



## Learners' expectation on future ODL Policy of India

K.GOWTHAMAN<sup>1</sup>, Nisha SINGH<sup>2</sup>, Ashish Kumar AWADHIYA<sup>3</sup>, Anshu MIGLANI<sup>4</sup>  
Inter University Consortium, Indira Gandhi National Open University, New Delhi  
(India)

[gowthaman@ignou.ac.in](mailto:gowthaman@ignou.ac.in)<sup>1</sup>, [drnisha@ignou.ac.in](mailto:drnisha@ignou.ac.in)<sup>2</sup>, [akawadhiya@ignou.ac.in](mailto:akawadhiya@ignou.ac.in)<sup>3</sup>,  
[anshu.miglani@ignou.ac.in](mailto:anshu.miglani@ignou.ac.in)<sup>4</sup>

### ABSTRACT :

Education system in the world is changing very rapidly with help of technology and upcoming changes in imparting education to the learners. Technology based learning is leading in the current era, Indian higher education system also moving towards this direction. New education policy of India also emerging with inclusion of Choice Based Credit System, Technology based learning, Online education and blended with technology in all the level of higher education.

IGNOU is one of the pioneer institution in distance education; the learners of distance education are heterogeneous, multi-lingual, multi-cultural background and widely spread learners across in India. IGNOU conducted a national-wide mega survey between in year 2016 and 2017 and collected the feedback from 7,812 participants towards the learners views on "future ODL policy of India". A questionnaire was framed to know their requirements and choices like equivalent recognition and employment opportunities, delivery of ODL programmes, study preference mode (SLM, online, blended and mixed), additional skills required for gaining employability, preference for the Learner Support Services, opportunities of collaboration between industry and ODL institution, opinion about Choice Based Credit System, and kind of programmes should be offered by ODL system etc.

The aim of this paper is to analyse the learners' expectation on ODL education policies. This paper facilitates to the ODL Institutions and Educational Policy makers to work on curriculum design, implementation and imparting latest development in education like Online education system, OERs, MOOCs (Swayam) etc. based on the learners' feedback.

Keywords: Distance Education Council (DEC), Distance Education Bureau (DEB), Open and Distance Learning, Learners profile, Skill Development, Employment, National Educational Policy, Learner Support Services, ICT Emerging trends, SWAYAM.

### 1.INTRODUCTION

Every country has its own educational policy. The educational policy comprises set of rules and guidelines for educational system which is important for country's growth. It should address the quality education for all, social need, economic growth, recognition and employability (King, et all., 2000).

India has framed the National educational policy in 1986 which focuses on dynamics of the population, quality, research etc. Later the policy was modified in 1992 to incorporate correspondence education and distance education to reach unreachable students (National Policy on Education, 1992).

*Distance Education Policy in India*

Even though the correspondence education started in 1962, the University Grants Commission (UGC) released guidelines for correspondence courses in 1974. The main focus of the correspondence education is to provide the higher education to students who had to drop-out their formal education or could not get admission in a regular college or university or for lifelong learning.

In 1969, United Kingdom established Open University with the new concept and its potential in making higher education more accessible, flexible and innovative. In India Andhra Pradesh government established the Andhra Pradesh Open University (now Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University) at Hyderabad in 1982. In 1985, the Govt. of India, established the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) through an Act of Parliament which is responsible for determining and sustaining standards of distance education in the country (Srivastava & Rao, 2015). Subsequently Distance Education Council (DEC) was created for the promotion and coordination of the open university and distance education system and for determination of its standards in India.

*Distance Education Bureau*

On December 2012, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Department of Higher Education, Government of India had issued some directions for higher studies through distance education in India. As per the directions issued by the Ministry, Now DEC has been dissolved and all the regulatory functions has now been undertaken by University Grants Commission(UGC). Thus, the Distance Education Bureau (DEB) is a new form of Distance Education Council with some improvements since 2013 (Distance Education Bureau, 2013).

*Need of national level policy on ODL*

The ODL experts (Basu & Manjulika, 2012) explore the possibilities of DEC/DEB guidelines with existing national educational policy and they demands a need of a national level policy on ODL system. Mishra (2014) states that “the quality of ODL has been questioned as always assuming that all face-to-face education is of same high quality. Not only the general public is confused about the status of ODL due to several changes in the regulatory practices, but also intelligentsia of the country lacks common understanding of the rationale and relevance of ODL in India”.

