps reframe and redesign Learner Support Service (LSS) made available by Universities like IGNOU and KKHSOU, with the 21st century learning requirements.

Remote proctoring has become increasingly important worldwide in recent years, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic when traditionally proctored in-person exams became almost impossible. From the start, Bangladesh Open University (BOU) has developed and delivered learning materials through the Internet. Kazi Sharmin Pamela in her article “The Transition from Face-to-Face (f2f) to Remote Proctoring Examination: Evidence from Bangladesh Open University (BOU)” explored the logic of using the remote proctoring system to assess BOU learners through online examinations.

In India, the schools reopened in September 2021 in a staggered manner for grades 9 to 12 with the decline in cases of Covid-19. Teaching in physical mode with all the Covid-19 protocols in place was quite challenging. Some schools adopted the HyFlex (Hybrid Flexible) mode, simultaneously teaching half the students physically and half online. Ms. Rikisha Bhaumik in her qualitative study “From Emergency Remote Teaching to HyFlex Teaching: Are Openness and Flexibility the New Normal?” tried to find out the experiences of post-secondary learners concerning the HyFlex mode in a central government-run regular school in Delhi, India and concluded that Hyflex to be extremely useful in the present scenario. Flexibility and accessibility in HyFlex mode emerged as the most valued feature in most of the responses indicating a preference of learners for openness in school education. The participants perceived the flexibility and freedom to choose online or offline modes of learning as the most useful feature of HyFlex. The other benefits they perceived were an equal opportunity for everyone to learn, catering to the need of all kinds of learners, minimizing learning loss of learners in the pandemic, saving of time and energy, accessibility to the vast



number of online learning resources, and features of Google Classroom that enables them to systematically see their grades and receive feedback from teachers. Though HyFlex is considered most useful in the present scenario, learners also mentioned issues experienced in the HyFlex mode i.e. technical, health, discipline and consistency, effectiveness, attitude etc. To improve the HyFlex model being used in the school, the participants came up with several suggestions, the foremost being a good internet connection to be made available in the school. Besides, strengthening of digital infrastructure and resources for smooth conduction of HyFlex classes, technical support to teachers, training of teachers and students in using technology for studies, improving the teaching pedagogy of HyFlex, sharing of recorded class lectures on GC, etc.

The article “Transforming Education with a Blended Learning Model to Overcome the Digital Divide” by Dr. Ritu Bakshi and Dr. Udayana attempted to make some recommendations in light of National Education Policy 2020 of India to aid educators in understanding the challenges of implementing a blended mode of learning in Indian classrooms and proposes an emerging blended learning model -based on a collaborative model of teaching. The global impact of COVID-19 has been devastating in all sectors throughout the world. COVID-19 has prompted experts to reconsider the most relevant teaching-learning pedagogies for dealing with global health challenges. Several educationalists and researchers propose blended learning as a practical and best-fit alternative for academic institutions. There is a dire need to blend and integrate technology and traditional method of teaching in the time to come. The importance of traditional textbook-based classroom learning cannot be overstated. However, in order to meet the demands of the new normal or after a pandemic, the integration of blended learning into education and its widespread use is the only solution. This paper attempts to track the potential of implementing blended learning classrooms in India following the corona virus outbreak, as well as to identify related problems and make possible recommendations. The issue of the journal focuses on transforming education to support the value of open distance learning through appropriate use of technology. We hope you will be able to relate your personal experiences with issues and concerns discussed by the authors of these articles on research papers. We look forward to your comments and suggestions on the articles published. We invite our readers to contribute to the journal by sharing their knowledge in the form of articles, research papers, case studies and book reviews.

Dr. Rajiv Kumar Singh
Chief Editor