

PERCEPTION OF INNOVATION: A SURVEY OF IGNOU LEARNERS

National Centre for Innovation in Distance Education
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Perception of Innovation:
A Survey of IGNOU
Learners (2016)

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INTRODUCTION

1. What is innovation?

Since the beginning of life on this planet, innovations have played an important role in the development and growth of humanity. It has spread its wings in various disciplines, like business, basic science, economics, sociology and technology. The concept of innovation is highly relative depending on the context. Sometimes innovations are confused with related words like creativity, invention, and change. Innovation can be defined in many ways, such as successful implementation of new ideas is an innovation.

The word innovation is derived from the Latin word *innovare*, which means 'renew' or 'alter'. Let us look at some of the well known definitions of innovations.

According to The New Oxford Dictionary of English, 1998, p.942, innovation is defined as “*Making changes to something established by introducing something new*” [1]. This definition is generic in nature and is straightforward.

Innovation is also defined as “the process through which economic and social value is extracted from knowledge through the generation, development, and implementation of ideas to produce new or improved strategies, capabilities, products, services, or processes” [2].

O'Sullivan gives the definition of innovations in view of organizations as “Innovation is the process of making changes, large and small, radical and incremental, to products, processes, and services that results in the introduction of something new for the organization that adds value to customers and contributes to the knowledge store of the organization” [3].

Innovation is the first attempt to carry out a new idea or invention into practice. In simple language we may say that innovation is the successful implementation of creative ideas within an organization or system. In this view, the creativity of an individual is the starting point for innovation. Broadly, an action can be identified as an innovation if it is new and useful to the system; increases the efficiency of the system; is cost effective; and is compatible/adaptable with other similar systems.

2. Qualities of an innovator

Innovators have the capability to make the world a better place to live by taking the world where it is to where it should be.

In this section we explain the common qualities of innovators.

1. **Do things differently:** Innovators do things differently because they perceive things differently, think differently and act differently. For example Steve Jobs inspired the employees of Apple to think differently in order to produce path-breaking products. According to a case study on Innovations at apple Jobs's vision of developing 'insanely great' products has made Apple an icon of innovation [4]. The innovators have the capability of bridging the gap between what the world today is and what it should be by doing things differently. Taking a day to day example you will find them experimenting with food to see how it tastes if it is made differently. Sometimes their conviction to act in a particular way annoys people in the beginning, however at the end people except what they do as innovation.

I awoke, only to find out that the rest of the world was still asleep.— Leonardo da Vinci

2. **Constantly question things:** Innovators have a passion for inquiry. Usually, innovators provoke the world with questions to get what is going under and above the surface. This enables them to get a bird's eye view while also focusing on the tiniest aspects. Such questions also enable them to understand how things really are today viz-a-viz how they might be changed or disrupted. Leonardo da Vinci was always in the quest for continuous learning. Throughout his life Leonardo quested to absorb the world within and outward. As shown in figure 1. Leonardo's to do list is full of questions in the form of a poem [5]. In our day to day life questioning is very important as it enables us to visualize the correct picture and to make it the way it should be.

Like a poem, the whole of which is greater than the sum of its parts, the following Da Vincian "to-do" list evokes the spirit of *Curiosità* and *Connessione*:

Show how clouds form and dissolve,
how water vapor rises from the earth to the air,
how mists form and air thickens,
and why one wave seems more blue than another;
describe the aerial regions,
and the causes of snow and hail,
how water condenses, and hardens into ice,
and how new figures form in the air,
and new leaves on the trees,
and icicles on the stones of cold places....

“Take up one idea. Make that one idea your life – think of it, dream of it, live on that idea. Let the brain, muscles, nerves, every part of your body, be full of that idea, and just leave every other idea alone. This is the way to success, that is way great spiritual giants are produced.”
– Swami Vivekananda

3. Generate ideas: While doing things differently and constantly questioning and continuously learning enables the innovators to generate ideas. Their passion of making the world a better place to live the day-to-day life and to serve humanity also enables them to generate ideas. In the year 2000 Jobs came up with the grand idea that the personal computer should be integrated in such a way that it manages a user's media (audio, video, pictures), and content at one

place like a digital hub. This idea of his was transformed into iPod and iPad.

4. Take risks: Risk is an inherent characteristic of Innovation.

Mostly, the ideas generated by innovators are different from the age old methods. Innovators refuse to accept status quo. They are always in the forefront of taking risk just to accomplish what they wanted to do. Their fear level is far much lower than most people. Risk

“We choose to go to the moon in this decade and do the other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard.” –John F. Kennedy

taking also emerges from their thinking that anything is possible. Facebook is an innovation in the field of social networking done by a young innovator Mark Zuckerberg, Facebook Founder and CEO. The success of facebook relied on some key factors in which the prominent one being making bold decisions.

5. Curious and love to learn new things: Innovators are always curious asking good questions with a desire to learn new things to understand more deeply. They have a passion for inquiry. They listen to every one very carefully and learn the other's perspective and expertise. This enables them to give new insights, connections, possibilities and directions.

6. **Highly creative:** Creativity enables an individual to turn an idea into a successful product, process or service. Innovators have a high level of creativity.
7. **Highly committed to their ideas:** Ideas form the core of innovations. The innovators hold their ideas very dearly. They believe in their ideas. They devotedly pursue these ideas until they are converted into innovations.
8. **Strive for excellence:** The dictionary definition of excellence is the state, quality or condition of excelling; doing something well and with a high degree of proficiency; superiority; first-class. Innovators strive to achieve excellence in their personal and professional life.
9. **Persistent and hard workers:** A lot of people have great ideas, yet they never come to an outcome. Innovation is a combination of ideas and hard work. Without action bright ideas also are not able to see the light of day. Innovators keep on trying. They are well aware that it is not necessary that things work on the first try itself. They tweak, they generate more ideas to make their original idea work but they never stop or leave in between. On risk taking Edison mentions, "I have not failed. I have just found 10,000 ways that won't work."