*Equivalent Recognition*

After three decades of existence, the recognition of distance education is questionable in people mind. According to the Gazette notification (No.44, 01.03.1995) of Government of India (Distance Education Regulation, 2017), all the qualifications awarded through Distance Education by the universities and other institutions stand automatically recognized for employment to posts and services under Central Government, provided it has been approved by Distance Education Council. Colin Latchem (2016) stated that open and distance learning will succeed, when rigorous quality assurance mechanisms should be created by governments to expand higher education.

In order to increase the gross enrolment ratio (GER), the government is making effort to reform the education system of the country. The ODL system will fulfil the government vision provided a national policy on ODL with proper vision and required benchmarks for quality. While asserting the formation of national policy, Basu & Manjulika (2012) expressed that the proposed national policy need to focus on the following:

- *“Technology being an important tool in ODL it should be made mandatory for all ODL providers to use ICT in delivery of their programmes, management of learner and university administration through web portal or any other such platform,*
- *Recognition and accreditation policy should be clearly spelt out for the benefit of various stakeholders,*
- *Recognition of prior learning, certification of skills, choice-based credit system, credit transfer, modular approach in offering of programmes for the benefit of learners, etc.*
- *Convergence between ODL and class room teaching.”*

#### *Employment Opportunities and their skills requirements*

Most of the state open universities in India have the campus placement drives at various point of time. However, it has been observed that the campus placement drives generally invite the applications from graduation degree holders and the companies where the placement are limited. The distance learners are getting less chances than conventional university face to face learners. The relevant jobs are varying such as customer support, back processing office (BPO), Data Entry operator, Sales and Marketing management, and IT professional. Jail prisoners also got job placement (like Tihar Jail) after completion of skill based programmes from IGNOU.

Campus Placement Cell (CPC) of Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) conducts a Job Mela in IGNOU since 2013 for the placement for graduated learners of BA, B Com, B Sc, BSW, BCA and MCA for the vacancies in various leading companies in different locations across the country. The famous multi-national companies like Genpact, Barclays, IBM, Convergys, Wipro BPO, Infosys BPO were participated in the job mela, and around 200 distance learners of IGNOU got placement.

In India, most of the state open universities also created a placement cell and keep on posting the vacancies details at their universities website. As per research findings (Awadhiya et.al, 2014), the young learners prepare skill based programme and trainings to develop the relevant competency for their employability perspectives. Graduate learners of ODL are expected to acquire adequate knowledge of hard skills and soft skills. Employer is looking for "employability skills" which includes the specific skills like communication (being a good talker or a good writer), Team work, Problem Solving, Self-Management, Planning and organizing, Learning and Technology adoption etc.

#### *Delivery of ODL*

Minnaar (2013) conveys that the success of open and distance learning is adapting the need to increase access to deep learning and the readiness of technology for delivery. Watkins & Kaufman (2003) expressed that more challenges affecting the planning of ODL, such as globalization, joint course development, material sharing, computer and information technology. According to Levy (2003), ODL is a distinct and coherent field of education which is focused on new delivery methods with a pedagogical philosophy.

Rapid growth of internet facilitates the teaching learning process of ODL more effective. In the technology era, the ODL system adapting synchronous learning and asynchronous learning for delivering the courses. Web conferencing, videoconferencing, educational television, internet radio, live streaming, telephone, and web-based VoIP are used for synchronous learning (Ghosh, 2012). Similarly, recorded video lessons, discussion forums, mails and text materials are used for asynchronous learning.

The advance technology for learning such as virtual lab, virtual reality, augmentation is also incorporate to increase more access to leaching learning in ODL system (Sharma, 2001). In addition to the supplementary materials on CD, DVD, Pen drive, Mobile devices etc. along with SLM, the ODL institutions could adopted the blended approach like Teleconferencing, Radio counseling, online teaching via internet tools.

#### *Learner Support Services*

The learner support services of open and distance learning consist of both administrative and academic support provided to the students (Hanafi et.,2015). The administrative support includes pre-admission counselling, admission process, moral support, career development, library etc. to facilitate the students. Whereas the academic support enriches the student knowledge, skill and clears the misconception of the course. According to Simpson (2000), “the learners’ support system in distance education may be defined as all activities beyond the production and the delivery of course materials that assist in the progress of students in their studies.

The fifth-generation distance education talks about information and communication technology (ICT) and internet-based learner support services. The advancement of the ICT provides the opportunities for interactivity and access to instructional resources provided by Internet, the World Wide Web (WWW) or the Information Super Highway (Helen et., 2005).

Biswas & Mythili (2004) suggested that the ODL programmes should include live demonstration of audio-video production, live demonstration of academic counselling, preparation of seminar which develop more interest of the students and help in reducing the dropout rate significantly.

