

Collaborative Models in Course Design and Delivery: The IGNOU Experience

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Abstract

For achieving the developmental goals in the present global scenario, the planners in the ODLS of the developing countries face challenges which necessitate strategic shifts in the areas of curriculum and course development, course design, delivery mechanisms and so on. Collaboration amongst knowledge and education generating institutions is looked upon as a method to derive maximum benefits for the society.

This paper attempts to familiarise the participants with the collaborative methods innovated and adopted at IGNOU in the last fifteen years for developing professional courses in Tourism and Hospitality Education.

INTRODUCTION

The inclusion of education in GATS has considerable impact on the education systems of third world countries. Today, education is treated as a commodity or service for sale and profit generation. The entry of private players with market orientation has added more complexities and higher education is becoming a prerogative of the wealthy. The Indian belief of "imparting education and not selling it" stands shaken. In such a situation the Open and Distance Learning System (ODLS) has a major role to play for making education accessible to the poor and needy and ensure that the benefits of knowledge society are justly distributed amongst all. For achieving the developmental goals in the present global scenario the planners in the ODLS of the developing countries face challenges which necessitate strategic shifts in the areas of curriculum and course development, course design, delivery mechanisms and so on. Collaboration amongst knowledge and education generating institutions is looked upon as a method to derive maximum benefits for the society.

This paper attempts to familiarise the participants with the collaborative methods innovated and adopted at IGNOU in the last fifteen years for developing professional courses in Tourism and Hospitality Education. Based on a collaborative approach, IGNOU launched four programmes in the area of Tourism Studies and two in the area of Hospitality Education (See Table 1).

Table 1: *Tourism and Hospitality at IGNOU*

Sr. No.	Programme	Launch Year	Collaboration With	Nature of Collaboration
1	CTS	1994	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tourism Industry segments• Ministry of Tourism• NGOs• School of Management	Curriculum Design and Course Development
2	DTS	1996	- do -	- do -
3	BTS	1996	- do -	- do -
4	MTM	2000	- do -	- do -
5	B.Sc.	2002	National Council for Hotel Management and Catering Technology (NCHMCT)	Curriculum Design Joint Delivery & Degree

6	M.Sc.	2004	- do -	- do -
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The former includes a six months certificate in Tourism Studies (CTS), a one year diploma (DTS), a three years Bachelor Degree (BTS) and two years Masters degree (MTM) where as in the case of hospitality a three years B.Sc. Programme (BHM) and a two years M.Sc. Programme (MHA) were launched. In the case of Tourism Studies there was interdisciplinary collaboration within the various disciplines of the University along with collaboration with the various segments of the tourism industry. In the case of hospitality an institutional collaboration was established with the National Council for Hotel Management and Catering Technology, an organisation under the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, which has 24 institutes all over the country. This collaboration has its uniqueness in the model where the curriculum and course delivery are a mix of conventional learning classroom teaching and open and distance learning – a model, perhaps, first of its kind where the two systems complement each other and offer a joint programme. Such a model evolved through a process wherein various kinds of collaborations experienced by the faculty earlier were taken note of. I have elsewhere discussed the Adaptive and Adoptive Models of innovative course development along with certain strategic shifts made for quality assurance, reducing the time span and costs keeping in view the Indian environment and societal needs (K. Kumar, 2005). Collaboration was one such shift keeping in view the characteristics of programmes. These approaches are discussed in brief as the emphasis is on tourism and hospitality – areas having a wider scope for job opportunities in the developing countries. The Open and Conventional Mix (OCM) model for hospitality education has been in existence for last four years and its success led to similar collaborations by offering a BSc in Nautical Sciences in collaboration with Shipping Corporation of India under the Ministry of Shipping, Government of India.