3. Innovation in Distance Education

Innovations are the backbone of an ODL system overcoming hurdles in context to access equity and quality. We may define innovations in Open and Distance Learning (ODL) as follows:

"Innovation is a process which makes change radical or incremental in a product, process or services provided to the stakeholders of ODL by introducing something new or improved that adds value to the stakeholders of ODL and contributes to the knowledge management of the ODL system."

Categories of innovation in Distance Education

The ODL system is a huge and diverse system that carries out diverse functions. Accordingly, the areas of innovation are also diverse. Broadly, NCIDE, for the documentation and dissemination purpose has categorized these into the following:

- Programme
- Application of Information Communication Technology (ICTO)
- Admission procedures and learner support
- Evaluation methodologies and practices
- Convergence of systems
- Quality management and benchmarking

These categories are explained below:

1. ***Innovative Programme***: A programme forms the core of the Open and Distance Learning (ODL) system and refers to either a certificate, diploma or degree programme. The main component of a programme is the instructional design, which is the special design of the teacher's instructions to the learners (study material) of the ODL system. The instruction is learner-centric instead of teacher-centric and has features that the learner easily understands. Innovations are possible in the design, content and delivery of the programme. To illustrate, the programmes that are considered innovative may contain new content which includes contemporary development issues, special education programmes, promoting Indian culture, constitutional laws, clean environment, etc., among others. Any novelty in the design, content of programme is considered an innovation in this category.
2. ***Innovative application of ICT in delivery mechanism***: The ODL system uses different Information and Communication Technology (ICT) tools to deliver its Programmes to the students. These tools include audio and video CDs, interactive radio, television, teleconferencing, videoconferencing, digital repository and online teaching. Another important ICT tool, the mobile, is showing good promise as a means of instructional delivery to the ODL learner. Any creative intervention that uses ICT in print material production and its distribution to learners is also considered an innovation in this category.
3. ***Innovations in admission procedures and learner support***: The admission procedure to the ODL system involves walk-in-admission, online or through entrance tests. There is much scope of innovation in the area of admissions that would ease the workload of the staff involved. Similarly, the learner support system is overloaded and is slow owing to several factors. The use of ICT tools are needed in student support solutions such as online student registration, online programme delivery, online evaluation of assignments and project reports, online examination, online availability of results. An innovative practice, that is useful and effective; and also has the characteristic of user-friendliness and cost effectiveness, or an innovative application of technology and idea in admission procedures and learner support has been considered as an innovation in this category.
4. ***Innovation in evaluation methodology***: Evaluation of students in ODL system becomes critical since the learner is not present physically in front of teachers/evaluators as in case of traditional teaching/evaluating mode. The learner in ODL system is generally evaluated by providing self assessment questions in the course book itself, questions at the end of each unit, multiple choice questions, projects, assignments, and through term end examination. Any innovative method or practice that contributes to the efficiency of the evaluation system is considered an innovation under this category.

5. ***Innovations supporting convergence of systems:*** Innovations supporting convergence of systems. Convergence of systems is envisioned to ease the flow of students from the ODL system to Conventional system and vice versa. Today in India, although the transfer of students from the conventional system to the ODL system is easy, the reverse is not true. As a result the student of the ODL system faces difficulties. The rules of admission need to be reworked in detail to enable the transfer of students from one system to another with ease. The creation of intelligent solutions to address credit transfers, exemptions, transfers, recognition of prior learning etc., have been considered as innovations under this category.
6. ***Quality management and Benchmarking:*** Quality management plays a key role in developing and maintaining quality in distance education institutes. It deals with the quality of the learning experience and the support services. It helps to ensure the completion rates of studies and diminishes dropout figures and results in satisfied students who may in the future be willing to start new studies. Benchmarking is one form of monitoring and measurement used in quality management. Benchmarking is being highly used in educational organizations to evaluate various aspects of the teaching-learning processes in relation to best practice or innovations. It provides new methods, ideas and tools to improve the effectiveness of the organization. A practice that has markedly improved the quality of the ODL system is considered an innovation under this category.

Parameters of Innovation in Distance Education

The NCIDE identified ten parameters for determining what constitutes an innovation in distance education. These parameters were: i) New, ii) Useful, iii) Increase in efficiency, iv) Cost effective, v) Compatible, vi) Adaptable, vii) Reach viii) Repetitiveness, ix) Overall Impact, and x) Sustainability.

1. ***New:*** The element of novelty should be evident in the innovation.
2. ***Useful:*** The innovation should have proven its usefulness to the end users.
3. ***Increase in efficiency:*** The innovation should have proven to increase the efficiency of the system in which it is implemented.
4. ***Cost effective:*** The innovation should be inexpensive to implement and use.
5. ***Compatible:*** The innovation should be compatible with the existing system.
6. ***Adaptable:*** The innovation should have features that enable its adaptation to other similar systems.
7. ***Reach:*** The innovation should allow easy access for all the users. Even users in the remote areas should be able to have access to it. A wide reach of the innovation is expected.
8. ***Repetitiveness:*** The innovation should enable its repetition and scalability, so that it could be reproduced by independent users and also scaled up to be used by many users.

