

Distance Education and Its Future: An Ethiopian Experience

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Abstract- Distance Education plays an important role in the educational system. With the application of modern technology, its responsibility lies equivalent to the Conventional educational system. In this paper an attempt has been made to describe about Continuing and Distance Education at University of Gondar, Ethiopia. The main purpose of Continuing and Distance Education in University of Gondar is to increase access to education and to reach out the Public at large. The Office for Continuing and Distance Education has been established since providing this education. The Office for Continuing and Distance Education (CDEO) shall place excellence in the pursuit of the University's three-fold mission: education, Research and service to the public. It shall make use of credit and non-credit courses or alternative methods of knowledge transfer to enable students to become more competitive in employment and personal enrichment through the use of innovative technology and quality customer service. Continuing and Distance Education refers to all instructions offered outside the regular full-time program through formal and non-formal means such as evening programs, summer in-service programs, distance education, correspondence and radio programs as well as seminars and workshops to working adults and those who, for various reasons, are not enrolled in the regular programs. The main focus of this paper is to discuss about distance education in the context of International level. For this purpose detailed study has been taken with the verification of the University Legislation Act, consultation with the Deans of Faculties and Heads of Departments where these distance education programs are offering. We have concluded that how this University has participated in the process of Continuing and distance Education to working adults and those who, for various reasons, are not enrolled in the regular programs.

Keywords – CDEO, Distance education, Ethiopia, Amhara, Programs, University

I. INTRODUCTION

Now-a-days, distance education plays an important role in the present educational scenario. With the implementation of modern information technology, distance education has reached its equivalent position with that of conventional educational system. People who could not get regular education and their ambition to fulfill can get through this distance education. One way to say it is 'education for all'. At International level it may not be at encouraging level, but in U.K, India and other places it got its importance. The main purpose of this study is to discuss about distance and continuing education at international level, especially in Ethiopia and particular about university of Gondar. Its activities and its extension, continuing and distance education. For this purpose gathered information with the consultation of different Deans of the departments, University Legislation Act and departments where these programs are offering.

1.1 The University of Gondar, Gondar, Ethiopia:

The University of Gondar (UoG) was officially inaugurated in June 2004. The Gondar college of Medicine & Health Sciences (GCMHS) generally contributed for the establishment of the university. The GCMHS is prominent for training different health professionals for about sixty years. Currently the university consists of one college(College of medicine and health sciences), five faculties (faculty of business and economics, faculty of natural and computational sciences, faculty of social sciences and humanities, faculty of veterinary medicine and faculty of agriculture) and three schools(school of law, school of education and school of engineering).

The UoG is expected to play a leading role in the socioeconomic development of the region and the nation. Although, the university has many different tasks, those which reflect phenomena in the society like education (teaching), research and community service. From 2004 to date, the university has been doing well producing disciplined professionals, conducting researchers and delivering the required services to the community. Currently more than 19000 students are undertaking their tertiary level education under regular, extension and distance education programs in the various disciplines. Post graduate programs in health, medicine, natural and social sciences, business and economics are expanding in recent years. The UoG is providing distance education through different departments. The department of marketing management was established in 1998 E.C (2005 G.C). With the aim of producing qualified marketing professionals to meet the needs of private, government and non-government organizations. The department is also further expanding its activity by offering distance education since 2001 E.C. the department is presently one of the five departments in faculty of business and economics that offers graduate

level teaching in the regular and distance program. The department by recognizing the initiation of the government in capacity building and over all reform program that needs knowledge-based marketing management proposed post graduate program that creates opportunity for the training for teachers assigned at government as well as private universities and organizations that need to use highly trained marketing professionals in order to remain competitive at the local, National and global levels. The department of bio-technology has been launched in 2005 under the faculty of applied natural sciences (now called the faculty of natural and computational sciences) to run under graduate program. The objective of the department is to produce skilled under graduates and post graduates in bio-technology for the rapid development of the country trained man power. Moreover, the department is also geared towards providing professional consultancy to private and public sectors. A master's of science degree in bio-technology is supposed to complete the program within two academic calendars beginning with the first semester of registration unless approval is obtained from the department of bio-technology (AS FULL TIME STUDY), and may require three years to complete for part time students. Summer students require four successive summer trainings if they would be able to complete one semester course during each summer. Standard examinations and grading systems are used for evaluating the student's academic performance. The department of information technology (I.T) was established in 2002 under the faculty of Natural and Computational Sciences. Currently, the department of I.T is educating and training under graduate students in regular, extension and summer programs. Besides, the teaching-learning activity, the department is exercising its best effort to outreach its services to the community. To identify potential research and community service areas and meet the outreaching objective, the department has started M.Sc program in I.T for both regular as well as extension students. The main aim of this program is to produce highly educate and trained graduates in I.T that perfectly fit to the demand in the academia, industry, etc. department of anthropology also offering extension course at post graduate level and also department of economics is offering extension courses at under graduate level. Steps are taking for offering extension program at post graduate level also.

