

Technical and Vocational Skills through ODFL with reference to Pakistan

By
Nowshad Khan*

Abstract:

Technicians working in the field rarely get the opportunity to upgrade their knowledge and skills through trainings, workshops, symposiums or courses due to their working conditions. It has been observed that potential of ODFL is up-grading knowledge of Technical and Vocational skills courses, programmes. In view of this the Faculty of Sciences of AIOU has launched technical and vocational skills Courses both in urban and rural areas all over the Country. These programmes are open to semi-literate and literate people, open for both sexes, open for all socio-economic classes, open to working and non-working groups, open for urban and rural areas, open to place of study either at home or on the job and open for the learners to fix their own time for Study. The Electrical wiring, Electrician, Repair and Maintenance of House Hold Electrical Appliance, Basic Electronics, Radio Servicing, Auto-mechanics, have been launch through ODFL. These programs are improving the level of knowledge and skills by using correspondence, radio and T.V Programs printed materials well illustrated correspondence, and in easy language. The Technical courses also supported by the face-to-face system for the practical in the laboratories and workshops. The study shows that minor problems with the technical courses are still there but by the careful planning and implementing recommendations of this study can minimize the problems at AIOU and at large in commonwealth countries.

*Dean Faculty of Sciences, Allama Iqbal Open University, Islamabad, Pakistan

Introduction:

Vocational Education (also known as vocational education and training or VET) is education that prepares people for specific trades, crafts and careers at various levels from a trade, a craft, technician, or a professional position in engineering, accountancy, nursing, medicine, architecture, pharmacy, law etc. Craft vocations are usually based on manual or practical activities, traditionally non-academic, related to a specific trade, occupation, or vocation. It is sometimes referred to as technical education as the trainee directly develops expertise in a particular group of techniques. Vocational education may be classified as teaching procedural knowledge. This can be contrasted with declarative knowledge, as used in education in a usually broader scientific field, which might concentrate on theory and abstract conceptual knowledge, characteristic of tertiary education. Vocational education can be at the secondary, post-secondary level, further education level and can interact with the apprenticeship system. Increasingly, vocational education can be recognized in terms of recognition of prior learning and partial academic credit towards tertiary education (e.g., at a university) as credit; however, it is rarely considered in its own form to fall under the traditional definition of higher education. Vocational education is related to the age-old apprenticeship system of learning. Apprenticeships are designed for many levels of work from manual trades to high knowledge work. However, as the labor market becomes more specialized and economies demand higher levels of skill, governments and businesses are increasingly investing in the future of vocational education through publicly funded training organizations and subsidized apprenticeship or traineeship initiatives for businesses. At the post-secondary level vocational education is

*Dean Faculty of Sciences, Allama Iqbal Open University, Islamabad, Pakistan

typically provided by an institute of technology, university, or by a local community college. Vocational education has diversified over the 20th century and now exists in industries such as retail, tourism, information technology, funeral services and cosmetics, as well as in the traditional crafts and cottage industries.

AIOU role in Technical and Vocational Courses:

Simpson (1997) says the the Electronics Technicians Distance Education programme provides flexible, skills-based training in electronics. It has been developed for adult learners pursuing electronics technician -level training through independent study, specifically students who cannot attend college full -time because of work or family commitments. The Allama Iqbal Open University of the Faculty of Sciences of AIOU has launched technical and vocational skills Courses both in urban and rural areas all over the Country. These programmes are open to semi-literate and literate people, open for both sexes, open for all socio-economic classes, open to working and non-working groups, open for urban and rural areas, open to place of study either at home or on the job and open for the learners to fix their own time for Study. The Electrical wiring, House Hold Electrical Appliance, Basic Electronics, Radio Servicing, Auto-mechanics, Auto-Servicing, Repair and Maintenance of House Hold Electrical Appliances have been launch through ODFL. These programs are improving the level of knowledge and skills by using correspondence, radio and T.V Programs printed materials well illustrated correspondence, and in easy language. The Technical courses also supported by the face-to-face system for the practical in the laboratories and workshops.