9. **Overall Impact:** The innovation should have a proven overall impact over the span of a few years on the users in terms of numbers of users and quality of change the innovation has brought about in the users' lives.
10. **Sustainability:** The innovation should be sustained by the system implementing it over a period of time, without any adverse impact.

4. Fostering innovation at IGNOU

The IGNOU is a national University that has not only a pan India reach, but is present in 35 countries. It has a three tiered structure with the headquarters at New Delhi, Regional Centres at 67 locations and Study Centres at 2,667 locations all over India. It has 29 partner institutions for the international students [6]. There are 21 schools, 12 Divisions, 15 Institutes/Centres/Units and 3 Chairs in IGNOU.

The stakeholders in distance education include the learners, teachers, academic staff, and non academic staff of the University. There are about 3 million learners, 810 faculty members and 574 academic staff in this University[6]. There are 33,212 academic counselors [6] who are in direct contact with the learners during counseling sessions.

Considering the huge organizational structure and the number of stakeholders, the task of fostering innovations is not an easy one. However, it also means that there is a need for these stakeholders to work together to make it possible.

The University has established the National Centre for Innovation in Distance Education (NCIDE). The NCIDE is an innovation system, which is a ground for nurturing bright minds whose ideas are expected to revolutionize the ODL system. The aim of the Centre is to develop a culture of constant search for new innovative solutions towards IGNOU's mission of seamless education, cost efficiency and borderless access to quality education. NCIDE promotes, develops and pilots innovations in all aspects of the ODL system and works through the build-operate-transfer (BOT) mechanism. It provides intellectual and technological support to the stakeholders for the growth and development of the ODL system. It acts as a resource centre for prototype development that ensures quality assurance, cost- and learner-related effectiveness, and system efficiency.

The NCIDE encourages innovations in distance education through collaborations within IGNOU and with other institutes in India and abroad. The very first initiative by NCIDE is to promote and encourage innovations in ODL system. Recognising this initiative, a Gold Medal for Innovations has been instituted by IGNOU, to be awarded at the Annual Convocation.

Research studies by NCIDE have indicated that IGNOU needs to foster innovation among its learners as well as the academic staff [7, 8]. The areas of innovation highlighted by these studies are those enumerated by

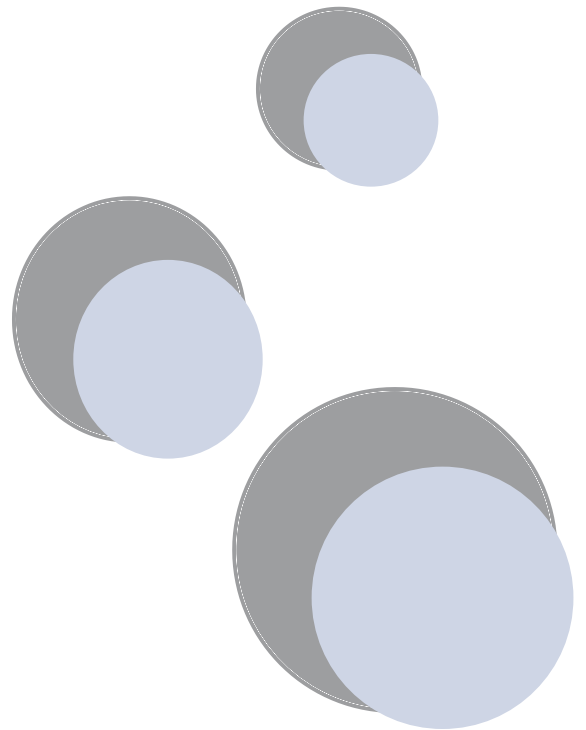
Dr. A.P.J Abdul Kalam in his convocation address at IGNOU in 2005. These areas are:

1. Spirit of inquiry
2. Creativity
3. Technological capabilities
4. Entrepreneurial leadership
5. Moral leadership

According to Dr. Kalam, these five capacities are required to be built through the education process [9]. Together, these innovation capabilities, when instilled in the learner, will be able to take him/her to a level where s/he will be able to contribute constructively to the growth and development of the country.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The main objective of this study was to learn about the perception of innovation among the learners of IGNOU. This study is expected to aid in formulating a suitable environment for fostering the innovative spirit in the learners.



DESIGN OF THE STUDY

1. Sample

This study was carried out on the enrolled learners of IGNOU at the Headquarters in Delhi. The sample size was a total of 100, which comprised graduate learners, post graduate learners, and M.Phil and PhD learners.

2. Methodology

A questionnaire was employed for the study. The questionnaire was structured with a few objective type questions, questions employing the five-point Likert scale, and open ended questions for opinions and suggestions. The questionnaires were distributed to the learners who were participating in the 28th Convocation of IGNOU in Delhi.

3. Data analysis

The data was analysed using appropriate statistical methods using Ms Excel and expressed as percentages.

RESULTS

The data has been analysed and is presented below:

1. Sample:

The questionnaire was distributed to 150 respondents, out of which 100 responses were obtained (n=100). They comprised graduate learners, post graduate learners, and M.Phil and PhD scholars. The respondents for this study were drawn from across 20 disciplines. These included Commerce, Science, Sociology, English, Education, Social Work, Hindi, Public Administration, Political Science, Psychology, Computers, Economics, Library Science, Management, Tourism, Rural Development, French, History, Nursing, and Fine Arts.

