Open and Distance Learning (ODL) Policy, 2063

Vision

Creating supplementary/alternative ODL System to benefit with all the possible opportunities for the citizens belonging to diverse need contexts to give access to education and opportunities to acquire formal education and overall personality development especially to the deprived community, women and working people through distance mode.

Objectives

- Expanding full access to school and higher education to learners having diverse and special needs especially of out-of-school children, deprived groups, working people, housewives and so on through open and distance learning system as supplementary to the existing system of education.
- Improving the quality of conventional education through different kinds of support mechanisms and materials by the application of ICT.
- Promoting the life long learning, continuing education and professional development through open and distance learning system by applying mix mode delivery mechanism
- Establish a provision to provide skill-based education through customized courses to cater the needs of labor force seeking employment in the national and international job market
- Creating an avenue for skill certification and accreditation to preserve the traditional skills and customary learning of the tribal and indigenous community.

Statements

Agenda 1: Expanding access to education to learners of diverse needs

- An Open and Distance Learning (ODL) System for both school and higher education will be created to act as alternative to existing conventional education system in order to ensure fuller access of all interested learners belonging to various groups especially poor, women, deprived, marginalized citizens to education.
- Under the ODL system, there will be two separate streams of open education: viz., general and vocational with the provision of separate curriculum to be developed under the National Curriculum Framework for the country. Flexible learning practice will be introduced as a strategy to overcome various barriers to education, such as time, physical and pedagogical etc.

- The ODL system will be institutionalized by the creation of a Semi Autonomous High Level Council with mandates to policy formulation and overall execution at the national level.
- The government will take major role to finance for establishment of the system and collaboration with private, NGOs and other agencies will highly be encouraged to run the system for sustainability.

Agenda 2: Improving quality of conventional education

- A special arrangement will be made to integrate the learning facilities under the ODL system into the conventional system of education in order to create varieties of opportunities for quality education.
- Various programmatic schemes such as application of appropriate media and learner support materials to benefit students of the conventional system; credit transfer system between open and conventional schooling, teacher development programs will be developed and implemented through the distance mode.
- The council will initiate and develop the programs and establish official collaboration with relevant agencies in the public and private sector for implementation and monitoring.
- Initial investment for such supplementary programs will be born by the government. At the same time private sector will be encouraged for large-scale implementation. Possibilities of public private collaboration will be explored and implemented in the execution of the programs.

Agenda 3: Promoting continuing education and professional development

- Under the ODL system, a separate mechanism will be established to create various provisions for life long/continuing education and occupational skill upgrading by targeting to different actors working in various sectors and the community members.
- Different programs in areas like teacher development, afforestation, social awareness, civic education, health education, human rights education, child rights education, environment education will be developed and implemented through distance mode.
- The DEOL Council will coordinate the efforts of various agencies involved in the implementation of programs through distance mode for designing and planning of activities. At the sub-national level all relevant agencies and networks including the Community Learning Centres (CLCs) and the Tele-Centres will be utilized for the purpose of implementing such programs.
- In addition to the government investments in the targeted areas sponsors will be attracted to fund the programs. Further, fees will fund part of the costs in case of the registration based courses. The Council will mobilize all other

possible sources of generating resources including the involvement of private sector.

Agenda 4: Establishing a system of knowledge and skill certification

- Special mechanism will be established under the ODL system for accreditation and certification of the skills in the vocational field and customary learning/knowledge in the general field of education acquired by citizens of diverse communities such as tribal and indigenous communities.
- Appropriate testing, customized remedial/bridging courses and counseling programs will be developed and organized to certify the skills and knowledge at the primary and secondary levels of education.
- A separate board will be created at the national level under the ODL system and the board will be made responsible for developing and organizing the testing, remedial and counseling programs in close coordination with relevant agencies like CTEVT and so on.
- Operational cost will be managed on the basis of cost recovery principle. Institutional linkages and networking will consolidated to utilize resources from various sources.

Implementation Strategies

Curriculum and Learning Material

- Curricula for open education (open schooling and higher education) will be developed within the national framework of curriculum and with the consultation of the Curriculum Development Centre and universities. Besides, curricula for other programs to be run under the ODL system will be developed and implemented by the council.
- Different sets of learning materials will be designed, adopted, reproduced and approved for the implementation by taking the consideration of better experiences at the international level. The materials will be gradually developed in different languages to meet the diverse demands of the clients.
- Different kinds of self learning materials (print, audio and audio visual and multimedia) for the ODL learners will be prepared to use in the classroom setting and to facilitate the independent style of learning.

