

A Comparative Study on Training/ Professional Development Needs of University Teachers on ODL Pre-Covid and Ongoing Pandemic in India

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Abstract

Education is of utmost importance for social development and political change, regardless of whether it is dispensed through conventional, non-conventional or ODL mode. The Indian ODL system, geared toward this philosophy, is the second largest ODL system in the world, comprising 17 open universities and 110+ dual-mode distance education institutions. The Staff Training and Research Institute of Distance Education (STRIDE) of the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) undertakes training needs assessment (TNA) studies from time to time for addressing the training needs of the ODL faculty in the country, (besides offering a PG Diploma and a Masters in DE as long-term professional development programmes, which at one point of time was offered in about 22 countries, largely supported by the Commonwealth of Learning). Recently, the Covid-19 pandemic forced the education sector to adopt changes in teaching-learning. Even though the adaptation of technologies started in the field of education prior to the pandemic, the educational institutions including ODL institutions had to go through compulsory remote online teaching during this period. It was thought prudent to undertake a TNA of ODL teachers during this pandemic and compare the variations in their training needs, which was conducted in pre-pandemic times. This paper reports the findings of a research focusing on the identification of training needs of teachers/ academics from IGNOU; their preferences on mode of training; and any difference in additional required competency during pre- and ongoing-pandemic. The data collected in January-February 2022 has been compared with the data collected in the pre-pandemic period of 2019, and implications for policy and practice on continuing professional development in ODL are drawn accordingly.

Keywords: Training Needs, Professional Competencies, Open Distance Learning, Covid-19, Continuing Professional Development.

Introduction

This study seeks to identify the training needs of teachers and academics of Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU). This study is aimed at finding out and renewing the skill-set of the experienced teachers and academics of IGNOU.

In the 1970s, the world took cognizance of the potential offered by open and distance learning in advancing the aim of developing human resources. The Division of Distance Education was established by IGNOU in 1986 as a central unit to develop staff development programmes in ODL to meet professional requirements of the staff of IGNOU and eventually to meet the human resource requirements of the open and distance learning systems in India. Later on, the ODL system gained momentum and other dual mode universities came up, and the Directorate of Distance Education started their own staff development programmes across the country in which IGNOU played a crucial role.

In the meantime, with a joint effort of the Asian Development Bank, Commonwealth of Learning (COL) and Ministry of Human Resources Development of Government of India, the Division of Distance Education (DDE) was upgraded as the Staff Training and Research Institute of Distance Education (STRIDE) in 1993. STRIDE emerged as the premiere training and research institute in the field of distance education not only in India but also in South Asia and other Commonwealth Countries. Recognizing DDE, IGNOU's contribution in distance education programme and training activities, the COL conferred 'the Centre of Excellence in Training for Distance Education' award on IGNOU.

This study was undertaken with the belief that a systematic identification of the training requirements of the focused group, namely, 'Teachers and Academics of IGNOU' may help in planning appropriate, demand-based training programmes in the coming years.

Research problem

The education system of our country is presently undergoing a major transformation consequent upon the implementation of the *National Education Policy 2020* and the continuation of Covid-19 pandemic. This has caused a drastic change in the training needs of teachers and academics engaged in the ODL platform. This paper seeks to identify the changes in the demands, needs and preferences of training needs of teachers and academics of IGNOU induced by these changes.

Review of related research

The historical trajectory of research in ODL can be traced back to the 1960s, when the British Open University came into existence. However, the research activities in ODL have picked up their momentum only recently.

Some prominent researchers who have contributed to the literature on the vitality and rising need to look into the training needs analysis of those involved in ODL platforms include Pulist (2016), Gaba and Mishra (2015), Clark, Dobbins and Ladd (1998), and Santosh and Stuart (2013).