Gowthaman et al. (2017) recommended a 24x7 dedicated Information technology and Information Library (ITIL) enabled Call Centre should be set up for Learners Support System to take care of all emails, telephone queries, chats and personal visits, etc. along with synchronous and asynchronous learner support mechanism is embedded with the Learning Management System (LMS) to provide timely support to the students.

Open and distance learning (ODL) is one of the most rapidly growing fields of education now a days and it has substantial impact on all education delivery systems (Bates, 1995). The ODL system focuses on open access to education and training to make the learners free from the constraints of time and place, and offering flexible learning opportunities to individuals and groups of learners (Ghosh, 2012). The learners opinion on current ODL system are more important, which helps the review of current ODL in the context of present challenges and opportunities, examine relevant concepts and contributions, outline current global and regional trends, suggest policy and strategy considerations (Bradley and Yates, 2000).

#### *Choice Based Credit System and MOOC*

Government of India has already introduced the Choice Based Credit System (CBCS), and MOOC based platform called as SWAYAM (Study Webs of Active Learning for Young Aspiring Minds). This helps the distance learners to choose prescribed courses as per their choices, which are referred as core, elective or minor or soft skill courses and they can learn at their own pace and the entire assessment is graded-based on a credit system.

Considering the above dynamic scenario of global ODL system the India ODL system needs to be relooked to amend the various policies and delivery systems of Indian ODL system. This is also imperative because Indian learners have become the global learners, due to invasion of ICT tools and social media.

This study is an attempt to uncover the change needs of ODL learners in various aspects of ODL such as policy, recognition, employment opportunities, learner supports, choice-based credits, inter institutional mobility and industrial collaboration etc.

## 2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objective of this study was to gather ODL learners' choices and preferences of future ODL education policy. The questionnaire was developed to collect the inputs from distance education learners on following areas of ODL:

- a. equivalent recognition and employment opportunities,
- b. delivery of ODL programmes,
- c. study preference mode (SLM, online, blended and mixed),
- d. additional skills required for gaining employability,
- e. preference for the Learner Support Services,
- f. opportunities of collaboration between industry and ODL institution,
- g. opinion about Choice Based Credit System

## 3. METHODOLOGY

The questionnaire was reviewed by the experts of IGNOU and the final feedback questionnaire was hosted in IGNOU web site to collect the feedback data from the learners of India. The learners were informed through SMS via Regional Service Division (RSD) of IGNOU for wider dissemination.

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Total, 7812 learners responded to the survey. After receiving the responses, the data was analysed under 11 (Eleven) main heads titled as follows:

1. Demographic profile of the learners
2. View on recognition of ODL degrees
3. Discrimination Faced By The Learners in ODL System
4. Need of Accreditation for ODL
5. Opinion on the delivery of ODL programmes at future
6. Preference mode of study through ODL system
7. Employment Opportunity
8. Preference on Learner Support Services
9. Collaboration between Industry and ODL institution
10. Collaboration of ODL with Inter Institutional mobility and CBCS
11. Choices on programmes to be offered by ODL system.

These response details are discussed in following sections.

### 4.1 Demographic profile of the learners

#### a) Gender

Table 1.1 shows the gender profile of learners who have responded to the questionnaire. Out of 7812 respondents, 67.5% were male, while 31.5% were female and 1% were transgender. This indicates less female respondents while compare with male.

Table 1.1: Gender

Gender	Response %	No. of learners
Male	67.5	5274
Female	31.5	2462
Others	1.0	76
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>7,812</b>

b) Age

Table 1.2 indicates that out of 7812 responses, around 44% were below the age of 25 years, around 24% respondents were of age group between 26 to 30 years, around 14% respondents were of age group between 31 to 35 years, around 9% respondents were of age group between 36 to 40 years, followed by around 9% from age group of above 40 years.

The institution wise details are provided in table 1.3, which indicates that out of 7571 responses, around 53% were belong to Indira Gandhi National Open University learners, 0.50% belong to State Open Universities and others are belong to Distance Education Institutions.

Table 1.2: Age wise Classification

S. No.	Age in Years	Response %	No. of learners
1	<=25	43.50	3398
2	26-30	24.42	1908
3	31-35	14.31	1118
4	36-40	8.49	663
5	>40	9.28	725
	<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>7812</b>

Table 1.3: Institution

S. No.	Institution	Response %	No. of learners
1	IGNOU	53.21	4149
2	SOU's	0.50	39
3	DEIs	43.38	3383
	<b>Total</b>		<b>7571</b>

4.2 Recognition of ODL degrees

To know the learners' view on ODL degree recognition, a question framed that the "degrees/ diplomas obtained through ODL system are at par with conventional system of education".