2. Learners' definition of innovation

The learners defined their perception of innovation as follows:

Innovation is

- creating something original, unique, different or new process or product.
- improving the existing system by changing the way it has been implemented.
- seeing and doing things differently in a smarter way that showcases one's creativity.
- applying creativity for new ideas for simplifying procedures and practices and make them more effective and user friendly.
- improving inventions by tailoring with local demands to contribute to the development of a society in a sustainable manner, and for the peace and tranquility of the society.

3. Learners' perception of an innovator

- a. A majority of the learners (85 %), agreed, with 46 % strongly agreeing, that innovators do things differently, whereas only one per cent of them disagreed (Fig. 1a).

- b. A majority of the learners (75 %) of the learners agreed (46 % strongly agreed) that the innovators are constantly questioning things whereas about 14 % said that they did not agree (Fig. 1b).

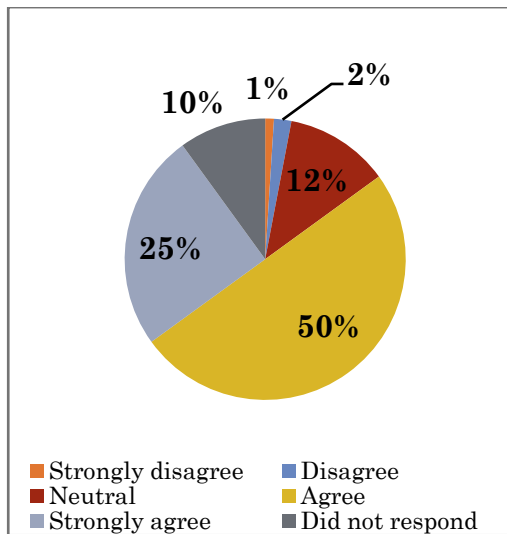


Figure 1a. Graph showing the learners' perception of innovators doing things differently.

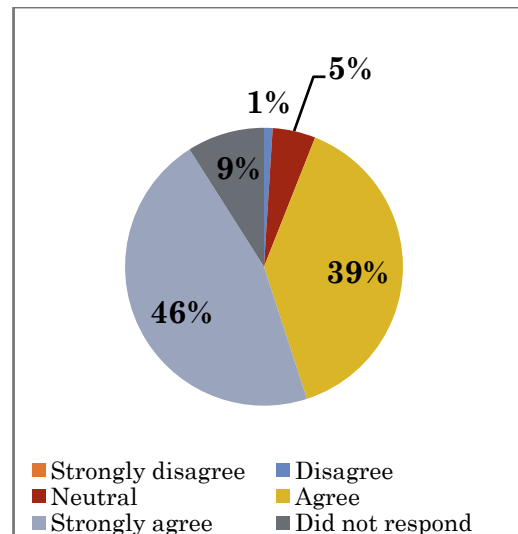


Figure 1b. Graph showing the learners' perception of innovators questioning things.

- c. Eighty six per cent of the learners agreed (42 % strongly agreed) that innovators generated ideas. There was no response from 11 % of the learners on the matter (Fig. 1c).

- d. A majority of the learners (73%) agreed (33 % strongly agreed) that innovators like to take risks (Fig. 1d).

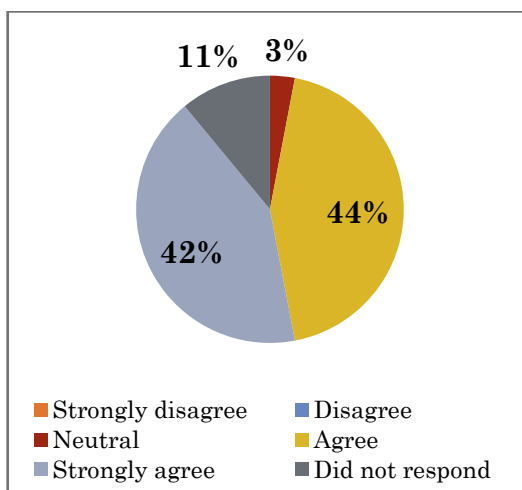


Figure 1c. Graph showing the learners' perception of innovators generating ideas.

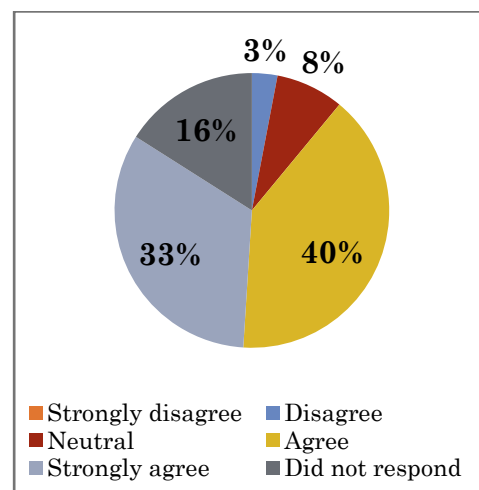


Figure 1d. Graph showing the learners' perception of innovators liking taking risks.

- e. A majority of the learners (84%) agreed (57 % strongly agreed) that innovators are curious and love to learn new things (Fig. 1e).
- f. Seventy five per cent of the learners agreed (41 % strongly agreed) that innovators are highly creative people (Fig. 1f).