Gaba and Mishra (2015) highlighted the advantages of training programmes in general and that of ODL in particular. They pointed out that training programmes are vital for improving the job behaviour of the employees, and hence adopting strategies that call for continuous evaluation are bound to advance the skills of trainees. Pulist (2016) seconded these claims, and further elaborated on the need to ensure that these training programmes be aimed at reaching specific targets. Ladd (1993) observed that involvement of trainees in the planning of training programmes is bound to be beneficial for the participants, and increases the chances for training effectiveness. Santosh and Stuart (2013) support Ladd's claim and added that the involvement of trainees in the planning process of training programmes increases the effectiveness of the programme, with respect to achieving the targets.

Commenting on the distinct needs of the staff involved in ODL modes of learning, Koul (1990) finds that, 'the training needs of the staff involved in ODL are slightly different from that of those involved in conventional forms of teaching. The rapid use of technology and E-learning mediums for the dispersion of knowledge calls for training programmes in the use of multimedia'.

With regard to the question of the approach one should adopt while planning training programmes for those involved in ODL modes, Lama and Menon (2002) found in their study that open and distance learning as a mode should focus on the development of the skills of their staff in varied modes of communication and interactive technologies. Teachers, academics, administrative and other functionaries should be well versed in the usage of multimedia technologies. Koul and Ramanujam (1998) advocated the familiarization with the tools that are required to carry out teaching-learning processes via multimedia, as they can be useful for not just for the academics, administrative and technical staff, teachers and students, but for practically everyone'.

Rosette (1987) indicates the importance of training needs analysis, and claims that TNA proves to be a powerful tool for checking in on the Human Resource Management index of an organization. Advancing one's skills in this fast-paced ever evolving mode of technology is an indication of the advancement of humans as a species and the profession of teaching, with its eternal aim of empowering people and dispensing knowledge, should not hesitate from taking advantage of the by-products of human intelligence. Sharma and Porwal, 2013 claim that the development of higher education is connected to the social and economic development of a nation and ODL serves as a step in the direction of human progress. Needs assessment studies are considered to be very important activity for starting any training programme or academic programme in ODL. Needs assessment study enables a planner to assess the real need of a programme as it determines 'who needs the programme, how great the needs are and what might work to meet the need' (Bansal, 2013).

Clough, (2000), Hjalager and Anderson (2001), Clarke (2003), Koech and Nzulwa (2017) suggest that factors such as age, marital status or education background limit employees from attaining career development, limit lifelong learning opportunities and hinder employee's development. Hence, ensuring that the training programmes are designed keeping in mind the necessity to value work-life balance of the trainees can help reap benefits. This

brings us to the third objective of this study that aims at presenting a suitable time-frame for the training programmes that is in tandem with the comfort of the participants. This is one of the elements that is usually neglected and holds the potential to impact the training of the participants.

Lastly, the literature overwhelmingly calls for the development of skills in the areas associated with the various mediums of technology, as the lack of which can hamper the process of teaching-learning and impact the achievement of the outcomes of these sessions. The review of literature stated above helps derive the objectives of this study.

Research objectives

This exploratory study had the following objectives:

- (i) To identify the training needs of ODL teachers belonging to different categories and the specific skill-set they would like to renew or be introduced to.
- (ii) To find out the preferred duration for future training programmes (which is in accordance with the comfort of the participants and would ensure active participation rather than drain them out).
- (iii) To suggest the arenas that will equip the focused group to keep pace with the demands of the time.

Research questions

- What are the training needs of teachers/academics of IGNOU?
- Which mode of training is preferred?
- Are there any additional requirements regarding competency that have risen in the training needs since the onset of the pandemic?
- What constitutes the future training needs of teachers/academics engaged in ODL platforms?

Significance of the study

The finding of this study can supplement in designing and developing capacity building programmes/activities, workshops/induction/refresher programmes not just for the employees of IGNOU but also for those working in similar capacities in other ODL institutions.

Methods

Research methodology

Since the study is aimed at providing a platform to the respondents to outline their interests in regard to the topics for future training programmes, the questionnaire was made to be of a descriptive nature. The study adopted the descriptive survey method to collect and analyse data through an online questionnaire administered through Google Forms.

