

Netaji Subhas Open University (NSOU) - An example of good governance

Dr Anirban Ghosh, Netaji Subhas Open University

E-mail: anirban_ghosh53@rediffmail.com

ABSTRACT

Netaji Subhas Open University as the State Open University has achieved the status of mega university and received the most prestigious International award (EDEA),2006 from the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) under the dynamic leadership of our Hon'ble Vice-Chancellor. Our challenge is to provide quality education at every door step within the State and we are able to reach the remotest areas of the State through our support services. Of course, the strength of the University lies in its support services, by which we have bridged the gap between the teachers and the taught and between the taught and the University. As such an effective man making education must remove the weaknesses, failures of the stereotyped ones and dispel all the gloominess of the Formal Education and strike at a new horizon in the field of education with all the luminess of the sun, as it were and here our NSOU takes up the grand torch.

NSOU has evolved Non-formal Distance Education which, shaken off all the hazards and stakes of the prevailing grand fatherly systems of education, has been a life learning education and it has promoted the human beings from the lumps of flesh to capital resources. The University has done the epoch making event in the field of education by introducing the ODL generating as it does, open and distant learning and it has a vital role to play in education all over the world in this knowledge crazy era. The growth of technology has created a strong need for life long learning in mankind which, in turn, is demanding increase of more learning opportunities. In this context, the ODL system needs to be of superior quality, flexible and adaptable so as to reach the learners beyond there geography and gender. Education is of the people, for the people and by the people. The emergence of new technologies particularly Interactive Communication Technology or Information and Communication Technology (ICT) encompassing radio, TV, cellular phones, computer network, satellite system have opened up new methods of providing instructions and learner support. This educational technology is capable of taking education to people rather than people to education. ICT is being used to increase access to education.

Emerging as it does from mass varsity, it goes with the largest accessibility for the people. It democratizes education and leaves no reservation against any one, high or low, lettered or not. NSOU reaches the unreached, includes the excluded, and takes up the drop outs with all respects and seriousness. The open and distance learning system of NSOU is totally based on innovative ideas.

In this paper, I have tried to show, how NSOU has achieved the status of Mega University and how it spreads its horizon in the rural and disadvantaged areas with its pioneering and innovative courses.

THE PREAMBLE

By dint of rationality man has excelled over the world of creation, especially over the animal kingdom. And this is not an emotional vainglory in as much as man only acquires education which other genera, do not or can not. The latter have addressed some blind behaviours tossed under the stimulus and response (SR) mechanism. They have no sophistication. Man "only looks before and after and pines for what is not" and as such, man has Philosophy, Ethology, Science, Mathematics, Techno-efficiency and innovative skills which are tantamount to his education.

Again, by education is meant 'the manifestation of perfection already in man' which understood summarily, is his all round development, both moral and materialistic.

THE CONTEXT AND SCOPE

Of course there are formal or conventional systems of education in the form of kindergarten, primary, secondary, degree, post graduate courses under the convent, grammar school, pry, secondary school, college, universities and institutions governed chiefly by the Panchayat, District Board, State board, regional council, university and the like.

As the apexes, there are different types of universities in India. These introduce guide and control the type of education, general, technical and vocational etc. There are Central Universities, State

Universities, Affiliating Universities, Universities of National Importance, Deemed Universities. These Universities try to bring about Education of a kind and follow their curricula, syllabi and the methodology with qualified staff, placement of himalayan grant-in-aids, manorial palaces as reading accommodation, costly equipments, routine and all other things they require.

But still it becomes increasingly evident that these traditional universities and institutions fail to fulfil the aspirations and requirements of the society.

As a result, the concepts of efficiency and progress remain almost misnomers or a pious wish.

Labouring, as they do, under the idea that educands are merely numbers and numbers, and repeated harping on the old, abstruse, dreary subjects and methods prevailing education fails miserably. Practically speaking, education is so crucial a subject that it is exactly here that all the sarboranian bog have sunk.