The learner feedback (Table 1.4) shows that 66.5% of learners agreed that ODL system is at par with conventional system where as (82%) were not agreeing that the system is at par with the conventional system. But around 25.3% are not able to distinguish between ODL system and conventional system.

Table 1.4: The degrees of ODL system are at par with conventional system

S. No.	Responses	Response %	No. of learners
1	Agree	66.5	5194
2	Disagree	8.2	642
3	Not Sure	25.3	1976
	<b>Total</b>		<b>7812</b>

For the learners who disagreed that ODL system are not at par with the conventional system. A further question was added asking what initiative could be taken by the government to make ODL more acceptable to them details are provided in table 1.5. While answering this question 45.3% responded that Appropriate Regulatory Framework is required, 32.1% expressed that

Appropriate Process like enactment of law is required, 64.7% selected that Monitoring and Evaluation of ODL Institution is required. The rest opted 33.8% respondents expressed that the government should include the skill development, carrier development and personal development programmes of ODL system.

Table 1.5: Initiative(s) by the Government to make ODL more acceptable

S. No.	Responses	Response %	No. of learners
1	Appropriate Regulatory Framework	45.3	240
2	Appropriate Processes like enactment of law	32.1	170
3	Monitoring and Evaluation of ODL Institutions	64.7	343
4	Others (please specify)	33.8	179
<b>Total</b>			<b>530*</b>

*\*Learners have selected more than one option, so percentages/total may add up to more than 100%.*

#### 4.3 Discrimination faced by the Learners in ODL System

While analysing the question on discrimination faced by the learners related to ODL system is listed in table 1.6. Around 33% of learners agreed that they faced discrimination and

rest 67.4% said that they did not face any discrimination while pursuing in the ODL system. Since one of the objective is to find the bifurcating two point i.e

- Areas of Discrimination.
- Suggestion taken to overcome it.

Table 1.6: Discriminated due to studying in the ODL

S. No.	Responses	Response %	No. of learners
1	Yes	32.6	2336
2	No	67.4	4837
<b>Total</b>			<b>7173</b>

Areas of discrimination details are provided I table 1.7. It was observed that under areas of discrimination 6.34% expressed that they faced discrimination

while admission in higher education. 17.54% faced discrimination in jobs/promotion/salary. 39.96% faced discrimination in job denial. 7.99% faced social discrimination.

Table 1.7: Areas of discrimination

S. No.	Responses	Response %	No. of learners
1	Admission in Higher Education	6.34	65
2	Discrimination in Jobs/Promotions/ Salary	17.54	180
3	Job Denial	39.96	410
4	Social Discrimination	7.99	82
<b>Total</b>			<b>628*</b>

*\*Learners have selected more than one option, so percentages/total may add up to more than 100%.*

The learners suggested to overcome the discrimination details are provided in table 1.8. While enlisting the suggestions for discrimination cause 6.91% learners suggested that Awareness/expansion of ODL, 10.13% learner suggested that need of institutional efforts.

14.7% learners claimed for law/policy enforcement, 4.51% learners said that for support from regulators/accreditations, 2.11% learners suggested for quality measures /good practices, 1.29% learners opted for special employment drives, and 3.98% learners suggested that use of technology.

Table 1.8: Steps would you suggest/ have you taken, for overcoming it?

S. No.	Responses	Response %	No. of learners
1	Awareness/Expansion- ODL	6.91	118
2	Institutional Efforts	10.13	173
3	Law /Policy enforcement	14.7	251
4	Learners own Efforts	4.51	77
5	Support from Regulators/Accreditators	2.75	47
6	Quality Measures/Good Practices	2.11	36
7	Special Employment Drives	1.29	22
8	Use of Technology	3.98	68
<b>Total</b>			<b>792</b>

4.4 Need of accreditation for ODL

While analyzing the questionnaire related to accreditation by a separate independent body (in table 1.9) for ODL system 68.3%

of learners agreed that accreditation is needed in ODL system. 10.7% disagreed for the need of accreditation in ODL system. Whereas 21.0% were not able to give any answer this question.

Table 1.9: Accreditation of ODL system by a separate independent body

S. No.	Responses	Response %	No. of learners
1	Agree	68.3	2447
2	Disagree	10.7	385
3	Not Sure	21.0	751
<b>Total</b>			<b>3583</b>

4.5 Opinion on the delivery of ODL programmes at future

While reviewing the learners feedback on delivery of ODL programme emphasizing at near future 31.9% learners responded for print material driven. 58.4% learners agreed for technology driven.