Population and sample

The population of the study comprised of all (about 500) university teachers, academics, and all those involved in the teaching-learning process at the Indira Gandhi National Open University. The structured questionnaire was sent to all the population in 2019 (pre-pandemic) to which 89 responded, and to all the population again in 2022 to which 79 responded.

Research instrument/tools

A survey was conducted to find out the opinions of teachers/academics. The data was collected through a structured questionnaire design to obtain feedback from the teachers/academics of the university. A self-developed questionnaire consisting of forty-three (43) questions in pre-pandemic and eighty (80) questions during-pandemic was developed, and content validity established through comments by a few experts in ODL. The semi-

structured questionnaire was on a five-point (Likert) scale. The questionnaire also contained a few open-ended questions/ spaces for the participants to make any additional suggestions.

Data collection

Data collection was carried out through Google form, which was sent to all schools/divisions/centers/ institutes/ units and regional centers of IGNOU. The questionnaire was sent to five hundred (500) participants. A total of eighty-nine (89) responses were received in pre-pandemic and seventy-nine (79) responses were received during the ongoing pandemic.

Results

The data was analyzed using frequencies and percentages. The training areas selected and contents suggested or proposed by the respondents were analyzed and presented in tabular/graphical form. While analyzing the qualitative data, overlapping/ repetition of suggestions were eliminated and the broad training areas/ topics were considered, listed and presented in the paper.

Profile of respondents

Table 1: Gender

Gender	Pre-pandemic		Ongoing pandemic	
	Percentage %	No.	Percentage %	No.
Female	52.81%	52	48.10%	38
Male	47.19%	37	51.90%	41
Grand Total	100%	89	100%	79

The participation of the respondents in the pre-pandemic period was (89), little higher than the ongoing pandemic is (79) (Table 1). The dip in the participation rate in the midst of the pandemic may be the result of the Coronavirus and its after-effects in households, and surroundings and the added burden of discharging duties through online and video conferencing modes.

Table 2: Designation of the respondents

Designation	Pre-pandemic		Ongoing pandemic	
	Percentage %	No.	Percentage %	No.
Assistant professor	28.09%	25	40.51%	32
Assistant Regional Director	34.84%	31	15.19%	12
Associate Professor	14.61%	13	10.13%	8
Deputy Director	5.62%	5	7.595%	6
Professor	4.49%	4	18.99%	15
Regional Director	1.12%	1	5.063%	4
Assistant Director	7.85%	7	2.532%	2
Producer	3.37%	3	0	0
Grand Total	100%	89	100%	79

More responses were received from professors (Table 2) (15% during ongoing pandemic) and assistant professors (40.51%) are more in ongoing pandemic. The responses from assistant regional directors got reduced from 34.84% to 15.19%.

Areas of training

Table 3: Open and distance learning

Theme	Pre-pandemic				Ongoing pandemic			
		F2F	Online	N/A	F2F	Online	N/A	Both
Induction/ Orientation to Open Distance Learning	%	29.76%	8.33%	11.90%	16.46%	10.13%	20.52%	51.90%
	N	25	7	10	13	8	17	31
Support Services in ODL	%	45.00%	20.00%	16.25%	18.99%	13.92%	11.39%	55.70%
	N	36	16	13	15	11	9	44
Design and Development of Self-Learning Materials	%	42.50%	16.25%	12.50%	25.32%	7.59%	17.72%	49.37%
	N	34	13	10	20	6	14	39
Instructional Design in ODL	%	46.84%	18.99%	11.39%	22.78%	10.13%	12.66%	54.43%
	N	37	13	10	18	8	10	43
Curriculum Design in ODL	%	41.98%	18.52%	14.81%	27.85%	8.86%	12.66%	50.63%
	N	34	15	12	22	7	10	40
Course Writing in ODL	%	51.22%	13.41%	13.41%	26.58%	8.86%	15.19%	49.37%
	N	42	11	11	21	7	12	39
Editing of Print SLM	%	51.35%	2.27%	14.86%	26.58%	12.66%	13.92%	46.84%
	N	38	15	11	21	10	11	37
Academic Counselling in ODL	%	45.95%	24.32%	17.57%	17.72%	13.92%	13.92%	54.43%
	N	34	18	13	14	11	11	43
Course Revision	%	54.43%	25.32%	15.19%	22.78%	13.92%	13.92%	49.37%
	N	43	20	12	18	11	11	39
Management of ODL System and Operations	%	60.76%	26.58%	10.13%	24.05%	12.66%	12.66%	50.63%
	N	48	21	8	19	10	10	40
Formative and Summative Assessment in ODL; Authentic Assessment	%	42.50%	27.50%	8.75%	16.46%	11.39%	17.72%	54.43%
	N	34	22	7	13	9	14	43
Quality Assurance in ODL	%	62.96%	23.46%	7.41%	12.66%	18.99%	6.33%	62.03%
	N	51	19	6	10	15	5	49
Course/Programme Evaluation	%	57.50%	22.50%	10.00%	20.25%	13.92%	13.92%	51.90%
	N	46	18	8	16	11	11	41