But if it is not a quagmire, education has a meaning and merit more than its definition. It gives fullness of beinghood to a person before he/ she comes to be a fossil. Education is in all practical senses an end in itself and not an experiment on the guineapigs like young learners.

THE EMERGENCE OF NSOU

Every individual is very much like the German philosophers, Leibnitz's monad picturing the world from its own window. He creates, compares, contributes and criticizes and also receives contribution from the social ethos. As such an effective man making education must remove the weaknesses, failures of the stereotyped ones and dispel all the gloominess of the Formal Education and strike at a new horizon in the field of education with all the luminess of the sun, as it were and here our NSOU takes up the grand torch.

INTRODUCTION OF ODL

NSOU has evolved Non-formal Distance Education which, shaken off all the hazards and stakes of the prevailing grand fatherly systems of education, has been a life learning education and it has promoted the human beings from the lumps of flesh to capital resources.

The University has done the epoch making event in the field of education by introducing the ODL generating as it does, open and distant education. It has a vital role to play in education all over the world in this knowledge crazy era. The growth of technology has created a strong need for life long learning in mankind which, in turn, is increasing for more learning opportunities. The ODL has become a prominent feature on higher education in the globe. In this context, the ODL system needs to be of superior quality, flexible and adaptable so as to reach the learners beyond their geography and gender. Education is of the people, for the people and by the people. Emerging as it does from mass varsity, it goes with the largest accessibility for the people. It democratizes education and leaves no reservation against any one high or low, lettered or not. NSOU reaches the unreached, includes the excluded, and takes up the drop outs with all respects and seriousness. This has been made a fact by compiling the experiences of the ages and untiring labour and unstintive research by dedicated educationists of the University. Its syllabi and curricula have of necessity been diversified, multipurpose, need based and pragmatic.

The relationship between accessibility and quality can be described as a paradox. The problem of accessibility is the challenge to meet a desperate need to increase access to higher education. By the system of ODL one can pursue his/ her education throughout his/her life. In the present century, lifelong learning is regarded as a necessity since it meets the needs of adult – improvement of quality of life, improvement of skills etc. Netaji Subhas Open University gives the opportunity for lifelong education through its number of innovative and pioneering programmes.

The clientele of ODL is different from that of conventional system of education. The flexibility it offers, in terms of choice of courses and the period over which these can be pursued, make it attractive to those who are employed and cannot attend regular classes. Initially, the University (NSOU) started only formal degree courses like B.A, B.Sc. and B.Com. But the success in terms of students' enrolment did not come in true sense. And the dream of democratization of higher education did not come true. The objectives of meeting the needs of those living in rural areas and providing opportunities for higher education to the disadvantaged sector did not get due importance at that time. In this context, the university introduced diploma, PG diploma and