II. PROPOSED STUDY

2.1 Continuing & Distance Education:

The main purpose of Continuing & Distance Education is to increase access to education and to reach out the public at large. The office for continuing & distance education (CDEO) shall place excellence in the pursuit of the universities three-fold mission: education, research and service to the public. It shall make use of credit and non-credit courses or alternative methods of knowledge transfer to enable students to become more competitive in employment and personal enrichment through the use of innovative technology and quality customer service. Continuing and distance education refers to all instructions offered outside the regular full-time program through formal and non-formal means such as evening programs, summer-in service programs, distance education, correspondence and radio programs as well as seminars and workshops to working adults and those who for various reasons are not enrolled in the regular programs.

2.2. Powers And Re Sponsibilities Of The Office For Continuing & Distance Education:

The office for continuing & distance education (CDEO) shall have the duties and responsibilities to:

- To prepare a strategic plan for continuing and distance education of the University by identifying the educational needs of the public and the private sector.
- Make provisions to meet these needs by proposing, in consultation with the appropriate faculty, distance education courses and programs leading to university degrees and diplomas and organizing certificate programs, lectures, seminars and related activities.
- Provide part-time, on-the-job and / or on-the-spot education and facilitate lifelong learning by overcoming barriers of time and distance through the use of appropriate media of communications such as correspondence, internet, interactive video and others,
- Expand services and promote innovative approaches to reach traditionally underserved populations, including adult learners
- Develop collaborative programs with the business community, industry, government agencies and non-profit corporations to enhance economic development and the quality of life
- Increase both the use of technology for sharing data and systems among higher education institutions and other government agencies and the private sector
- Improve the quality of education by tapping the best global academic resources with a view to nurturing problem solving skills and entrepreneurial spirit

III. EXPERIMENT DESIGN AND OUTCOME

Design specialized program of studies specifically tailored to fit the needs of stakeholders of Continuing & Distance education Design guide line for recruitment of academic and support staff for continuing and distance education.

Work on admission policy, on internal and external transfer from/to continuing and distance education credit, non-credit and short-term training program Facilitate the launching of graduate programs of study within continuing and distance education in collaboration with the office for graduate programs. Revise, from time to time, the rate of tuition fee in order to provide quality service at an affordable price and means of revenue generation for the university and develop partnerships both within the University and beyond in order to discharge its duties and responsibilities.

3.1 The organizational structure of CDEO:

The continuing and distance education office shall have appropriate organizational structure which shall be designed by the office of the President.

3.2 Office of Graduate Programs:

The office for graduate programs (OGP), through the established colleges, institutes, schools and faculties offers Programs of study and research leading to the Master of Art's (M.A) , the master of sciences(M.Sc), the master of Law(L.L.M), the doctor of philosophy(PhD) and similar other post graduate degrees as well as programs leading to specialty certificate in M.D or other similar programs.

The G.P may also as conditions permit offer such programs of study and research leading to post graduate and post-doctoral diplomas. The above provision applies to both regular and continuing education programs. This will fit the current tangible need of the country and will ensure that it is responsive and relevant for the changing conditions of the economy. The g.p shall function through department council, faculty, academic commissions and the office for graduate program (CGP).

3.3 Teaching Methods And Materials:

The program teaching and learning includes a variety of instructional strategies to accommodate various student learning styles and provides opportunities that will help students to construct their understanding the concepts and practices of the respective courses involved. The teaching will be inquiry oriented and is aimed at developing students 'greater independence as individual thinkers and as individuals who are capable to work independently and with groups.

Various types of teaching and learning are used in each program. The method may use one or more of the following as deemed appropriate

- Lectures
- Debates and discussions
- Simulations
- Term papers
- Industry visits/community based programs
- Research projects
- Case studies
- Role playing
- Computer lab work

3.4 Assesment Methods:

Based on the nature of the course the students will be evaluated using different assessment methods. This may include, but not limited to the following:

- Tests and examinations
- Student projects
- Student presentation
- Assignments
- Participation in case studies, etc.

IV.CONCLUSION

The national educational policy of Ethiopia states that the need for functional education, to be relevant, practical and acquisition of appropriate skills and the development of competencies as equipment for the individual to live in and

contribute to the development of the society. This notion in mind, the university of Gondar offering many programs for regular as well as continuing and distance education students to make them educate, reduce the illiteracy rate and benefit to the society. To encourage the students , they are giving education on free basis, providing them scholarships, free boarding and lodging facilities, running free reading facilities I.e., computer and library to the students in the campus, well established building infrastructure with very big campuses, well equipped laboratories, different faculties and newly established departments, establishment of university library developed computer center with internet facility (Academic development research center(ADRC)). The University of Gondar will reach its high position amongst the Ethiopian educational system in future.

V. REFERENCES

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