As per Table 3, the majority of the respondents preferred face-to-face training. The preferences are more or less the same in the pre-and ongoing pandemic for most themes. It is evident from the responses of teachers and academics that face-to-face mode is beneficial to them. The priority areas included: quality assurance, support services, instructional design, academic counselling, formative and summative assessment, programme evaluation, orientation to ODL in that order (though 12 areas have been suggested by the participants).

The following extra responses were received during the ongoing pandemic:

Theme	Training through Online	Training through F2F	Both (Online & F2F)	N/A (not needed)	Total
Question Banks in ODL/OLL	10	11	47	11	79
	12.66%	13.92%	59.49%	13.92%	100%
Right to Information	16	15	38	10	79
	20.25%	18.99%	48.10%	12.66%	100%

The extra contents/themes added in the study included: question bank in ODL/OLL., and Right to Information Act (59.49% and 48.10% preferred training on these themes in both modes respectively).

Table 4: Media and technology (audio/video, teleconferencing)

Theme	Pre-pandemic				Ongoing pandemic			
		F2F	Online	N/A	F2F	Online	N/A	Both
Role of Media in ODL	%	56.10%	28.05%	6.10%	17.72%	16.46%	11.39%	54.43%
	N	46	23	5	14	13	9	43
	%	60.00%	12.94%	10.58%	32.91%	8.86%	8.86%	49.37%

Design and Development of Audio/Video Programmes	N	51	11	9	23	7	7	39
Quality Assurance in technology-enabled learning	%	63.41%	19.51%	8.54%	24.05%	22.78%	3.80%	49.37%
	N	52	16	7	19	18	3	39

Respondents preferred training through the F2F mode on themes related to media and technology in ODL in pre-pandemic times, though almost 50% preferred any of the F2F and online modes during the pandemic (Table 4).

The following extra responses were received during the ongoing pandemic:

Media and technology (A/V, Teleconferencing)	Training through Online	Training through F2F	Both (Online & F2F)	N/A (not needed)	Total
Scripting and Storyboarding for Audio and Video	8	22	42	7	79
	10.13%	27.85%	53.16%	8.86%	100%
Design and Use of Teleconferencing in ODL	6	19	40	14	79
	7.59%	24.05%	50.63%	17.72%	100%
Interactive Radio Counselling	10	18	37	14	79
	12.66%	22.78%	46.84%	17.72%	100%
SWAYAM Prabha	14	20	40	5	79
	17.72%	25.32%	50.63%	6.33%	100%

The extra content/themes added in the study of ongoing pandemic are: scripting and storyboarding for audio and video. 53.16% of respondents preferred training in both online and F2F modes, and 46.84% of respondents stressed on interactive radio counselling.

