

## CASE STUDY

### STAFF TRAINING IN DISTANCE EDUCATION AT BANGLADESH OPEN UNIVERSITY

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#### Preamble:

With a population of 120 million, Bangladesh faces the challenge of creating productive human resources for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. While conventional system of education limits the access to education for all, the Bangladesh Open University (BOU) has been established on October 21, 1992 by an Act of the Parliament with a potential of crossing this limit. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) stands out with a substantial amount of loan to this BOU project covering 81% and the rest with the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh (GOB).

BOU is a new type of academic institution in Bangladesh. Distance education is, on the whole, a new concept in this country, which requires varieties of skills, innovative activities and modern technologies. The work involved in it therefore cannot be done by inexperienced and untrained persons. Hence BOU will attach top priority to staff development and its staff be properly trained from both within and outside the country. BOU allocated a considerable amount of money for its staff training from the project.

#### Main Objectives of Training:

The objectives of training are as follows:

- To improve the overall understanding of open learning among the faculty and staff of BOU so that the university can maintain a sustained growth in terms of system development and implementation.
- To provide individual staff with the knowledge, understanding and skills needed to perform jobs and/or to improve their performance.
- To develop trained Personnels among the permanent faculty and staff of the university so that they will become the local trainers.
- To help in implementing the programs of the BOU project in time.
- To study the latest developments in the various disciplines with particular reference to Distance Education.
- To detail academic staff to open universities abroad for study/interaction to obtain on the job experience.

#### Staffing at BOU.

Bangladesh Open University will be the largest university in the country having 12 Regional Resource Centres and about 80 Local Centres spread all over Bangladesh. It will be a different type of university with Vice

Chancellor, Pro Vice Chancellor, Treasurer, Project Director, 6 Deans, 10 Directors, 12 Regional Directors and with other Professionals. Total Manpower will be 838 including 80 staff from former Bangladesh Institute of Distance Education which has been merged with the university.

**Table 1: BOU Staffing (Persons):**

<b>Description</b>	<b>91-92</b>	<b>92-93</b>	<b>93-94</b>	<b>94-95</b>	<b>95-96</b>	<b>96-97</b>	<b>97-98</b>
Project Pro-forma (PP)	15	53	181	491	761	758	758
Recruited	15	53	182	313	365	400	458+300*

\* to be recruited by 31<sup>st</sup> January 1999.

Recruitment has been slower than the original projections. BOU has been growing rather slowly due to its initial delay. So the staff development activities have also been delayed.

**Initial Ways of Training (1992-1997):**

There are two methods of staff training at BOU:

- a. Training through Local Institutes or arranging Seminar; Symposium; Workshop or training through appointing Foreign Consultants.
- b. Training through overseas Open or Distance Education Institutions.

**Local Training (1992-1997):**

Staff has been sent to get their training in Local Institutions in the field of Modern Management, Computer Skill Development, Information Technology, Printing Technology, Media Production, Mass Communication, Communication Skill Development, Environmental Control, Transport Management, Editing, Module Writing, etc. The staff are also sent to attend the seminar, symposium, conference, workshop in other institutions. Staff are also trained/familiarized with the DE system arranging workshop/seminar at BOU premises by the foreign consultants hiring from abroad (UK, Australia, Canada, India, etc.)

**Table 2: Status Report of Staff Development (Domestic):**

<b>Description</b>	<b>91-92</b>	<b>92-93</b>	<b>93-94</b>	<b>94-95</b>	<b>95-96</b>	<b>96-97</b>	<b>Total</b>
No. of Program	-	2	40	48	57	60	207
No. of Trainees	-	2	565	603	700	750	2620
Person-Month	-	0.50	120	140	198	203	661.5

**Overseas Training (1992-1997):**

The categories of foreign training are as follows:

- Category I : Familiarization visits to other distance teaching institutions (2-4 weeks)-for general understanding of distance education and open university systems. This category is mainly for senior policy makers concerned with or working in BOU. This includes attendance at seminars and workshops.
- Category II : Details-for detailing persons to open universities for study and interaction with faculty in the host institutions to gain experience, academic enrichment and managerial expertise. This category is mainly for Directors and other staff of divisions and schools (4-8 weeks).