41.1% responded for blended approach, and rest 11.0% learners responded likely to opt the mobile based synchronous and asynchronous driven ODL programmes.

Table 1.10: Delivery of ODL programmes

S. No.	Responses	Response %	No. of learners
1	Print Material driven	31.9	1142
2	Technology driven	58.4	2093
3	Blended approach	41.1	1472
4	Others	11.0	395
<b>Total</b>			<b>3583</b>

\*Learners have selected more than one option, so percentages/total may add up to more than 100%.

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**4.6 Preference mode of study through ODL system**

The table 1.11 reveals that 30.7% responded for fully online programmes, 22.9% agreed on partly online programmes. 35.9% opted blended (online OERs, MOOC's.

45.5% responded for Existing Mixed Mode (print, broadcast, telecast, face to face). 4.6% agreed on MOOC's and rest 5.4% agreed for MOOC's and OER's.

Table 1.11: Preference/s for studying through ODL system

S. No.	Responses	Response %	No. of learners
1	Fully Online Programmes	30.7	1101
2	Partly Online Programmes	22.9	819
3	Blended (Online, OERs, MOOCs	35.9	1285
4	Existing Mixed mode (Print, broadcast, telecast, face to face )	45.5	1629
5	MOOCs	4.6	164
6	MOOCs and OERs	5.4	194
<b>Total</b>			<b>3583*</b>

*\*Learners have selected more than one option, so percentages/total may add up to more than 100%.*

**4.7 Employment Opportunity**

In order to achieve employment opportunity learners might require personal skills as well as Industrial Exposure. As per learners feedback provided in table 1.12, under personal skills 61.2% learners agreed on communication skills, 44.8% learners responded for IT skills, 49.0% learners

responded for problem solving skills, 51.6% learners opted for soft skills (team work/emotions/quotient/leadership etc). The rest of 11.1% learners were uncertain for their required personal skills. Whereas under Industrial exposure 85.8% learners agreed for industrial exposure 2.0% learners disagreed and 12.2% learners were uncertain for the same.

Table 1.12: Additional skills for gaining employability (Personal Skills)

S. No.	Responses	Response %	No. of learners
1	Communication skills	61.2	2192
2	IT Skills	44.8	1606
3	Problem Solving skills	49.0	1757
4	Soft Skills (team work/ emotional quotient/leadership etc.)	51.6	1850
5	Other (please specify)	11.1	397
<b>Total</b>			<b>3583*</b>

*\*Learners have selected more than one option, so percentages/total may add up to more than 100%.*

**4.8 Preference on Learner Support Services**

A questionnaire has been designed to collect the feedback for Learner Support Services by choice of their preference mode either online or existing offline services details are provided in table 1.13.

While analyzing the learners' perspective on student support services 63.3% of the learners expressed that they were willing to take pre-admission counselling whereas 36.70% were interested in face to face counselling. While asking about admission surprisingly 78.50% person were interested in online admission and 21.50% were interested in offline admission.

Further question on information Services 86% of learners responded for Online Information Services and 14% responded for Offline Information Services. While revealing the data on delivery of study material/learning resources 39.90% opted for online delivery of study material. 60.10% of learners preferred traditional SLM as their choice of learning resources. “Induction is engaging students with the ethos, procedures and processes of the institution and encouraging them to see themselves as effective learners. Preparation is the process of helping students develop the supporting knowledge needed for a course and the

generic and specific skills needed for studying that course”(Simpson, 2002). While analyzing on learners preference on online or offline mode of induction programme conducted by DEI, 54.80% learners preferred to attend online mode and 45.20% learner preferred traditional offline mode of induction programme. While analyzing on assignment submission & evaluation and 64.40% learners opted online assignment submission & evaluation and whereas 39.60% opted for traditional mode of offline submission and evaluation.