Institutional Arrangement and Human Resources

- A high level semi-autonomous DEOL Council will be established at the national level with all the legal and functional mandates to act as an apex institution in the field of open and distance learning. The council will stand in a two layers- a) governing body constituted with representation of all kinds of stakeholders and b) executing body dealing with overall implementation affairs.

- Five regional study centers by the administrative region will be created under the council and local level resource centers will be established in selected institutions presently dealing with training, research and education at the local level.
- The council will have own cadre system comprising a pool of professional and management staff at the national and regional level. Initially, the cadres can be selected from those working for universities and MOE system by applying standard selection procedures.
- The ODL system will be promoted with the recognition and affiliation to the aided community schools, institutional schools and other governmental and nongovernmental educational organizations.
- The DEOL council will be responsible and accountable for policy formulation; course and program approval; recognition and affiliation of the ODL institutes; certification/accreditation and implementation of ODL programs of the country.
- A number of existing schools and educational institutions will be identified / registered or affiliated as 'open schools' that will operate in a flexible mode to work as study and support centre. These schools will work as a focal point for the ODL learner support.
- Technical and academic resources of the DEOL division of NCED will be utilized to initiate the preparatory activities for official establishment of the new ODL system. This mode of policy implementation will continue until the Council will be created.

Certification and Accreditation

- A strong certification and accreditation mechanism will be set up by establishing a separate examination board to ensure the quality of ODL programs after the establishment of DEOL council.
- For certification and accreditation purposes, the written, oral, portfolio and practical oriented evaluation system will be applied.
- A system of credit transfer and accreditation will be developed so as to build a link with similar educational system, both nationally and internationally. Moreover, such a system will be developed to tie up with the technical/vocational education system.

Learner Support System

- All kinds of academic support and technical backstopping to the schools and study centers will be provided by DEOL division of NCED through the ETCs at the initial stage of the implementation.
- Pool of experts and full time tutor will be available in central and regional study centers where as the local level study center will be facilitated by part

time tutors. For learner support on/off line discussion between tutor to tutor, tutor to student, and student to student will be extensively used. Besides these, the library facility, counseling, material delivery, student orientation will be provided.

- An effective learner support system will be put in place with face to face meeting of the learner and tutor and by the extensive use of new technologies and available media such as mail; telephone; internet; e-mail; tele conferencing/video conferencing etc.
- The open school system will be sustained by utilizing the local expertise and resources (trainers, teachers, head-teachers or lecturers) as facilitators for the learner support.

Media Application

- All kinds of available mass media and print media will be extensively used for designing and delivery of ODL materials.
- Electronic media should be applied with the use of new technologies such as internet, email, teleconferencing and video conferencing, multimedia and on/off line discussion.
- The provisions of mandatory broadcast of educational materials on all types of Radio, FM and TV channels for a fixed duration will be formulated.
- Separate Educational Radio and TV are to be set up by refurnishing and renovating the existing audio and visual studios of DEOL division of NCED with the collaboration of the international donor agencies.
- Existing TV and Radio channels are to be utilized for delivering the ODL programs until there will be a separate media station/network created under the academy.

Linkage and Networking

- For sustainability of ODL system in the country, institutional linkage and networking with national and international ODL institutions/ organizations such as SACODiL, IGNOU, OU, ICDE and so on will be consolidated and established materials design and delivery and for human resource development.
- The cooperation and collaboration of SACODiL will be sought for preparing ODL curricula and materials to meet the standard set up by it.
- The ODL system will be sustained with collaboration and partnership of NGOs and INGOs.
- Local community involvement for management and supervision; monitoring and follow up will be ensured.

Funding and Budgeting

- A sustainable resource management and funding mechanism will be set up and required provisions are to be made to establish a funding scheme for ODL system of the country.
- The Department of Education will have responsibility of funding support to open schooling and the University Grant Commission (UGC) will be responsible for managing funding support to the institutes of higher education. They are also responsible for channeling the resources, and to provide incentives and scholarships to students under open schooling.
- The government grant will be obtained as sole source of funding for ODL institutes at the initial stage but gradually some special schemes of cost recovery of the resource mobilization- tuition fee, material production; support and grants from NGOs and INGOs will be obtained.
- Realizing the disadvantageous position of the target audience the major portion of the financing will be taken care by the government. At the same time, options will be explored to share costs at the local level. This will take the form of subsidy in the educational materials, scholarships, and other supports.
- The partnership with private agencies, collaboration with non-government organizations and linkages with international institutions will systematically be introduced for self-sustainability of ODL system.
- Private sector and local bodies, NGOs and INGOs will be involved for production and distribution of instructional materials.

Note: *Approved by MoE on Pous 20, 2063 BS.*