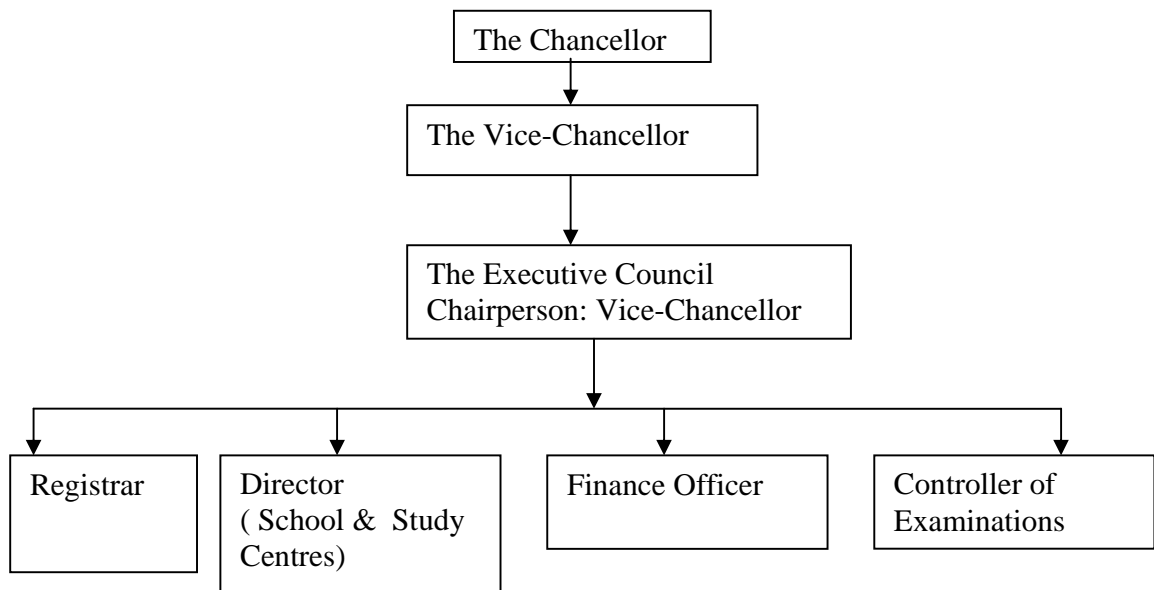
certificate and need based vocational courses for those residing in rural areas and for people belonging to the disadvantaged group. The open and distance learning system is totally based on innovative ideas. In order to encourage increased access to persons from the disadvantaged groups, the University has

- i) increased the number of study centres in rural and minority areas,
- ii) designed various courses that would suit the needs of present day
- iii) taken initiatives to conduct seminars/ workshops at study centre level to make the local people aware different courses etc.
- iv) opened the study centre for prison-inmates.
- v) started need based in-service training.

THE GOVERNANCE

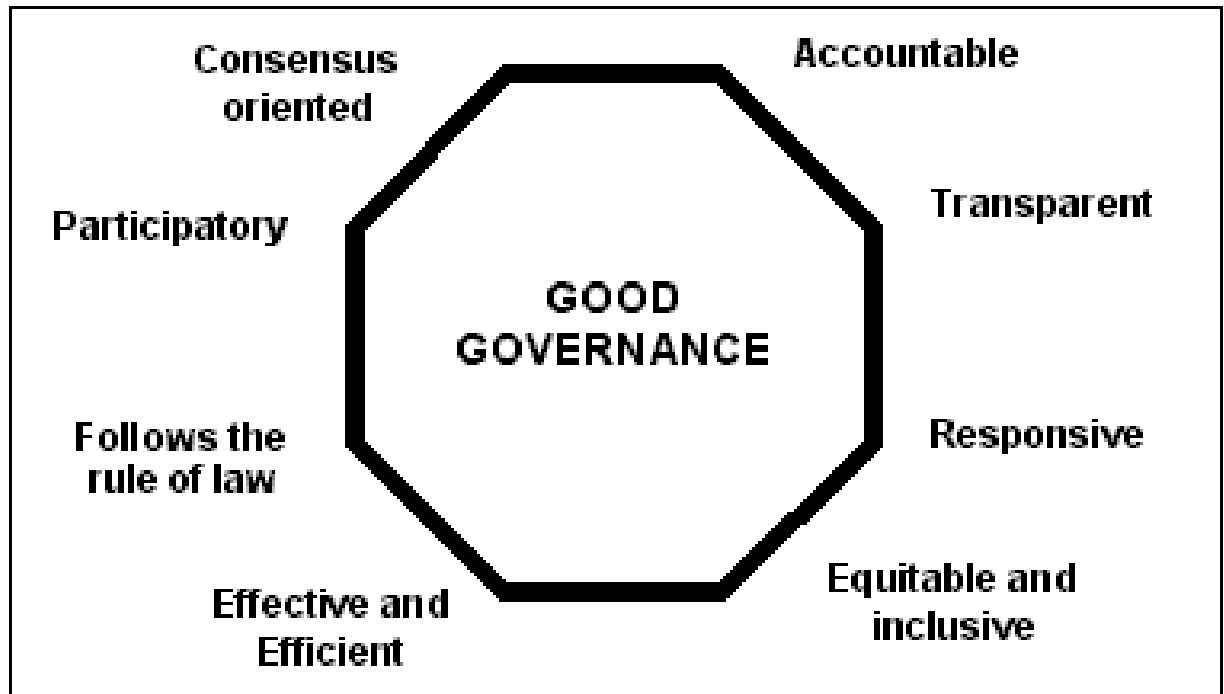
But who is the pilot to pilot this gigantic ship? Because without an efficient and good governance NSOU and its journey with its objects would be just a ship without a radar. As such NSOU has the most efficient hierarchy with Hon'ble Governor of the State of West Bengal at the helm as Chancellor and the internationally reputed educationist Professor Surabhi Banerjee who is pivot of this whole enterprise as the Vice-Chancellor in association with the Executive Council (EC) and the Academic Council (AC), (the details of which have been furnished in the schedule below) and the members thereon serving as the dedicated coefficients and not as clerks complying with routine and roster.