INTER-DISCIPLINARY AND INTER-SCHOOL COLLABORATION

Inter-disciplinary collaboration within the schools of studies for launching inter-disciplinary programmes was experienced in Foundation Courses for Humanities and Social Sciences and Science and Technology. Inter-disciplinary teams were made within a school or across the schools also. Experience showed that managing an inter-disciplinary programme team requires lot of tactical handling as the ego states of the academics involved and their specialisations in particular fields often generate complexities. An aptitude for inter-disciplinary approach has to be developed and one has to be selective in picking up a team of open-minded and motivated members and competing with each other. For example, before preparing the policy document for the tourism studies while analysing the tourism education scenario in the conventional system one realised that there was a major lacuna in the curriculum structures as tourism was housed in different disciplines. If it was with commerce department the emphasis was on business activities or studying the balance sheets; in management department it was only the managerial aspect whereas in history department it was hard history that was taught as tourism (K. Kumar 2005). Hence, the challenge before the distance learning system was to develop tourism studies with an inter-disciplinary approach, keeping in view the nature and operations of tourism industry and other issues like tourism impacts, gender sensitivities, politics – aspects that have been termed as “Liberal” elements in curriculum development (J. Tribe, 2005).

UNIVERSITY-NGO COLLABORATION

Certain programmes were developed in collaboration with NGOs. This collaboration was more in the nature of curriculum development. Table - 2 gives the names of courses/programmes launched in collaboration with NGOs. Still there can be a lot done in this area and more programmes after assessing the societal needs, particularly in vocational areas, need to be taken up. These may include even certification of skills that the learners have attained through their own experience without having any formal education.

Table 2

Sr. No.	Name of Course/Programme	Nature of Collaboration
1	Certificate in Disaster Management (CDM)	Curriculum development and course writing
2	Certificate in Labour Development (CLD)	Funding, Curriculum development, course writing and delivery
3	Certificate in Women Empowerment and Development (CWED)	Curriculum development and course writing
4	Certificate in Craft and Design (Pottery) (CCDP)	Curriculum development, course writing and delivery
5	Certificate in Shoe Upper Cutting (CSUC)	- do -
6	Certificate in Shoe Lasting and Finishing (CSLY)	- do -
7	Tourism Studies (4 Programmes)	Curriculum development and course writing

INDUSTRIAL-UNIVERSITY COLLABORATION

It was for the first time in India that a collaborative approach was adopted in tourism programmes by inviting various segments of tourism industry. Representatives from Tour Operators, Travel Agents, Tourist Transporters, Hotel Industry and the Government Tourism Departments participated in the National Workshop that provided the policy document and curriculum for tourism education through the distance learning. A major reason for seeking this collaboration was that generally the industry accuses the education system for not producing what is required and the education system comes with a counter charge that the industry does not spell out what is required. I have elsewhere dealt with this dilemma in tourism curriculums (K. Kumar 2006). In fact, such an approach facilitated the curriculum development and almost 60 per cent of the course writers were from the industry, which was something unique to experiment. The industry experts were reluctant to write the units, as they were not academicians. Hence, they were requested to jot down the nature of job profiles, task analysis and skills required for carrying on the jobs in respective sectors and these write ups were converted into units by the faculty. This also solved another problem faced by the industry. Tourism education had been a privilege of students in Metros as in 1993 only four conventional universities offered Masters programmes and one college, a Bachelors programme. The annual intake was not even 150 students – much less than the demand. Further, everyone passing a Tourism course wanted jobs at the head offices. For tourism operations trained personnel were required in the destination zones where the local youth had no training or opening to tourism education. The conventional system was not infrastructurally geared to take up this challenge and hence distant education was to play a major role. IGNOU started with 105 study centres and today the programmes are on offer at 503 study centres. Table - 3 gives enrolment figures for tourism programmes. Another aspect was to generate tourism awareness and encourage the local population towards small-scale entrepreneurship for tourism services in their areas. This in fact was not only in league with the University's aims and objectives of taking education to the unreached and under developed areas but also in tune with the NGOs who wanted tourism benefits for local population.