*Dean Faculty of Sciences, Allama Iqbal Open University, Islamabad, Pakistan

Courses offered:

The following technical courses are offered through distance teaching system by the AIOU. There are about 1800 students are enrolled in the following courses (AIOU 2010).

1. Electrical Wiring
2. Electrician
3. Basic Electronics
4. Radio Servicing
5. Auto Servicing
6. Auto Mechanics
7. Repair & Maintenance of
House Hold Electrical Appliances
8. Maintenance of House Hold Electrical Appliances

Aims and Objectives:

1. To offer functional and highly skilled courses at different levels for those who are working in Industry and workshop.
2. To offer technical qualification to enable the students to be easily absorbed in Industry and workshop.
3. To open the door of technology/technical education for all interested students who were deprived of the opportunity of getting education in formal institution.
4. To provide an avenue for continuing education and enable the workers to improve and get updated technical skill while earning their livelihood.

Mode of Teaching:

The technical courses are offered throughout the country by established private technical centers in the major cities of Pakistan. All these Technical & Vocation courses consist of theory and technical classes. The practical work is essential and compulsory component in the Technical and vocational courses. All the technical courses are written in easy language Urdu. These programs are improving the level of knowledge and skills by using correspondence, radio and T.V Programs printed materials well illustrated correspondence, and in easy language. The Technical courses also supported by the face-to-face system for the practical in the laboratories and workshops. There are 15 tutorial meetings on every Sunday for 05 hours guided by the Tutors at the technical centers.

Evaluation:

The informal interviews were conducted at the end of semester of the enrolled students, Tutor and Faculty staff members regarding the contents of the course, radio and TV programs, and printed materials and the knowledge they gained from technical and vocational courses at the study centers (Workshops/Labs). Following are the main constraints indicated by the all stakeholders.

CONSTRAINTS:

1. Problem in writing the Units for Technical Courses in Urdu because University is providing study material in the national language (Urdu).
2. The writers used the meaning of Technical words in Urdu and cause miscommunication because the people are used technical words in English.

3. AIOU facing problems to establish private study Centers/workshops for tutorial support for students.
4. Private workshops are not well equipped as Government technical institutions.
5. Teaching staff (Tutor/Teacher) are not fully experienced as compared to the Govt. Technical Institutions.
6. The writer of technical courses some time uses technical terms which are beyond the understanding of students. The reason is this that the students study these courses at home and the tutors are far from their homes. Students receive no immediate answer on query which they do not understand.
7. The writers/experts are usually not trained in writing for distance teaching for the technical courses.

Overcoming the Constraints:

Problems with distance teaching in technical are there. But by careful planning we can minimize the problems. The following step may be taken.

1. University should approach the unit writers through the Govt. Technical Institutions like Technical Vocational Training Authority for unit writing
2. Instruct unit writers to use English Terminology during writing the course instead of meaning into Urdu.
3. Establish Technical Study Centers at Govt. Technical Institutions because Govt. Technical Institution is funded by the Govt. and well established in comparison to private workshops.

*Dean Faculty of Sciences, Allama Iqbal Open University, Islamabad, Pakistan

4. Govt. Teachers are well experienced and they are appointed by the maximum required Technical qualification and experience.
5. Less technical terms must be used in Distance Teaching courses. If necessary to use, then example must be given from local experience. A technical term should be explained and followed by a question or exercise to help the student understand the technical words. Many languages lack scientific vocabulary and therefore the writer should introduce alternative expression or new words.
6. Diagrams and pictures must be clear and more illustrations should be used in the printed material for easy understanding and to avoid complexities. (khan 1991)
According to Jerkins (1985) Pictures and diagrams can be used to explain points, to aid learning, to act as a reminder, and to provide variety. They can be used with both literature and illiterate people, providing for the latter a useful alternative to printed words.

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*Dean Faculty of Sciences, Allama Iqbal Open University, Islamabad, Pakistan