Table 1.13: Preference for the Learner Support Services

S. No.	Responses		Online	Traditional /Offline	Total
1	Pre Admission Counseling	Response %	63.30	36.70	3,583
		No. of responses	2,268	1,315	
2	Admission	Response %	78.50	21.50	3,583
		No. of responses	2,813	770	
3	Information Services	Response %	86.00	14.00	3,583
		No. of responses	3,081	502	
4	Induction	Response %	54.80	45.20	3,583
		No. of responses	1,963	1,620	
5	Delivery of Study Material / Learning Resources	Response %	39.90	60.10	3,583
		No. of responses	1,430	2,153	
6	Counselling and Tutoring Services	Response %	47.50	52.50	3,583
		No. of responses	1,701	1,882	
7	Assignment submission and Evaluation	Response %	60.40	39.60	3,583
		No. of responses	2,163	1,420	
8	Internal Assessment and Evaluation	Response %	61.10	38.90	3,583
		No. of responses	2,188	1,395	
9	Term End Assessment and Evaluation	Response %	51.40	48.60	3,583
		No. of responses	1,843	1,740	
10	Practical/ Projects/ Internship	Response %	38.20	61.80	3,583
		No. of responses	1,368	2,215	
11	Declaration of Results	Response %	92.20	7.80	3,583
		No. of responses	3,305	278	
12	Receipt of Award / Marksheet/ Degree	Response %	47.40	52.60	3,583
		No. of responses	1,698	1,885	
13	Monitoring/ Feedback of Services provided	Response %	85.20	14.80	3,583
		No. of responses	3,052	531	
14	Grievance Submission and its Redressal	Response %	83.50	16.50	3,583
		No. of responses	2,991	592	
15	Placement Services	Response %	68.40	31.60	3,583
		No. of responses	2,449	1,134	
<b>Total</b>					<b>7381</b>

While analyzing on internal assessment and evaluation 61.10% of learner opted the choices of Online method and rest 38.90% of learners opted as traditional offline method. Similarly analyzing on term-end assessment and evaluation 51.40% of learner opted the choices of Online method and rest 48.60% of learners opted as traditional offline method.

While analyzing on practical / projects / internship 38.20% learners opted as online mode and whereas 61.80% opted for traditional method of face-to-face practical approaches.

While analyzing on declaration of results 92.20% learners preferred as online mode and whereas only 7.80% opted for traditional offline method.

While analyzing on receipts of award/marksheet/degree, 47.40% learners preferred as online mode and whereas only 52.60% preferred to collect their awards/degree through traditional face to face method.

While analyzing on monitoring feedback of services provided. 85.20% responded for online feedback services and only 14.80% preferred traditional methods. Similar way, while analyzing about grievances submission and it redressal 83.50% preferred online and only 16.50% responded for offline Grievances Rehearsal.

Lastly while discussing placement services 68.40% opted online placement services and 31.60% opted the traditional placement Services.

It clearly indicates that learners preferred to use online portal for monitoring, feedback, grievances & redressal and placement etc., purposes.

#### 4.9 Collaboration between Industry and ODL institution

While analyzing the learners opinion to question “Do you think that collaboration between industry and ODL institution will enhance your employability, 79.4% of learners agreed that employability chances and 2.3% of learners disagreed for collaboration with inter Institutional mobility, and 18.3% were uncertain for the same.

Table 1.14: Collaboration between industry and ODL institution

S. No.	Responses	Response %	No. of learners
1	Agree	85.8	3073
2	Disagree	2.0	73
3	Not Sure	12.2	437
	<b>Total</b>		<b>3583</b>

4.10 Collaboration of ODL with Inter Institutional mobility and CBCS  
The learners’ opinion on inter institutional mobility by ODL institutions are provided in table 1.15.

Table 1.15: Inter Institutional mobility by ODL institutes

S. No.	Responses	Response %	No. of learners
1	Agree	79.4	2844
2	Disagree	2.3	82
3	Not Sure	18.3	657
	<b>Total</b>		<b>3583</b>

The majority of learners (79.4%) are agreed and 2.3% of learners disagreed for collaboration with inter Institutional mobility, and 18.3% were uncertain for the same.

As per analysis of learners opinion in table 1.16 about implementation of choice based credit system by ODL institutes,

67.5% learners agreed for the implementation CBCS of and 6.5% disagreed for collaborating with CBCS and 26.0% were uncertain regarding CBCS.

Table 1.16: Implementation of Choice Based Credit System by ODL institutes

S. No.	Responses	Response %	No. of learners
1	Agree	67.5	2418
2	Disagree	6.5	232
3	Not Sure	26.0	933
	<b>Total</b>		<b>3583</b>

4.11 Choices on programmes to be offered by ODL system

While analyzing the learners’ opinion on what kind of programme should be offered on ODL system, 54.20% opted for online skill development & competency enhancement rest of the 45.80% opted for offline skill development & competency. While analyzing regarding professional programmes (management, computer application, etc) 61.70% learners opted for to be offered by online and 38.30% learners opted to be offered by traditional offline mode.

Under technical programmes (engineering/agriculture etc.) 42.30% responded for which to be offered on online mode and whereas 57.70% learners responded for which to be offered by traditional face to face mode.