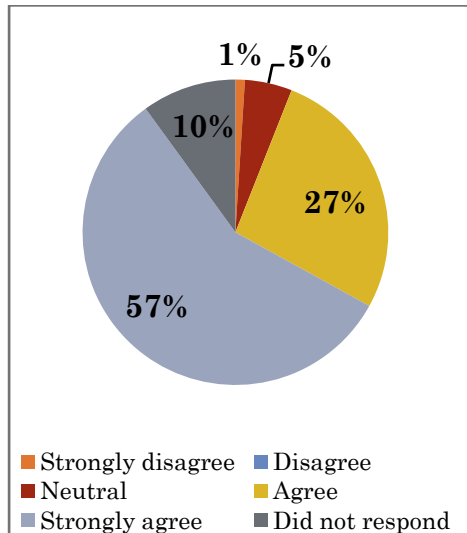


Figure 1e. Graph showing the learners' perception of innovators being curious and love learning new

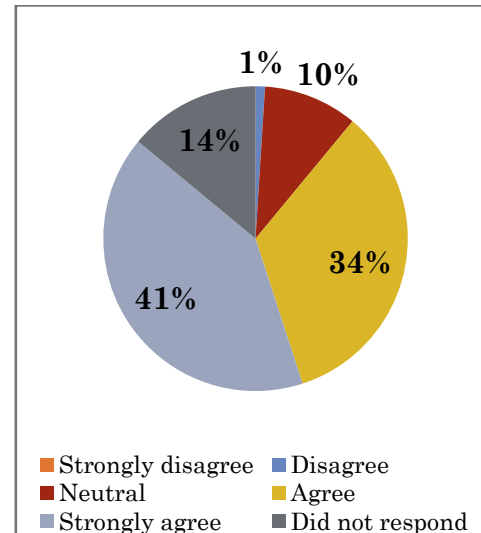


Figure 1f. Graph showing the learners' perception of innovators being highly creative people.

- g. Seventy six per cent of the learners agreed (41 % strongly agreed) that innovators are committed to their ideas (Fig. 1g).
- h. Seventy one per cent of the learners agreed (35 % strongly agreed) that innovators earn from their mistakes (Fig. 1 h).

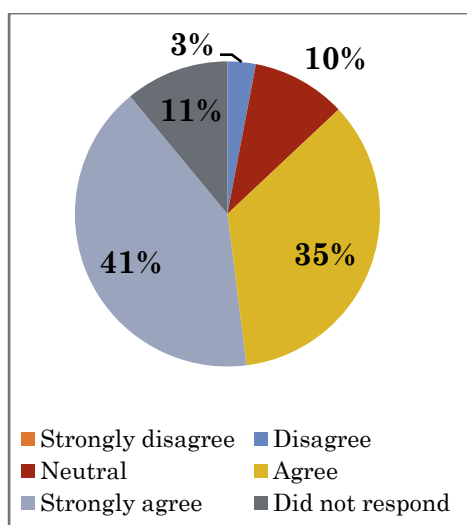


Figure 1g. Graph showing the learners' perception of innovators being committed to their mistakes.

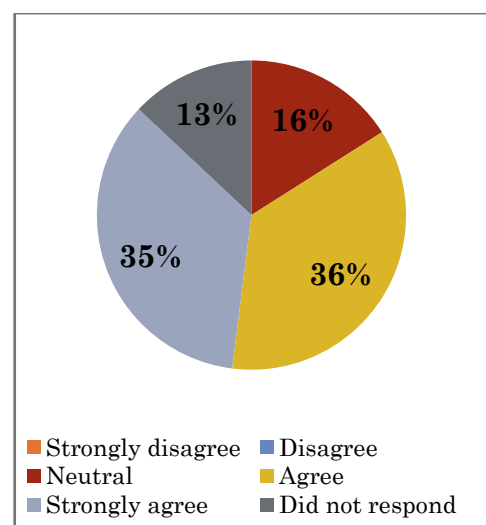


Figure 1h. Graph showing the learners' perception of innovators learning from mistakes.

- i. Seventy eight per cent of the learners agreed (32 % strongly agreed) that innovators strive for excellence (Fig. 1i).
- j. Seventy five per cent of the learners agreed (44 % strongly agreed) that innovators are persistent and hard working (Fig. 1j).

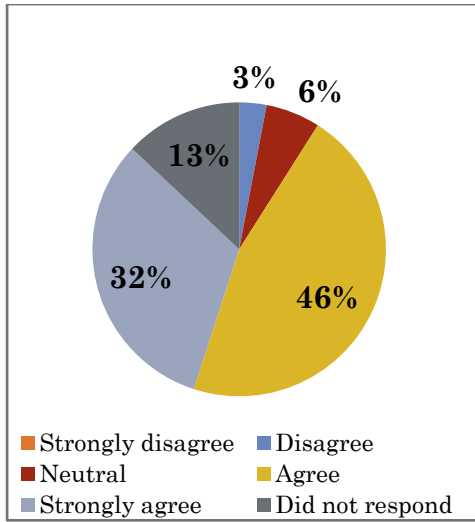


Figure 1i. Graph showing the learners' perception of innovators' habit of striving for excellence.

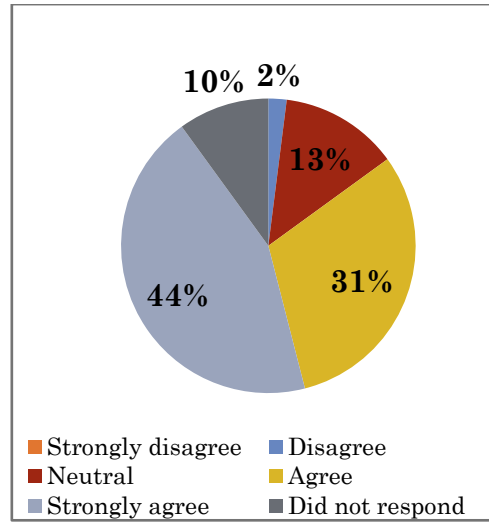


Figure 1j. Graph showing the learners' perception of innovators being persistent and hard working.

