

Chapter IV

Ethics in the Ambit of Distance Education

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ABSTRACT

In an era when the distance teaching institution, irrespective of their type, namely single mode, dual mode, mixed mode and consortium, is involved in distance education, for the benefit of the aspirants targeted for each programme of study, which are on offer, this chapter discusses the ethics in the ambit of distance education. After citing reasons for adopting ethics in distance education, the chapter discusses about eight spheres of concern for ethics in distance education, namely Student Support Services (Administration, Admission, Eligibility Criteria/Calibre, Academic counselling and Medium of Instruction); Collaboration (Learner Support Centre, How, why they are selected); Credibility (Employability vs. Continuing Education); Duplication of Efforts (Material Production, Launch of Programmes, Course Writing); Provision of intersystem transfer (Lack for interface to aim transfer); Expertise (Academic activity and Administrative activity); and Resources and Research (Who does, How it is done). Genuineness, originality, copyright/patent, Memorandum of understanding kept, and causative agent made predominant are the advantages of facilitating ethics in distance education. The disadvantages of facilitating ethics in distance education are the rules viewed as hindrances, human elements given a preference over the

credibility, and lack of buffer time. Distance education laid in the foundation of ethics, as viewed from the optimistic person, is that it will become more accommodative without diluting the standards. Irrespective of any comments from the critics, for any distance educator, ethics should be the signpost beyond which things should not go wrong at any cost. Ethics coupled with the scientific method of doing things will spin off the effectiveness of quality maintenance.

INTRODUCTION

The education systems globally improved during the mid-1990s, when the services were introduced and adopted information, communication and educational technologies in order to develop teaching and learning processes with an aim of providing world-class or an excellent “on-click” education on demand to the learners. With the growth of the technologies, online delivery of programmes became more popular worldwide. Format of online delivery of programmes through this was quite effective for learners placed geographically at distant places.

Distance education has become one of the most effective, economical, and productive ways of delivering instruction by the corporations, institutions, colleges and universities, when properly and timely used. Historically, distance education has continuously evolved as technology has improved. From the early 1800s to present day, educators have utilized this method of instruction to reach those unable to interact face to face due to various circumstances.

In other words, distance education and its related educational components are a media of teaching and learning that have grown significantly in the past decade. This is indicated by the amount of higher education institutions that offer courses or full degree programs via distance learning methods. According to the National Center for Education Statistics-NCES (1999), the number of degree-granting higher education institutions offering distance education courses increased from 33% in 1995 to 44% in 1997-1998. More specifically, the use of computer-based

technologies has increased from 22% in 1995 to 60% in 1997-1998 and more than 80% in 2000s. The growing dimension and ratio and the rate of increase in the delivery of distance education should be carefully examined under contemporary circumstances.

The Open and Distance Learning System (ODLS) has emerged as an alternative to the number of aspirants of education, specifically higher education that overloads the delivery system of education in the South Asian part as a conventional system. Different distance education theorists like Börje Holmberg, Charles A. Wedemeyer and Michael G. Moore have essentially identified the centrality of the learner in ODL. Otto Peters and Desmond Keegan have been concerned with organizational aspects. The emergence of ODL has thus affected the use of technology to reach mass audience, typology of distance teaching systems, emergence of post-industrial education, learner autonomy and organizational structures. The numbers in ODL have also increased many folds over a short span of 2 decades. The emergence and developments in ODL methodologies have brought certain theoretical and pragmatic approaches to the field. The numbers in ODL have also indicated many faults in applications over a short span of 2 decades. The emergence and developments in ODL methodologies have brought certain theoretical and pragmatic approaches to the field.

Distance education has been a fair option of not only the aspirants of education but also education managers/administrators in the government/private and nongovernment sector. The main reason for this is that education is being considered as

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