Table 5: E-learning/ technology-enabled learning

Theme	Pre-pandemic				Ongoing pandemic			
	%	F2F	Online	N/A	F2F	Online	N/A	Both
Design, Development and Delivery of Online Programme on MOODLE	%	74.70%	18.07%	4.82%	31.65%	13.32%	5.06%	49.37%
	N	62	15	4	25	11	4	39
Design and Development of SWAYAM Courses	%	68.67%	26.51%	2.41%	30.38%	15.19%	6.33%	48.10%
	N	57	22	2	24	12	5	38
e-content development	%	66.28%	24.42%	4.65%	27.85%	18.99%	5.06%	48.10%
	N	57	21	4	22	15	4	38
Emerging Trends in ICT for ODL	%	72.09%	19.77%	2.33%	6.33%	18.99%	6.33%	68.35%
	N	62	17	2	5	15	9	54
Student Support Services using Social Media (social technologies and social networks like Facebook etc) and also IGNOU-WEAS	%	54.43%	35.44%	6.33%	25.32%	16.46%	7.59%	50.63%
	N	43	28	5	20	13	6	40
Design and Development of MOOCs	%	75.29%	17.65%	3.53%	30.38%	15.19%	5.06%	49.37%
	N	64	15	3	24	12	4	39
Quality Assurance in Online Programmes	%	66.67%	27.16%	4.94%	26.58%	17.72%	7.59%	48.10%
	N	54	22	4	21	14	6	38
Design and Development of Learning Activities	%	67.09%	20.25%	10.13%	24.05%	16.46%	5.06%	54.43%
	N	53	8	8	19	13	4	43
Personalized/Adaptive Learning	%	66.67%	24.69%	8.64%	22.78%	16.46%	10.13%	50.63%
	N	54	20	7	18	13	8	40
Learning Analytics in ODL/ Online Learning (OLL)	%	67.47%	22.89%	9.64%	26.58%	15.19%	8.86%	49.37%
	N	56	19	8	21	12	7	39
Teaching-Learning Strategies in ODL/ Online Learning (collaborative learning, problem-	%	62.03%	22.78%	12.66%	25.32%	12.66%	11.39%	50.63%
	N	49	18	10	20	10	9	40

solving, project-based learning, scenario-based learning, case study based learning, authentic learning, e-portfolio)								
Virtual Lab in ODL	%	61.73%	28.40%	8.64%	24.05%	21.52%	3.80%	50.63%
	N	50	23	7	19	17	3	40
Open Educational Resources (OER)-Searching and Adapting, Design-Development-Use	%	52.38%	30.95%	8.33%	26.58%	20.25%	2.53%	50.63%
	N	44	26	7	21	16	2	40

Table 5 suggests that the highest number of respondents preferred F2F mode in all the themes, ranging between 52.38% to 75.29% in pre-pandemic times. However, in the ongoing pandemic time, F2F ranged between 26.58% to 31.65% only, though a mix or blended more was preferred by more than half of the respondents. In the pre-pandemic research, higher preference was for Student Support Services using Social-Media (social technologies and social networks like Facebook etc.) and also IGNOU-WEAS (35.44%). However, only 16.46% preferred it in the ongoing pandemic research.

The following extra responses were received during the ongoing pandemic:

E-Learning/ Technology-Enabled Learning	Training through Online	Training through F2F	Both (Online and F2F)	N/A (not needed)	Total
Technology Enabled Learner Support	14	20	40	5	79
	17.72%	25.32%	50.63%	6.33%	100%
Technology Enabled Assessment and Evaluation	14	18	39	8	79
	17.72%	22.78%	49.37%	10.13%	100%
Pedagogy in ODL and Pedagogy of Digital Education; Innovative Pedagogical Practices	12	24	37	6	79
	15.19%	30.38%	46.84%	7.59%	100%
Augmented Reality	15	19	36	9	79
	18.99%	24.05%	45.57%	11.39%	100%
Virtual Reality	16	17	37	9	79
	20.25%	21.52%	46.84%	11.39%	100%
Artificial Intelligence in ODL/Online Learning	17	19	38	5	79
	21.52%	24.05%	48.10%	6.33%	100%
Outcome-Based Learning	13	20	41	5	79
	16.46%	25.32%	51.90%	6.33%	100%
Gamification	14	17	34	14	79
	17.72%	21.52%	43.04%	17.72%	100%
eSLM	15	19	39	6	79
	18.99	24.05	49.37	7.59	100.00
Use of Blogs (individual reflection) and Wikis (collaborative reflection) in ODL/ OLL	14	18	38	9	79
	17.72	22.78	48.10	11.39	100.00
Online Assessment, Examination and Evaluation	17	19	38	5	79
	21.52	24.05	48.10	6.33	100.00
ICT Support for Disabled Learners	14	19	37	9	79
	17.72	24.05	46.84	11.39	100.00