Category III : Fellowships for study: To undertake research or course of study in Distance and related fields. Intended for those who will be involved in research at BOU (8-54 weeks)

Category IV : Training courses: To attend training courses in specialist fields such as desk-top publishing, electronic media and the development of institutional materials for junior staff including lectures, assistant Professors and technical staff (2-24 weeks).

Up to 1997 , BOU has trained 107 persons as shown in table-3 in different areas of which 97 in category I, 1 in category IV, 7 in category III. It may be mentioned here that all of these training's were charged to the Asian Development Bank, Since BOU also received scholarships/grants from other sources to develop its Human Resources.

Table 3: Status Report of Training (International Program)

<u>Description</u>	<u>91-92</u>	<u>92-93</u>	<u>93-94</u>	<u>94-95</u>	<u>95-96</u>	<u>96-97</u>	<u>Total</u>
No. of Programs	1	4	7	16	7	23	58
No. of Trainees	1	7	10	32	7	50	107
Person. Month.	0.50	4	5	15	17	21	62.5

#### **Reviewing the Needs and Strategy of Training:**

A Round table seminar was held in 21 October 1995 at BOU under the auspices of Asian Development Bank (ADB) and Bangladesh Open University (BOU). Many government officials, representatives from ADB, BOU academics and officers, BOU consultants attended this seminar. In this Round table, they reviewed the needs and strategy and fix the training requirements and staff development strategy. It has been also decided that the university will appoint a consulting firm inviting open tender from the qualified relevant bidders around the world to assist in managing the training plan.

#### Staff Development- Future strategy:

- Several changes in the focus of our staff development strategy is worth mentioning. The traditional idea of staff development was according to the line of rank and status of individuals working in the institution. This has been changed since each person is now involved in several types of activities and each of these may need separate training the current focus is on the nature of jobs. Individuals are now expected to be trained in their area of expertise or in the areas where the university wants them to become efficient. This requires need oriented approach (rather than the status oriented approach) towards training's.
- The long-term and short-term needs of the university for staff development have been examined since the university has both and long term goals in terms of staff development. The short term staff development strategy is different from its long term staff development strategy. This is reflected in the tenure of training in each area.
- As a result of the bifurcation of the Tutorial Centres from the Local Centres as well as due to changes in the strategy of text book development, BOU now employs a good number of part time individuals. So domestic training has been emphasized for those people who supports BOU's academic activities (like tutors, writes etc.) BOU, However, will develop expertise among its permanent staff who eventually become trainers of these people. This will add to the sustainability of the university beyond its project period.
- BOU's training policy has been to develop Personnels in areas of management, planning, finance, instructional design, media productions, editing, computing, course development- coordination, regional service management, tutoring and counseling, evaluations, grading and examinations etc. Consequently, the four categories mentioned in the appraisal report need to be adjusted with the functions and length of training.

- For senior staff members, it has been found that if a familiarization visit could be synchronized with a conference then the efficiency of such training increases. In such cases, senior staff can also exchange views with their peers from other distance teaching universities.
- It is also essential that individuals who receive overseas training also serve the university after their training. To ensure this, the university has constituted a committee who will soon propose regulations for overseas training.

### **Training Requirements:**

The training requirements fixed on Round Table Conference is mentioned below with the details:

Table 4:

<u>No.</u>	<u>Category (person ´ trips)</u>	<u>Persons</u>	<u>days*</u>
I	Familiarization Visits (5 x 3)	15	225d
II	Administration (6 x 3)	18	144d
III	Planning/Research (3 x 2)	6	135d
IV	Finance (2 x 3)	6	150d
V	Printing and Distribution (2 x 2)	4	120d
VI	Admission and Examination (2 x 2)	4	60d
VII	Registration (2 x 2)	4	30d
VIII	Regional Services (4 x 4)	16	100d
IX	Library Services (3)	3	60d
X	Computer Programming (2 x 2)	4	10m
XI	Media production (3 x 5)	15	225d
XII	Academic instruction (each for 24 weeks)	14	2352
XIII	Text book writing (3 x 2)	6	90d
XIV	Editing (3 x 2)	6	90d
XV	Course co-ordination (6 x 3)	18	540d
XVI	Evaluation (3 x 2)	6	60d
XVII	Information (2 x 2)	4	30d
<b>Total:</b>		<b>145</b>	<b>4421</b>