4. Rating on their innovativeness

- a. About 44 % of the learners rated themselves highly for doing things differently. An additional 44 % of the learners rated themselves moderately (Fig. 2a).
- b. About 44 % of the learners rated themselves highly for constantly questioning things. About 22 % of the learners rated themselves moderately (Fig. 2b).

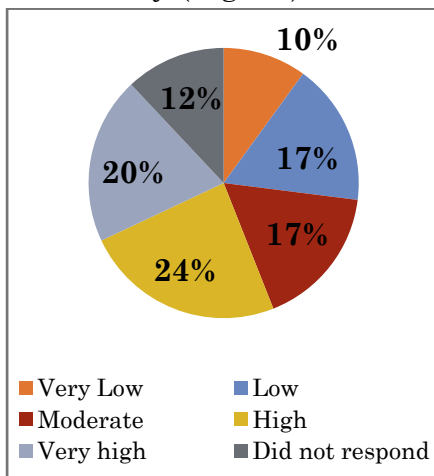


Figure 2a. Graph showing the learners' rating of doing things differently.

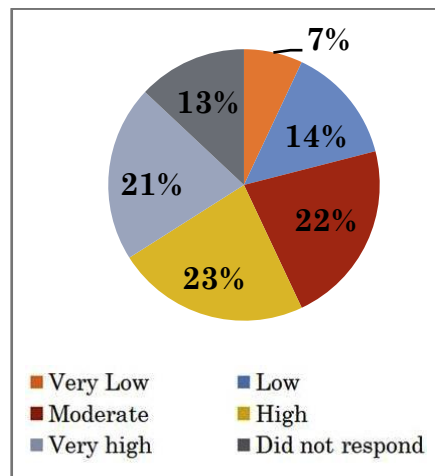


Figure 2b. Graph showing the learners' rating of questioning things.

- c. Around 38 % of the learners rated themselves highly for generating ideas. About 14 % of the learners rated themselves moderately for generating ideas (Fig. 2c).
- d. About 39 % of the learners rated themselves highly for the fact that they took risks (Fig. 2d).

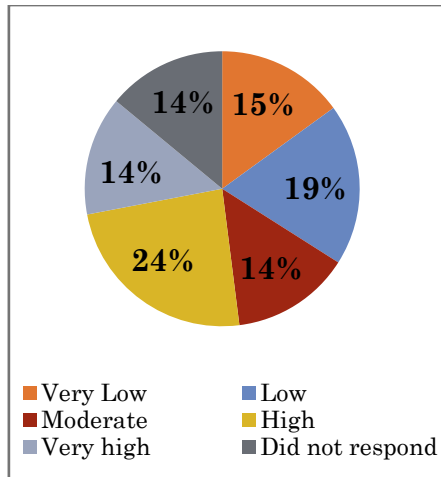


Figure 2c. Graph showing the learners' rating on generating ideas.

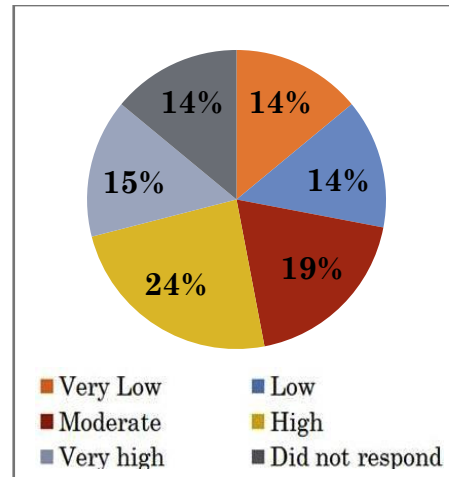


Figure 2d. Graph showing the learners' rating on liking taking risks.

- e. About 52 % of the learners rated themselves highly (36 % rating very highly) for the fact that they loved to learn new things (Fig. 2e).
- f. Around 40 % of the learners rated themselves highly for being creative. About 17 % of the learners rated themselves moderately for being creative (Fig. 2f).

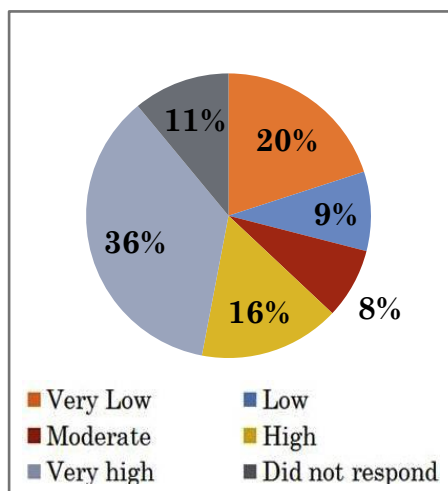


Figure 2e. Graph showing the learners' rating of being curious and love learning new things.

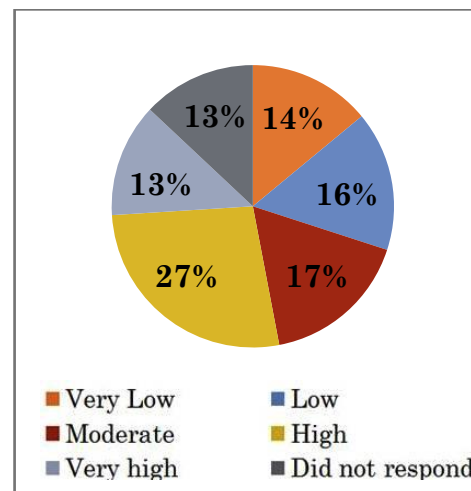


Figure 2f. Graph showing the learners' rating of being highly creative people.

