

## **Open and Distance Education in Global Environment: Opportunities for Collaboration**

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Distance education system in India has undergone many stages and phases of evolution before it really reached the stage of what is called open education, ICT-enabled education and global education. During these phases, it has assimilated different aspects of ICT with all applauds and has been able to go hand-in-hand with it transcending the national and regional boundaries. The distance education institutions have now started giving a serious thought to explore the possibility of cross-boarder expansion. The educational needs of the present society are changing very fast. The education is now being seen as an enabling tool for empowerment and all-round development of individuals. It is difficult for an institution to come up to all the educational requirements of the society. It is, therefore, time to collaborate rather than compete. Quality concern becomes a serious issue in such a situation. Consequently, globalization, internationalization, collaboration, networking have become the buzzwords of the day in distance education. In furtherance of this journey, Indira National Open University, INDIA organized an international conference on the theme "Open and Distance Education in Global Environment: Opportunities for Collaboration" under the aegis of International Council for Distance Education. The articles of the renowned educationists presented in the Conference have reserved their place in the volume under review. The volume is a repository of their experiences in the becoming of distance education all these years.

The volume is spread over 32 chapters summed up into four major streams—internationalization are: collaboration and networking; ICT-enabled education; quality assurance; and distance education for development. The canvas of the volume covers the present scenario of open and distance education from the global perspective.

The first part discusses as to how collaboration can be tamed to develop joint curriculum and deliver programmes of wider importance to larger heterogeneous clientele. Globalization is a popular phenomenon that includes the processes of economic integration, exchange of goods and services, and mobility of resources among others. The presence of GATS can be felt at appropriate places and the authors have tried to see distance education as a tradable commodity. The study of possibilities and challenges facing the distance education institutions in the wake of globalization has become imperative.

The chapters in the second part discuss ICT applications in open and distance education. ICT can support designing "learner-centered, engaging, interactive, affordable efficient, easily accessible, flexile, meaningful and facilitated learning environment". Emergence of EduSat networks in India is the latest development in this direction. Success of ICT-enabled support system, however, will depend on the proper alignment and integration of all the role players and functions. The areas like online environment, mobile learning, e-publishing etc. have also been discussed at length.

The issue of quality concerns in distance education form part of the third segment of the book. Every institution has to put quality assurance mechanism in place. Application of ISO 9000 in distance education, utilization of self-instructional material by the learners, and staff development, are the crucial areas discussed here. Fred Lockwood has suggested some parameters for quality assurance. The role of different international agencies involved with quality assurance has also been highlighted. One of the authors has presented a Norwegian Model for quality assurance. Application and reflections of ISO-9000 management system in England in some of the institutions of higher learning attract the attention of the readers.

In the fourth part, the use of distance education methodologies in teaching of science, criminology and food processing etc. have been analyzed. Different roles are of distance education in development at various levels. i.e. faculty development in educational institutions, human resource development in food processing industry and sustainable community development are some of the critical issues which have been discussed at length by the respective authors.

Since the book is a compendium of articles submitted in ICDE International Conference on the theme 'Open and Distance Education in Global Environment: Opportunities for Collaboration', the sub-themes dealt with it have a restricted canvas in consonance with the sub-themes of the conference. The book will prove to be a rich resource of information and will be of immense help to the scholars and researchers in the area of open and distance education the world over.