Note : days = trip x person x day in each trip, months = day/30, 52 weeks = year

### **Further details of each of the areas is given below:**

#### Familiarization visit

Visits to other distance teaching institutions to promote a general understanding of distance education and Open University systems and to acquire comparative knowledge, information, experience and insights on how other countries cope with problems in Distance Education.

#### Administration

Short training courses on the Management of distance education including structuring of jobs, supervision and guidance of workers, setting and monitoring of standards, office administration, problem solving and decision making, maintenance and use of office equipment and education technology etc.

### Planning

Planning, Project Analysis and Project Management. Training will be on project analysis, project development, implementation planning, implementation action and monitoring, coordination with participating agencies and donor agencies, project appraisal, critical path analysis and other planning techniques scheduling and project evaluation.

### Finance

Short courses on accounting and financial management of DE institutions. This includes budgeting, accounting, computerization of accounts, manual preparation, costing of distance education programs and constituent activities, and analysis and evaluation of different fee collection systems.

### Printing & Distribution

Graphic Design, Technical Illustration and Printing of textual materials and distribution of open learning materials (Books, Audio-Cassettes, leaflets, etc.). Includes graphic design and technical illustration of texts; the management of the interface with the printing industry including contracting and purchasing of printing capacity; and packing, storing & distribution of materials.

### Admissions, Examinations, Registration & Regional Services

Training on admissions, examinations and registration procedures for a distance education institution, acquiring knowledge about how to carry out admissions, examinations & registration efficiently. Also includes tutorial planning and budgeting, and the supervision and guidance of tutors (teachers), the measurement of student learning, student guidance and counseling, relations with parents and the community, problem solving and decision making, maintenance and use of office equipment and education technology.

### Library Services

Overall management of the library.

### Computer Programming

Computer programming to acquire knowledge for analysis & processing of data, maintenance and development of computer software and accessories.

### Media Production

Training courses in desktop-publishing, electronic media, use and maintenance of audio-visual equipment & AV production.

### Academic Instruction

Higher level study and research in distance education & related fields. This will be done through enrollment on higher degree-level courses.

### Text book Writing/Editing

Training in technical and professional knowledge understanding and skills in curriculum development, syllabus development, educational publications development, evaluation of text books, quality improvement in text book production and text book renewal and editing.

### Course Coordinator

Management and coordination of educational programs including text book and materials preparation, project coordination of the course development process, open learning methods etc.

#### Evaluation/Question Setting

Student evaluation (assessment and examination): Methods and procedures including question setting and issues relating to deferral, credit systems, GPA, etc.

#### Information and Public Relations

Information and mass communication techniques related to marketing and public relations functions.

#### **Implementation of Training Plan:**

The BOU has engaged a training consulting firm M/S Tecsuit International Ltd., Canada for implementing the training plan as in described earlier. The selection of consulting firm is a long process and it has taken about 1(one) year time to finalize the selection procedures as per provision of the Peoples Republic of Bangladesh and the Asian Development Bank.

#### **Stages of Implementation of Training Plan.**

- Selection of trainees, country and period finalized by the Project Implementation Unit (PIU) of the university.
- The list proposed by PIU sent to Training section and training section informed the Trainees for preparation and local office of the consulting firm for mobilization of trainees.
- With the approval of Head Quarters (HQ) of the consulting firm, their local office arranged all kinds of travel arrangements (visas, tickets, briefing, training plan etc.)
- The trainees went to Head Quarters of consulting firm at Canada and branch offices in case of other countries. They are briefed in the consulting firm and OVM in DE are arranged by consulting firm in HQ before attachment of actual relevant training.
- During the training period, BOU and the consulting firm monitored the training in the institutions where the training held.
- On finishing the training of each group, the trainees and consulting firm submitted the report to BOU.