While analyzing the question on “programmes having separate regulatory council (medical, nursing, legal, etc.) 32.60% learners were suggested for online mode to be offered and majority of learners 67.40% were suggested traditional face to face mode to be offered.

Table 1.17: Kind of programmes should be offered by ODL system

S. No.	Responses		Online	Traditional /Offline	Total
1	Skill Development and Competency Enhancement	Response %	54.20	45.80	3,583
		No. of responses	1,942	1,641	
2	Professional Programmes (Management, Computer Application etc)	Response %	61.70	38.30	3,583
		No. of responses	2,212	1,371	
3	Technical Programmes (Engineering/ Architecture etc)	Response %	42.30	57.70	3,583
		No. of responses	1,516	2,067	
4	Programmes having separate Regulatory Council (Medical, Nursing, Legal, etc)	Response %	32.60	67.40	3,583
		No. of responses	1,167	2,416	
5	Programmes not covered under specific Regulatory Council (Allied Health Sciences, Agriculture etc)	Response %	45.60	54.40	3,583
		No. of responses	1,635	1,948	
6	Community need based and tailor made programmes	Response %	55.20	44.80	3,583
		No. of responses	1,979	1,604	
7	Research Degree Programme (M.Phil/ PhD/ Post Doctoral)	Response %	46.60	53.40	3,583
		No. of responses	1,668	1,915	

While analyzing the question on programmes not covered under specific regulatory council (allied health sciences, agriculture, etc), 45.60% of learners responded for Online mode to be offered and 54.40% learners were suggested traditional face to face mode to be offered.

While analyzing the question on community need based & tailor made programmes 55.20% learners opted for online modes to be offered and 44.80% learners were suggested traditional face to face mode to be offered.

Lastly while revealing the data on research degree programmes 46.60% responded that to be offered in Online mode and 53.40% of learners were suggested traditional face to face mode for Research Degree programme.

#### 5.0 CONCLUSIONS

Distance education programmes are still secondary option for the learners and they are not considered ODL programmes at par with conventional degree programmes. Accreditation is a major issue in ODL system (68.3% learners expressed). Also, ODL learners (39.96%) faced discrimination in job opportunity. The regulatory body, Government and ODL institutions should frame the policy to overcome these issues. This will facilitate the ODL institutions to fulfill the moto of reached to unreach and the Government to incorporate 100% literacy in the country.

This survey highlights that learner's preference on delivery of ODL programme should be included technology and blended approach. As the world is moving toward technology for fast access, and education sectors integrate ICT in the curriculum, ODL policy should facilitate to incorporate technology based and blended approach for delivering the programmes.

In order to meet the employability, ODL learners required additional skills such as communication skills, IT skills, problem solving skills, soft skills and industrial exposure (85.8%). Based on the demand from the learners,

it is strongly recommended that ODL programmes should include personal skills and industrial experiences in the curriculum to enrich the learners to meet the job market.

Learner support system is the one of the key components of ODL system. Each ODL programme should include strong suitable learner support services to facilitate the learner starting from pre-admission to award the degree. As learners suggested (table 1.13), the ODL institutions should build the policy to incorporate technology driven and online learner support system with flexibility. This survey shows that learners strongly demands the collaboration with industry for ODL programmes. As India focusses the skill development, suitable policy should develop to meet the necessity.

Another major demand from learners are inter institutional mobility (79.4%). Nowadays, conventional educational system, facilitate inter university exchange programme including foreign universities. Learners experiences the collaboration between various institutions through exchange programmes.

Choice based credit system is major initiative by the Indian Government. Conventional universities and open universities are implemented the CBCS for UG and PG programmes. Learners (67.5%) necessitated the CBCS for all programmes including diploma and certificate programmes.

Growth of technology towards education, ICT integration in curriculum and delivery of programmes through online are partially implemented in the universities. Based on the nature of the programmes, the delivery of the programmes can be either online or traditional distance mode. For example, programme related computer science, management can be offered through online (61.70%) where as medical, nursing, law programmes (67.40%) can be deliver through traditional distance mode. Therefore, flexible and suitable policy is required to implement the demands from learners.

Keeping the rapid growth of technology, new trends and requirements in global employability, the Government, educational practitioners and policy makers should build the policy to meet the latest requirements from learners. Based on this survey, the ODL policy should be flexible to support the various requirements of the learners to enhance their skills and knowledge to face the job market demand and also helps to reduce the unemployment rate of India.