Administrative Hierarchy:



Thus under the abled leadership and constructive guidance of the Hon'ble Vice-Chancellor, the educational commonwealth of NSOU comes to offer the diversified courses which are most meticulously prepared on the need based societal values of very high importance and are human oriented and in turn made available by the missionaries called teachers to whoever and whosoever is desirous. As such Admission is conducted here most democratically irrespective of age, sex, religion, sectarianism etc.

Model of good governance



'THE MODUS OPERANDI'

Under the healthy superintendence of the Vice-Chancellor, the EC is there to formulate the policies for the management and administration. The Council is also responsible for fund administration, conduct and discipline, records and the audit etc. The inspectional programmes are also supervised for the 161 study centres serving as the umbrella over the State. Similarly the Academic Council has the powers to determine all academic affairs, preparation of syllabi and curricula, assessment programmes, issuance of certificates, awarding of scholarship, conferring degrees etc. The ODL institutions are manned by two types of staff – academic and administrative. Academic staff deals with the students education, training and outreach programmes. There is a clearcut hierarchy, area of operation enjoying limited autonomy, distribution of roles and expectations along with sanctions of slow progress and non performance and loss or failure of commitment in the system. The administrative staff are to be oriented about the broad mission and vision of the ODL system. Such an orientation helps in reducing role confusion, role strength, role rivalry and the role conflicts if any.

THE METHODOLOGY

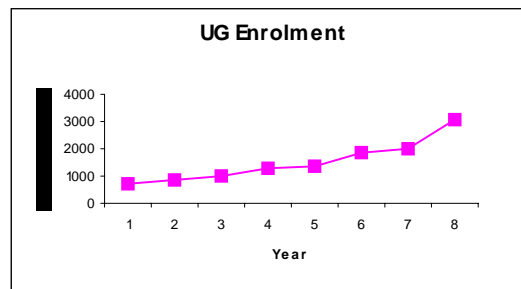
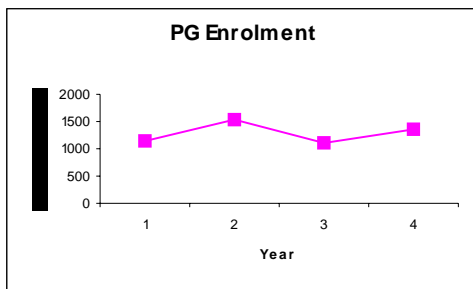
As for the methodology, we have immense respect for Jim Gibbon's practice in the Stanford University of the USA. The ODL system of the education is not an oral delivery service system method but learning-to-be or an enculturation. Mr. Gibbon with that end in view started sending video taped lessons to groups of off-campus students. He instructed them to stop the tape regularly and then with one acting as tutor would discuss to reach collective understanding. He was surprised to see that though some had low academic credentials pursuing the course consistently, outperformed the class room students when tested on the course contents. This appeared highly robust and proved that proactive learning as other may induce to and excel heavily over the face-to-face learning.