#### **Achievement to Fulfill the Training Requirements:**

BOU has successfully completed the training plan as mentioned in table 4. But there are some limitations:

- a) Initial delay for recruitment of teachers/officers.
- b) Long process in tendering specially in completing the formalities with the GOB & ADB.
- c) There is a another consultancy plan in the same time. In the consultancy package there was a provision of hiring of 20 consultants for providing of 34 man month of consultancy services in various fields of BOU activities.

#### **Outcomes from the training project:**

- The senior staff of BOU are familiarized with current distance education and practice. They are also familiarized with the planning and management systems of other open institutions and problems in DE.
- The academics are now known to the philosophy, nature, potential and pedagogic attributes of DE. They have expertise in the area of module writing, editing, instructional design etc.
- All the administrative personnel's have developed their expertise in their own fields: like Recruitment, HRD, training management, procurement, planning, research, campus management, printing & distribution, examination, management of regional services, student support services, media production, financial management and computer technology & engineering.
- Most of the staff have been trained in use and operation of computer.

BOU has completed its project period at a success utilizing these outcomes earned from the training project. The BOU has planned to establish a training institute and ID cell. The university has able to launch about 16 formal programs registering about 130,000 students through out the countries. It is going to establish a tele conferencing system & computer networking - really it's a dramatic develop not for only BOU also the country. The people of the Bangladesh hope that it will be the Mega-university at Bangladesh soon utilizing its trained Human Resources.

### **Plan for Establishment of Staff Training and Research Institute in Distant Education at BOU:**

For a large organization such as the BOU and indeed any similar organization, it is necessary that it has staff development and research policies together with well-developed processes and procedures for its implementation.

It has already been proposed by the Vice Chancellor and supported in the consultancy report by Alan Tait "Staff Development at BOU (Report No. CS 10) that a training and research institute for open/distance education Staff Training and Research Institute in Distance Education (STRIDE) be established within the BOU.

There are three main reasons for the establishment of STRIDE are:

- The BOU is the premier open education provider in the Peoples Republic of Bangladesh. It follows that it should therefore provide a leadership role in research and development and training in open education in Bangladesh Particularly through research it will be possible to maintain and build upon professional expertise in open education praxis within the Bangladesh context.
- The BOU has a considerable ongoing need and requirement for staff development and training of its own workforce as the majority of it own staff are from conventional educational training institutions or have no experience in open education.
- The BOU needs a designated team of staff to implement BOU staff development and training policy and practices.
- The BOU anticipates involvement in a range of projects and consultancies relating to the ongoing development of the BOU as well as provide its own expertise to other organizations within Bangladesh. The proposed institute would act as a central coordinating resource for such activities, many of which would require the provision of staff development, training and research.

Furthermore STRIDE will be able to contribute to BOU quality and efficiency endeavors and also contribute towards enhancing the level of institutional links with other open education institutions.

A need for an institute for training and research is urgent at this stage of the development of the BOU because:

- A considerable number of new staff (both academic and general staff) are to be appointed. These staff will all need training in their particular areas of expertise as most new personnel can only be recruited from conventional education areas and/or have no experience in open education.
- A considerable number of current staff at the BOU need further staff development and /or training in the principles and practices of open education systems in order to function more efficiently and effectively in their roles.
- The BOU is an evolving institution and new systems are still to be implemented or are in an implementation phase. This requires the provision of appropriate staff development and training programs.
- Currently next no research and development activity is taking place. This is vital in order to establish if open education practices used by the BOU are consistent with Bangladesh social, cultural and religious norms.

### **Conclusion:**

- It is revealed that the establishment of a staff training institute and research for open/distance education at BOU is immediately needed to train its newly recruited personnel's and ongoing needs.
- BOU can further develop a training project for establishment of STRIDE as well as training for its newly recruited and part-time employees and Research activities.

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