Respondents preferred both online and F2F for all the themes ranging between 50.63% to 46.04% respectively; preference through training online ranged between 15.19% to 21.52%, and preference through F2F ranged between 21.52% to 25.32%.

Table 6: Computer awareness

Theme	Pre-pandemic	Ongoing pandemic
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		F2F	Online	N/A	F2F	Online	N/A	Both
Office Automation System ODLSoft/ SAMARTH and its Use/ Application	%	55.42%	22.89%	19.29%	26.58%	17.72%	7.59%	48.10%
	N	46	19	16	21	14	6	38
Interactive PPTs (power points— print, audio, video)	%	59.52%	22.62%	11.90%	27.85%	13.92%	8.86%	49.37%
	N	50	19	10	22	11	7	39
Database Development and Management; Data Mining	%	56.25%	27.50%	13.75%	21.52%	12.66%	17.72%	48.10%
	N	45	22	11	17	10	14	38
Various Uses of Microsoft Word	%	54.88%	23.17%	19.15%	25.32%	15.19%	11.39%	48.10%
	N	45	19	16	20	12	9	38
Spreadsheet/ Excel for Data Base and Data Analysis	%	53.09%	22.22%	23.46%	27.85%	12.66%	11.39%	48.10%
	N	43	18	19	22	10	9	38

Analysis of Table 6 reveals that respondents preferred F2F training in all the themes (with preference ranging between 53.09% to 59.52% and between 22% to 27%) in pre-pandemic, though during the post-pandemic period both F2F and online modes have been suggested. Computer proficiency is necessary for those who are serving in IGNOU because IGNOU adopted ODL software for office automation, online course, etc.

The following extra responses were received during the ongoing pandemic:
Table 7. Skilling and employability

Theme	Training through Online	Training through F2F	Both (Online & F2F)	N/A (not needed)	Total
National Skills Qualifications Framework (NSQF) and its Allocation	13	20	43	3	79
	16.46%	25.32%	54.43%	3.80%	100%
Soft Skills for ODL	11	17	48	3	79
	13.92%	21.52%	60.76%	3.80%	100%
Training in Teaching Learning	12	20	44	3	79
	15.19%	25.32%	55.70%	3.80%	100%
Digital Marketing	15	15	44	5	79
	18.99%	18.99%	55.70%	6.33%	100%
Twenty-first Century Skills and Identification of Skills and Knowledge Gap	16	16	44	3	79
	20.25%	20.25%	55.70%	3.80%	100%
Building Skills, Employability, and Entrepreneurship(internship and start-up) in ODL/OLL	16	17	43	3	79
	20.25%	21.52%	54.43%	3.80%	100%
Vocational Education and Training	13	18	43	5	79
	16.46%	22.78%	54.43%	6.33%	100%
Linkage with Industry and Community	15	15	44	5	79
	18.99%	18.99%	55.70%	6.33%	100%
Recognition/ Accreditation of Prior Learning	14	15	44	6	79
	17.72%	18.99%	55.70%	7.59%	100%
Placement Services and Alumni Engagement	12	14	47	6	79
	15.19%	17.72%	59.49%	7.59%	100%

Table 7 reveals that 'Skilling and Employability' is the most highly preferred theme, with preference for both F2F and online modes. (NOT CLEAR—ONLY 1-2 SENTENCES SHOULD BE GIVEN AS OUTCOME).