- g. About 44 % of the learners rated themselves highly for being highly committed to their ideas. About 19 % of the learners said they were moderately committed (Fig. 2g).
- h. About 45 % of the learners rated themselves highly for learning from their mistakes (Fig. 2h).

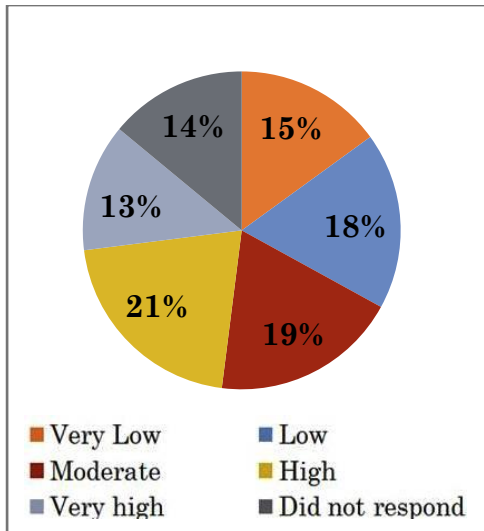


Figure 2g. Graph showing the learners' rating of being committed to their ideas.

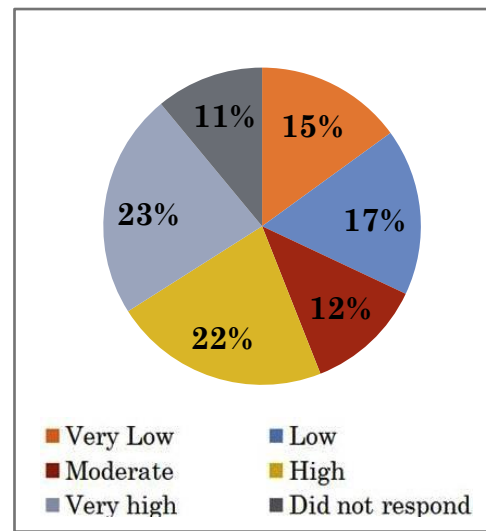


Figure 2h. Graph showing the learners' rating of learning from mistakes.

- i. Forty six per cent of the learners rated themselves highly for the fact that they strive for excellence. About 38 % of the learners rated themselves moderately (Fig. 2i).
- j. Fifty one per cent of the learners rated themselves highly for being persistent and hard working (Fig. 2j).

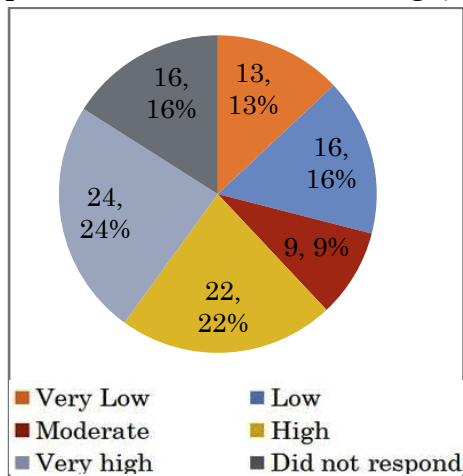


Figure 2i. Graph showing the learners' rating for the habit of striving for excellence.

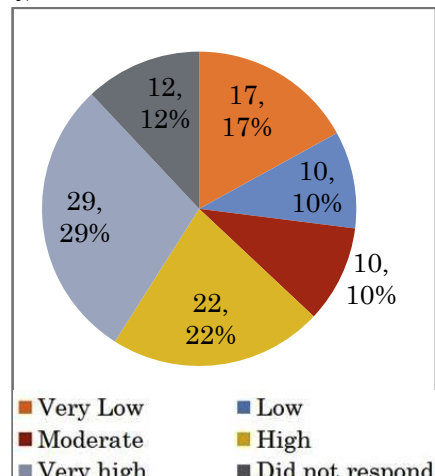


Figure 2j. Graph showing the learners' rating for being persistent and hard working.

5. Innovators' need for a suitable environment

About 33% of the learners said that innovators need a suitable environment whereas 21% disagreed. There was no response from 48 % of the learners.

The learners who said that innovators needed a suitable environment provided their opinion in the elements of a suitable atmosphere for innovation, both at home and work place. These are listed below.

An environment where

- i. talent and hard work is appreciated
- ii. those who take risks are motivated
- iii. someone believes in you
- iv. there is good leadership
- v. there is ease of choosing one's work area
- vi. there is less work pressure
- vii. there are suitable resources, such as
 - a. books
 - b. organized set up
 - c. instruments

The learners who said that innovators did not need any environment opined that:

- i. Innovators can find their ways in difficult conditions also.
- ii. Real innovators could create the (conducive) situation on their own.
- iii. Innovators will innovate under challenging environment.
- iv. Any environment would be suitable with the right attitude.
- v. Passion can lead the innovators to move up the ladder of success.

6. Areas in which the University has been innovative

The learners provided the following response (Table 1.)

- a. Thirty seven per cent of the learners said that IGNOU has not been innovative in the process of admission whereas about 34 % of the learners said that the University has been innovative.
- b. About 44 % of the learners said that IGNOU has not done innovations in the distribution of study materials. About 33 % of the learners said that the University has done innovations.