TABLE 3: *Enrolment Figures for Tourism Programmes*

YEAR	CTS	DTS	BTS	MTM
1994	2186	-	-	-
1995	833	1969	1280	-
1996	573	1318	1430	-
1997	568	1299	1882	-

1998	517	923	1515	-
1999	506	860	1863	-
2000	376	998	2609	856
2001	290	997	2725	1022
2002	498	711	2811	1311
2003	351	998	5388	1312
2004	339	748	3700	2710
2005	306	746	3908	2305

OPEN – OPEN UNIVERSITY COLLABORATION

Generally, such collaboration has been for capacity building or adopting programmes and the state Open Universities in India have adopted quite a few programmes from IGNOU. However, in case of tourism studies where as the U.P. Open University adopted DTS and BTS as such in totality, in the case of B.R. Ambedkar Gujarat Open University the collaboration was of a different nature. With the help of tourism studies coordinator of IGNOU they offered three certificates in tourism studies with specialisation in marketing, culture and environment. These were launched in Gujarati language with examples relevant for Gujarat tourism. Though it was expected that there would be extensive collaborations between the Open Universities the results have till date not been as per expectations. More sincere efforts are required and this also needs faculty exchanges amongst the open universities.

INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION AMONG THE OPEN UNIVERSITIES

Such a collaboration has been more in terms of capacity building and training rather than in the area of launching joint programmes globally with the exception of CEMPA/CEMBA that was coordinated through the Common Wealth of Open Learning.

In fact this is an area where the Open Universities of the developing countries need to concentrate from the point of view of optimum utilisation of resources, quality assurance and wider sharing of knowledge. These can be region specific or global, depending on the demand analysis. Adoptive and Adaptive models experienced at IGNOU can come handy in this regard to be applied at international levels. Courses from one country can be adopted by another as such or by using the adaptive model adopted after necessary modifications. Even joint programmes can be offered.

OPEN AND CONVENTIONAL MIX

Generally, there has been a misconception that the ODL and the conventional systems in Higher Education are antagonistic to each other and some also raise the issue of superiority and inferiority while comparing these systems. An another strong opinion has been that ODL fills the gap in imparting education which the conventional system cannot fill because of its infrastructural or policy limitations. Contrary to such views both these systems are to be seen as interdependent and complimentary to each other (K. Kumar, 2005). The collaboration between the two has been of a limited nature with the open and distance learning system seeking experts, course writers, counsellors and evaluators from the conventional system. Gradually, multimedia course materials developed at IGNOU made a mark in the higher education scenario and are being also used in the conventional system for classroom teaching. Another significant development is that students in the conventional system simultaneously take up short duration certificates and diplomas offered by IGNOU.

The most successful example of collaboration between the two systems has been the launching of B.Sc in Hospitality and Hotel Administration and M.Sc. in Hospitality Administration. It was perhaps for the first time, in the history of open and distance learning that programmes were offered jointly in collaboration by distance learning and conventional teaching.

Before coming to the features of this collaboration it is worth mentioning that the NCHMCT through its institutes had been offering a three-year diploma in Hotel Management since 1990 based on the vocational model of U.K. There were proposals to convert it into a degree programme and the Ministry of Tourism sought collaboration with IGNOU. It took almost five years to finalise the collaboration and a MOU was signed in March 2002. It was not an easy task to get the programme through from the various statutory bodies at IGNOU as some in spite of having worked in open system for years still have very closed minds as far as innovations are concerned. It was difficult for them to comprehend that a student can simultaneously study through a dwell mode. The main features of OCM model are as follows:

- 40 credits are taught through open learning and 80 credits through the conventional mode.
- Each Institute of Hotel Management (IHM) is treated as a programme centre where counselling and other facilities are provided and the costs are borne by IGNOU.
- Admissions to the programme are through a national entrance test conducted by NCHMCT at about 36 centres for which IGNOU send its observers.
- IGNOU recognised the examination system of NCHMCT and exams for the component of 80 credits are held by NCHMCT. The comprehensive grade card is issued by IGNOU mentioning the marks of both the components.
- The degree is given by IGNOU wherein it is mentioned that it is in collaboration with NCHMCT.
- From the IGNOU side it is handled in project mode as a one-window operation. All data related to admissions, assignments, evaluation, queries, problems etc. are routed through the programme coordinator to the relevant divisions in IGNOU.
- Placement rate of students has gone up to 100 per cent and for some institutes up to 150 per cent. Further, because of the degree many students have started opting for higher studies.
- Earlier in order to get a degree the students while pursuing the diploma would simultaneously register for a Bachelors degree in the open learning system. Thus, there was double pressure of education. This pressure has been eased; the students concentrate more on studies and the results have improved along with the quality.
- The conversion of diploma into a degree is attracting better talent for the Hotel Industry thus, demonstrating the success of this unique OCM model. The admissions have also gone up which is demonstrated in Table – 4.

Table 4: BHM Admission Figures

Sr. No.	Year	No. of Students
1	2002	6797
2	2003	7019
3	2004	7704
4	2005	8234

Two other collaborative arrangements were done with the Hotel industry training institutes. The ITC Welcome group selects 40 students every year for providing in house training in Hospitality and Hotel Management. All the students simultaneously register for the Bachelor in Tourism Studies Programme of IGNOU and since 1999 the institute has been given the status of a special programme centre where all students' supports services are provided. Similarly, the Obreoi Group has gone a step further. They select 40 to 50 students every year and offer them a stipend along with free lodging and boarding facilities. They are trained for three years in Hotel Management by the Oberio Centre of Learning and Development (OCLD). Simultaneously, they enrol for Bachelor in Tourism Studies. From IGNOU side it is taken as a one window operation. These are again unique models of collaboration between formal teaching of hospitality education by the leading Hotel chains and the distance-learning mode. Further such collaborations facilitated such knowledge requirements of students that had become essential in the

changing global scenario. For example, hospitality education is no more confined to the traditional themes of food and beverages, front office operations, house keeping and some language courses. Marketing, human resource development and other management issues are essential in this line and they were introduced as distance learning components. Similarly, hospitality being a part of the tourism phenomena also needed tourism education and this again was offered through distance learning.

Another innovative aspect that emerged out of collaborations with the tourism industry and the hospitality sector was to take management education to the undergraduate level. A major lacuna in management education in India has been that it is generally highly elitist wherein management is to be taught at the masters' level to produce managers and supervisors. In the case of tourism and hospitality such education is vital at the operations level – particularly for front line operations. This was taken care of in both tourism studies and hospitality education programmes. Similarly, the Katz Model (Katz, 1974) of technical, human and conceptual skills based on the hierarchical positions of managers was also reversed by emphasising on conceptual skills for front line service providers in tourism and hospitality. A prominent outcome of the collaborative approaches was the inclusion of social sensibilities, gender issues, consumer rights, environmental protection and child labour etc. forming part of the curriculum – something extremely relevant for the developing countries. Hence, the development of human resources in these areas was geared towards responsible tourism rather than only an industry – industry approach. I have elsewhere discussed in detail the curriculum debate between vocational and liberal knowledge (K. Kumar, 2006 b).

CONCLUSION

These collaborations in the area of tourism and hospitality, innovated under the ODL at IGNOU have provided a unique model for education, wherein, human resource development is seen “as a means to develop destination hosts to capitalise on development through productive and meaningful involvement” (A. Liu and G. Wall, 2005). In fact, these curriculums went a step ahead of this wherein the learners are trained to respect the environmental concerns, social and cultural authenticity, respect for local customs and the other liberal issues mentioned earlier (K. Kumar, 2006 a). These curriculums also demonstrated that the vocational and liberal streams in education are not antagonistic to each other but are essential components to meet the goals of sustainable and responsible development. They have also proved that open learning and conventional systems are complimentary to each other and the two, by joining hands, can serve the education needs and development goals of the poor and developing countries in a much better way. Of course, the nature and scope of collaborations whether with the industry, NGOs or between the two systems will depend on the nature of the programmes and courses to be launched keeping in view the vocational and knowledge needs of the society.

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