NSOU adopts the above art of teaching with free and wide application of such peripheral participation. We have evolved an era wherein teachers and learners, staying in different parts of the State interact using latest tools of information technology. We want the collaborative learning in preference to oral and/or auditory feeding. This increases continuous, flexible and lifelong learning by Home Service system. Because, this not only democratizes the education and is open, but it also encourages for social justice for the learners and guarantees educational opportunities to the mass. This decentralization comes to be a blessing bestowed door to door and thus it will usher in educationally a global village. And as such, this will stop exclusion particularly of the poor, down-trodden, unconcerned mass. This also would maximize access of the multitude to the butterfly world of education.

In my paper, I have identified 30 study centres which are located at rural and the remotest areas of the State of West Bengal. Though there are two admission sessions (January, July) in the University, learners at PG level are admitted in July session only where as learners at UG level and other short term courses are admitted twice a year i.e in January and July every year. From these two charts, it is evident that the growth in terms of students enrolment during the period of 2004-07 in the study centres located particularly at rural and disadvantaged is remarkable.

**Enrolment at 30 selected study centers during 2004-2007
(only PG &UG)**

Year	Jan,04	July,04	Jan,05	July,05	Jan,06	July,06	Jan,07	July,07
PG	-	1160	--	1520	--	1115	--	1349
UG	685	839	1010	1256	1365	1875	1970	3078



CONFLICTS

We believe that in the ODL there is a philosophy backed by the principles of concern, commitment, excellence, ethics and learning in all its acts and relationships with stakeholders like teachers, learners, associates, governments, employers and community at large which has always propelled NSOU to higher and nobler horizons. At the University, we are committed to continuously evoking the learners delight through constant review, monitoring and delivering proactive values. We also provide satisfaction of all stakeholders in a balanced way through sustainable growth. Our aim is to create a society enhancing opportunity to pursue over all development of the liveableness of life. We believe in creativity, innovation, entrepreneurship, skill, command, confidence, transparency, accountability, disciplines, team spirit, efficiency and mutual care etc.

But in that embarkation, NSOU has to meet the conflicts as under:

- i) As against the traditional education which is beset with piecemeal Class systems from I to X, XI, XII etc, segments like primary, high, degree post graduate courses, semesters etc., staccato (of question and answer process of class

- room), the NSOU offers life long, unified and voluntary courses of studies of free choice easing and overcoming the hurdles as stated above.
- ii) As against the meticulous courses of the traditional one NSOU offers a simple and life long learning through its ODL.
 - iii) As against the meretricious allurements of the dubious values of traditional one, the NSOU meets the challenge by dynamic, open to progress and adaptable to globalised requirements. Under the method of 'where there is a will, there is a way' it builds a life-centric knowledge society.
 - iv) Attention that seeks to be rapt in learning gets, more often than not disturbed by the statutory Sundays and vacations of the prevailing and formal system. But by introducing continuous process in the form of home task, private understanding, convincement and personal researches, NSOU easily crosses the hurdle. It makes educands believe that 'there are no holidays from virtue'.
 - v) Formal education demands huge packets of money for staff maintenance for the on-running of classes, construction of building, purchase of equipments. But under ODL, providing home service system it makes the home sweeter, safer and cost free. Casteism, communalism and inequality of different descriptions are altogether absent here to the great solace of all institutions, governments and the society at large. It thus escapes the hurdles and enhances the education which is an undertaking leisurely and pleasurable. No bar, barrier and boundary, reservation, exclusion, last dates are there.

By overcoming these hurdles the ODL system opens a great vista of education and leads to overcome the global crisis the formal ones.