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K. GOWTHAMAN is working as Deputy Director (T&D), Inter University Consortium for Technology-Enabled Flexible Education and Development, IGNOU, since November 2011. His academic interest areas are Training and Development on Online Educational System, Technology Enabled Support Services, e-learning, e-Office and etc. He has also 17 years of industry experience in Software Application Development, Maintenance and Support activities. His specializations are Management Information System, Software Engineering, Multimedia Application Development, Improving Quality Process, Re-Engineering and Reverse Engineering. Currently he is looking after eGyankosh, SWYAM PRABHA and SWAYAM MOOCs activities at IGNOU.

Dr. K. GOWTHAMAN,

Deputy Director (Training and Development),

Inter University Consortium for Technology-Enabled Flexible Education and Development (IUC-TEFED), Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), New Delhi-110068, India.

Phone +91-11-2957-2317 | Email: [gowthaman@ignou.ac.in](mailto:gowthaman@ignou.ac.in)



Dr Nisha Singh, M.Sc.(Zoology), M.Ed., M.Phil., Ph.D.(Education), PGDEL (IGNOU), MIDT(OUM) is presently working as Deputy Director (R&D), Inter University Consortium for Technology-Enabled Flexible Education and Development. Dr Singh joined Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) in 2009 as a Programme Officer in DEP-SSA.

Before joining IGNOU she was working as a Associate Professor in Faculty of Education and Allied Sciences, M J P Rohilkhand University, Bareilly, UP. She has long classroom teaching experience as Teacher Educator (1993-2009) in various Teacher Training Institutions (Department of Education, University of Delhi; Vasanta College for Women, Varanasi, UP; MJP Rohilkhand University, Bareilly, UP). She has guided three Ph.D. students. She has published a book entitled 'Development of Monastic Education in India' and to her credit there are more than 20 articles and papers in various books and Journals. Her specializations are ICT Applications in Education and Education of Exceptional Children. E-Learning, OER, Open and Distance Education, Teacher Education are areas of her interest and deliberations in workshops and trainings. Presently she is looking after e-Gyankosh, SWAYAM and SWAYAMPBABHA activities at IGNOU.

Dr. Nisha Singh,

Deputy Director (Research and Development),

Inter University Consortium for Technology-Enabled Flexible Education and Development (IUC-TEFED), Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), New Delhi-110068, India.

Phone +91-11-2957-2318 | Email: [drnisha@ignou.ac.in](mailto:drnisha@ignou.ac.in)



Mr. Ashish K Awadhiya has done M. Sc. (Life Science) from School of Life Sciences, Devi Ahilya University, Indore and UGC-CSIR NET. He has also done Post Graduate Diploma in Quality Management, MA in Distance Education (Gold Medalist). Currently he is working as Asst. Director (Training and Development), at Inter University Consortium for Technology-Enabled Flexible Education and Development (IUC-TEFED), IGNOU. Mr. Awadhiya has eight year experience including corporate in the field of Training and Development and Quality Assurance.

He has experience in field of Training and Development, Skill Development, Employee Training Management System. He is a trainer in the areas of e-learning, e-content development, Social Media Learning, Computer Added Learning.

His are of interest include skill development, capacity building, e-learning, MOOCs, OERs, Open and Distance Learning etc.

Currently he is looking after SWAYAM MOOCs and SWAYAM Prabha activities at IGNOU.

Ashish Kumar Awadhiya,  
Assistant Director (Training and Development),  
Inter University Consortium for Technology-Enabled Flexible Education and Development (IUC-TEFED), Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), New Delhi-110068, India.  
Phone +91-011-2957-2316 | Email: [akawadhiya@ignou.ac.in](mailto:akawadhiya@ignou.ac.in)



Dr. Anshu Miglani is working as Assistant Director (R&D), Inter University Consortium for Technology-Enabled Flexible Education and Development (IUC-TEFED), IGNOU. She has come from multi-disciplinary background which has endowed her with the knowledge of Basic as well as Applied Sciences . For the past 12 years, she has been a part of consultancy, capacity building (training & education), research & documentation coupled with industry experience. She has worked on a number of projects and provided consultancy on Natural Resource Management, Agriculture, Environment Impact Analysis etc., which utilize the knowledge of Geospatial technology. She has also been involved in various researches which has given me a number of publications. Her areas

of interest are ICT applications in Education esp. mobile learning.

Dr. Anshu Miglani,  
Assistant Director (Research & Development),  
Inter University Consortium for Technology-Enabled Flexible Education and Development (IUC-TEFED), Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), New Delhi-110068, India.  
Phone +91-11-2957-2319 | Email: [anshu.miglani@ignou.ac.in](mailto:anshu.miglani@ignou.ac.in)

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