INDIRA GANDHI NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF INTERDISCIPLINARY AND TRANSDISCIPLINARY STUDIES

FEEDBACK ANALYSIS REPORT OF SUBJECT EXPERTS ON "INTEGRATION OF ICT IN ACADEMIC COUNSELLING IN OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING (ODL)"

1.0: Introduction

Subject experts play a vital role in curriculum designing and programme development in open and distance education. Essentially, curriculum designing is a significant component of programme development, and it requires knowledge inputs from subject experts of various disciplines. In view of this, it is prudent to consider the inputs of experts for better planning and execution of academic activities of the School of Studies. The report presents an overview of the feedback provided by the experts regarding the Integration of ICT in academic counselling in Open and Distance Learning (ODL)"

2.0 About the School of Interdisciplinary and Transdisciplinary Studies

The School of Interdisciplinary and Trans-Disciplinary Studies (SOITS) was established to develop academic programmes and courses that address the complex dynamics of multi-faceted social issues and processes. The School houses two disciplines viz. interdisciplinary studies and Environmental Studies. The Programmes offered by the school play an indispensable role in addressing the complex issues that affect individuals, families, and communities, both locally and globally.

The School offers diverse programmes, ranging from certificate to PhD, designed to offer flexible and accessible learning opportunities for students from varied backgrounds and professions. The School offers Ph.D. in Interdisciplinary and Trans-disciplinary Studies (Interdisciplinary Studies) and Ph.D. in Environmental Science (Environmental Science). It offers Masters Programmes such

as M.A. in Philosophy, M. Sc.in Environmental Science, M.A. in Folklore and Culture Studies, M.A. in Environmental and Occupational Health, M.A. in Sustainability Science, M.A. in Environmental Studies, M.A. in Migration and Diaspora, (B.A. General) Philosophy, 4 year under graduate programme. Various PG Diploma Programmes are also offered by the school. These include PG Diploma in Environmental Studies, PG Diploma in Environmental and Occupational Health, PG Diploma in Environmental Management & Law, Post Graduate Diploma in Sustainability Science, Post Graduate Diploma in Migration and Diaspora, Post Graduate Diploma in Folklore and Culture Studies. The School also offers Post Graduate Certificate in Climate Change, Certificate in Solid Waste Management and Appreciation Course on Population and Sustainable Development.

Further, the school is offering several MOOCs under *Swayam* initiative of Ministry of Education (MOE) and online programmes viz. Post Graduate Diploma in Sustainability Science (PGDSSOL) and Post Graduate Diploma in Environmental and Occupational Health (PGDENOHOL) and Master of Arts in Sustainability Science (MASSOL). The faculty of the school is involved in the development and curriculum design of all the programmes and many more programmes are in the planning stage.

The School organises seminars, workshops and conferences to keep abreast with the latest knowledge and know how on contemporary issues. The Alumni network of the School is very rich and the alumni actively participate in the activities of the school. The School's programs, which are multidisciplinary in nature and offer practical experience through fieldwork, internships, and projects that enable our students to apply theoretical knowledge in real-world settings, are centered on the enhancement of employable skills, competencies, and skill development. This helps the School fulfill the mandate of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.

3.0: Methodology

The tool for eliciting the feedback/responses of experts regarding the design of curriculum was questionnaire method. The questionnaire was designed by Centre for Internal Quality Assurance (CIQA), IGNOU and consisted of two broad sections and the last section on suggestions and comments. Section A was on General Information about the expert including Name, Gender, Age Group, Highest Educational Qualification, Institution of working and Number of years of association with IGNOU. Section B comprised of questions on the Use of ICT Tools in Academic Counselling. Section C was on Suggestions and Comments of the experts regarding the use of ICT for academic counselling.

The questionnaire aimed at knowing the responses of the subject experts regarding the use of ICT for academic counselling. As India proposes to build on and carry forward digitalisation of current educational system, it is vital to know the opinion of the subject experts on Recognizing the potential of technology in learning, Further, NEP 2020 emphasizes the integration of digital tools and platforms to create a flexible, inclusive, and learner-centric education system and advocates for the development of digital infrastructure, e-content, and teacher training in online pedagogy.

The questionnaires were sent through email to the members of the School Board, experts of the Expert Committee meetings of various programmes, course writers, editors, counsellors and to all those who are involved in the school activities. In all, 10 experts responded to the questionnaire and participated in the study.

4.0: Feedback of Experts and Analysis

Section 1 was on the General information of the Experts. There were 6 questions in this section. The questions were asked regarding their Name, Age, Gender, Highest Education Qualification, Number of years of association with IGNOU and the Name of the Programme with which the experts were associated.

The experts who participated in the student were both from research and academia field.

There were 4 females and 6 males participating in the study. Most of them were above the age of 50 years and had long teaching and research experience. All the experts had Ph.D. as the Highest Qualification.