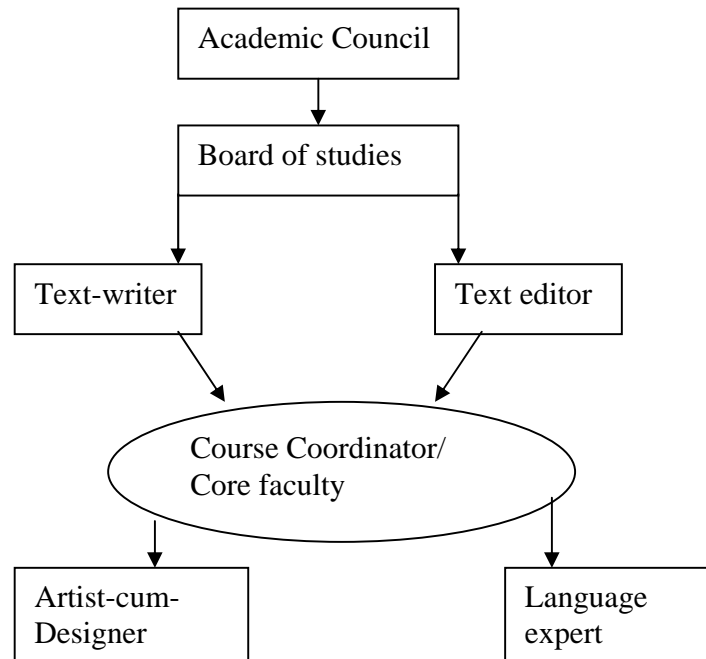
SUPPORTING SERVICES OF NSOU

The success of NSOU flows from the effective implementation of our student support services, emotional, social, economic and occupational and is envisaged below:

- i) Pre-admission counselling
- ii) Induction meeting
- iii) Face-to-face counselling & PCP
- iv) Home Assignment
- v) Library facility
- vi) Special Lecture Programme (SLP)
- vii) Meet the students' programme
- viii) Video-conferencing
- ix) Audio-video cassettes
- x) Radio counselling (Gyan Vani).
- xi) Teleconferencing
- xii) E-mail
- xiii) EDUSAT

The emergence of new technologies particularly Interactive Communication Technology or Information and Communication Technology (ICT) encompassing radio, TV, cellular phones, computer network, satellite system has opened up new methods of providing instruction and learner support. This educational technology is capable of taking education to people rather than people to education. ICT is being used to increase access to education. It will not only enhance the use of technology but shall also bring learning-teaching process as easily accessible and covering a large population living in the remotest areas. Technology enhanced distance education can accelerate the mass education easily.

The backbone of ODL system is Self Learning Material (SLM). We give very careful attention to be selective life-centric educational materials at the preparation of SLM. The following model is used in our University.



SLM development Model

Apart from the academic related services, there are also non-academic support services. This includes:
 Distribution of study materials, home assignment, identity card, registration number, timely holding of examination and publication of results etc.

CONCLUSION

Good governance and ethical conduct are essential for an educational institution. To ensure that these values are demonstrated in the conduct of employees, we start at the top. We also provide guidance and clarity in work place through management frameworks, sound practices and accountability oversights. Above all, values such as respect for the norms of the university, discipline, honesty, integrity must be truly lived in the social and ethical behaviour of individuals. There are many tools out there to promote ethical conduct, good governance and leadership. For the University, these tools are being improved and expanded to ensure that we continue to lead by performance and example, and we demonstrate the highest levels of skill, integrity in the delivery of educational service to the society.

As the Sun is the first, and the rest is no where, we have been trying to usher in a world of education where there would be light and light, leadership and no darkness, education and no ignorance and incapability, all round development and no envelopment, success and no failure. Life would be more liveable, continuous, flexible and progressive leaving all sorts of injustice, inequality, conflicts and racialism behind the bar and it would be a life full of envious efficiency of meaning, magic and music. It would be conducive to bring about a world of golden beinghood free from war.

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