The following extra responses were received during pandemic:
Table 8: Research (discipline and systemic)

Theme	Training through Online	Training through F2F	Both (Online & F2F)	N/A (not needed)	Total
Research and Innovation in Open, Distance and Online Learning (areas, review, gaps, priorities)	11	19	45	4	79
	13.92%	24.05%	56.96%	5.06%	100%
Research Ethics in ODL	13	17	43	6	79
	16.46%	21.52%	54.43%	7.59%	100%
Use of ICT Tools in Research	16	14	45	4	79
	20.25%	17.72%	56.96%	5.06%	100%
Design and Development of Research Proposals	14	19	40	6	79
	17.72%	24.05%	50.63%	7.59%	100%
Research Methodology in ODL	13	18	42	6	79
	16.46%	22.78%	53.16%	7.59%	100%
Quantitative and Qualitative Data Analysis for Research	12	20	43	4	79
	15.19%	25.32%	54.43%	5.06%	100%
Research Report Writing and Publishing in Refereed Journals and OAJ	10	20	46	3	79
	12.66%	25.32%	58.23%	3.80%	100%

Out of the themes referred in Table 8, quantitative and qualitative data analysis for research in both online and face to face was preferred by majority of respondents. Research report writing and publishing in refereed journals and OAJ, and quantitative and qualitative data analysis for research with only 25.37% in F2F mode and the lowest in case use of ICT tools in research (17.72% F2F mode). Preference is given for training through only online, ranged between 12.66% to 20.25%.

The following extra responses were received during the ongoing pandemic:
Table 9: Academic programmes

Theme	Training through Online	Training through F2F	Both (Online & F2F)	N/A (not needed)	Total
Holistic and Multidisciplinary Education/ Programmes/ Courses	13	19	40	7	79
	16.46%	24.05%	50.63%	8.86%	100%
Human Values and Professional Ethics in Education and Training	16	18	41	4	79
	20.25%	22.78%	51.90%	5.06%	100%
Multilingualism, Indian Languages	12	17	40	10	79
	15.19%	21.52%	50.63%	12.66%	100%
Indian Traditional Knowledge (Bhartiya Gyan Parampara)	11	20	41	7	79
	13.92%	25.32%	51.90%	8.86%	100%
STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) Education	12	14	37	16	79
	15.19%	17.72%	46.84%	20.25%	100%
Interdisciplinary Courses	14	20	40	5	79
	17.72%	25.32%	50.63%	6.33%	100%
Internationalisation of Curriculum and Cross-Border Educational Delivery	16	15	43	5	79
	20.25%	18.99%	54.43%	6.33%	100%
Gender sensitization	19	13	39	8	79
	24.05%	16.46%	49.37%	10.13%	100%
Stress Management	17	15	40	7	79
	21.52%	18.99%	50.63%	8.86%	100%
Team Building and Leadership in Workplaces	15	17	38	9	79
	18.99%	21.52%	48.10%	11.39%	100%

The highest preference for training in both online and face to face was in the theme of 'internationalisation of curriculum and cross border educational delivery' (54.43%) and lowest in 'team building and leadership in workplaces' (48.10%). The lowest preference in the training through face to face was on the theme of 'gender

sensitization' (16.46%) and highest is in 'interdisciplinary courses and Indian traditional knowledge' (Bhartiya Gyan Parampara) with 25.32%. Overall analysis of Table 9 reveals that participants preferred training through face to face (20% and above) for six themes, and preferred training through online mode (20% and above) for four themes.

Conclusion and Implications

It is no doubt that the growth of distance and online learning has been exponential over the past decades in the country. IGNOU has been at the forefront of implementation of many reforms given in the National Education Policy-2020, including 'Skilling and employability' and 'technology-enabled blended learning'. The respondents of this survey questionnaire have responded freely and without any hesitation. The inputs provided by them shall be of great help for the training planners, designers and capacity building professionals not only for those of IGNOU but also for those of other open universities.

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