These experts were familiar with IGNOU's teaching learning pedagogy and have been associated with IGNOU for more than 5 years. These experts were immensely contributing to various activities of the school particularly in developing curriculum, preparing the course content and conducting counselling of the learners.

The experts participating in the study were associated with Programmes such as Master of Environmental Science (MSCENV), Master of Arts in Philosophy (MAPY), Master of Arts in Sustainability Science (MASS), Master of Arts in Environmental and Occupational Health (MAEOH), Post Graduate Diploma in Waste Management (PGDWAM) and Certificate in Solid Waste Management (CSWM) Programme.

Section 2 was regarding use of ICT in academic counselling.

The section comprised of 7 questions.

When asked about the mode of academic counselling more useful in their subject, 100 % of the respondents regarded Face-to-Face and Online both mode of academic counselling to be more useful in their subject. None of the expert considered solely face to face or online mode to be useful.

Regarding opportunities for interaction and discussion, 70 % experts believed that it provided very good prospects while the 30 % believed that it was useful to some extent only.

When asked about the effectiveness of academic counselling sessions in enhancing learners' subject knowledge and clarifying their doubts, 70 % respondents believed that it was very useful. and 30 % said useful. None of the experts opined that it is not at all useful.

Majority of the experts (60 %) believed ICT integration is very effective in enhancing the teaching-learning process. However, 10% of the experts were neutral with regards to the effectiveness of integration of ICT in teaching learning process.

According to the experts, Web conferencing (Zoom, Teams, etc., Chat platforms (WhatsApp, Telegram, etc.) and Learning Management Systems (LMS) ICT tool(s) is more effective for academic counselling in their subject in ODL. Majority of the experts (80 %) considered web counselling using tools like Zoom, Google meet solely while 50 % of the experts also considered IGNOU's teleconferencing and radio Counselling Services through Gyan Darshan and Gyan Vani respectively also useful in enhancing the knowledge and skills to the learners.

All the experts rated the accessibility and convenience as the key benefits of using ICT in academic counselling in their subject? However, 10% of the experts believed that it also improved two-way communication and is cost effective also along with accessibility and convenience.

Regarding frequency of the ICT-based academic counselling for effective teaching-learning, 50 % of the experts opined that it should be conducted weekly, 20 % monthly and 20 % recommended that the sessions should be conducted everyday. 10 % of the experts believed that ICT Based academic counselling should be conducted occasionally.

Section C: Suggestions for Improvement

When asked about the suggestions for improvement and enhancing the effectiveness of ICT-based academic counselling in ODL, the experts were of the view that the class conducting centres should run properly with all courses. They should promote ICT in ODL. All the experts opined that the digital initiatives of the University play a great role in achieving the expected learning outcomes of the specific courses. The learners should be trained in skills such as making presentations using the latest tools, presenting online, being connected through digital media for knowledge gaining and sharing learning experiences. The learners must be taught to explore and experiment with various digital tools and software relevant to their field of study. They must further engage with online communities and forums where they can participate in discussions, ask questions, and share their knowledge and experiences. Frequent online classes, seminars, development of more user friendly computer interfaces etc must be organised as suggested by the experts. The experts suggested that the academic counselling should be more learner and inclusive for the learners. Multilingual support should be provided for diverse learners. regular surveys should be conducted to assess student satisfaction.

5.0: Conclusion and recommendations

To enhance ICT-based academic counselling in Open and Distance Learning (ODL), institutions should implement AI-driven chatbots, adaptive learning platforms, and multilingual support for personalized guidance. Virtual Reality (VR), webinars, and interactive forums can improve engagement. Mobile apps, WhatsApp, and SMS alerts ensure seamless communication. Learning analytics can track student progress and provide targeted support. Faculty should receive training in ICT tools for effective digital counselling. Strengthening cybersecurity ensures data privacy. Integrating career counselling, virtual internships, and industry partnerships enhances employability. These improvements will make ODL counselling more accessible, engaging, and student-centric. Focus on collaboration with environmental organizations for virtual internships and real-time climate data integration, which will enhance practical learning and make environmental education more interactive, accessible, and impactful. Additionally, GIS-based virtual field trips should be organized from time to time to provide better practical exposure. Class conducting centres should run properly with all courses. They should promote ICT in ODL. Session should be regularly held for the ODL programs and students should be aware more through social media for its use and benefits.

The feedback analysis recommended the following

- The digital skills must be promoted among the learners and other stakeholders.
- AI-driven personalized support systems must be integrated in the teaching learning process.
- There should be a robust digital infrastructure with user-friendly platforms to promote accessibility and engagement.
- The effectiveness of ICT-based academic counselling services must be evaluated regularly using metrics such as student satisfaction, retention rates, and academic performance on weekly basis.
- Feedback analytics may be used to refine ICT tools and services.
- ICT based academic counselling should not be promoted on the cost of and as the replacement of traditional teaching-learning process and teachers.

6.0: Annexure (Enclose Questionnaire format)