- c. Almost half of the learners (50%) said that IGNOU has not been innovative in its orientation programmes.
- d. More than half of the learners (54 %) said that IGNOU has not innovated in its counseling sessions.
- e. About 47 % of the learners said that IGNOU has not been innovative in student support for the entire duration of their study.
- f. About 53 % of the learners said that IGNOU has made no innovations in the area of technology support, such as Audio/Video material.
- g. A majority (58 %) of the learners said that IGNOU has negligible innovations in learner support using ICT material, such as emails, discussions etc.

Table 1. Rating of innovations done by IGNOU by the learners.

Sl. No.	Areas	Very low (%)	Low (%)	Average (%)	High (%)	Very high (%)	No response (%)
a.	Admission process	13	17	17	17	17	19
b.	Distribution of study material	8	22	15	23	17	22
c.	Orientation programme	12	15	23	17	11	22
d.	Counseling sessions	13	26	18	10	11	22
e.	Student support for the entire duration of your study	17	14	16	21	10	22
f.	Technology support (e.g. Audio/Video material)	16	19	18	14	12	21
g.	Learning support using ICT (email, discussion forum etc.)	8	18	32	12	10	20

7. Innovation by the University that has been helpful to the learners

The learners provided the following areas in which the University has done innovations that have been helpful to them:

- Study material
 - Study material designed by experts
 - Post Graduate Diploma in Social Work
 - Study materials prepared and presented timely, and feedback adequately
- Student support
 - [Received] advice [on] anything in the university
 - Very good interactive counselling sessions and learning support, and good interpersonal relationships
 - Regular interaction with the facilities (director of the school)
 - Regular notifications of various events through SMS
 - Mobile service at the time of degree distribution has made the process smooth.
- E-services
 - Online information to students individually
 - Admission, examinations details, etc. online
 - Online submission of examination form, fees etc.
 - Online question papers
 - Online study material, e-book stores
- Electronic Media Production Centre, *E-Gyankosh*
- Exemption of course work in [Research degree programmes] for those who have 5 year teaching experience
- RTA Scheme, sign language course

8. Suggestions for the areas in which the University should innovate

The learners provided the following areas in which the University needs to innovate:

- The 'May I help You' service should be improved
- Communication channel should be broadened
 - communication on time
 - increase interaction between faculty & student

- more interactions through videos, visuals etc. with the students
- SMS services or emails for courses or any new things happening in IGNOU
- all information should be updated on the internet
- New technology should be used
 - cloud computing
 - android
- Fee-structure should be less.
- Study material
 - Improvement in the material
 - distribution on time
 - made available online
- Counselling
 - Rather than focussing on theoretical concepts, more emphasis should be on practical things.
- Approval of synopsis and projects on time
- Online submission of progress reports
- Proper grievance management
- The University should work for the partner institutions abroad
 - providing connecting service, orientation, tutorial and others to the learners abroad
- Student friendly environment
- Research work environment
- Creative teaching methods
- Alumni in innovation in teaching and learning

9. Innovation designed by the learners

About 9 % of the learners said that they had done innovations, whereas 12 % said they hadn't done any. About 79 % of the learners did not respond to the question.

Some of the innovations done by the learners are listed below:

- Digital mode of teaching
- Management Information System
- Preparation of Detailed Project Report through SMS or email
- Rural Economy development and new venture creation opportunity through tourism business
- Plant tissue culture media, which is economical and can reach farmers

- a screenplay for a film

10. Learner participation in the innovation activities of the University

About 40 % of the learners said they were willing to participate in the innovation activities of the University. There was no response from the rest of the learners.

The areas in which the learners expressed interest to participate are:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. Advertising | 14. Indo-French bilateral relation |
| 2. Biotechnology | 15. Information Technology |
| 3. Creative design | 16. Innovation |
| 4. Creative teaching | 17. Language Sociology |
| 5. Company accounts | 18. Molecular biology |
| 6. Corporate laws | 19. New teaching methodologies |
| 7. Corporate governance | 20. Nursing |
| 8. Course design | 21. Plant tissue culture |
| 9. Education | 22. Public health |
| 10. Environmental studies | 23. Research and development |
| 11. Financial risk activity | 24. Skill based programmes |
| 12. Genetics | 25. Social science |
| 13. Gerontology | |

The activities the learners were interested in were the following:

- Teaching by
 - Lecture
 - E-learning
 - Developing study materials
 - Developing effective teaching modules
- Promoting IGNOU courses among prospective learners through internet, through SMS, or verbally.
- Research

DISCUSSION

The present study focused on the perception of the IGNOU learners about innovation. The learners were asked about what they thought of innovators. They were also asked to rate themselves as innovators. Further they were asked if innovators needed a suitable environment to carry out their innovation activities. To understand how they see IGNOU as an innovative University, they were asked to list the areas in which they felt the University was being innovative and rate these areas. They were also asked to list any specific innovations by the University that had been of help to them. The learners were asked to suggest areas in which the University could innovate. Finally they were asked to list any innovations they had done, or list an area where they would like to innovate in collaboration with the University.

The results indicated that the learners were well aware of innovation and its elements as evidenced from the remarkable definition of innovation they provided. It was also found that a majority of the learners understood the personality and qualities of an innovator. They agreed that innovators did things differently, were curious people, loved to learn new things, generated ideas, highly creative, took risks, learnt from their mistakes, pushed for excellence, and were hardworking. It can thus be safely concluded that the learners of IGNOU do have a clear perception of innovation and the qualities of innovators.

However, when asked to rate themselves, many of the learners said they were not innovative, as evident from their self-ratings. Less than half (about 40 %) of the learners were found to have qualities of an innovator in their self-ratings. In fact a surprising finding was that many of the learners (about 46 %) did not respond to the question on whether a suitable environment was needed to carry out innovations. However, 33 % of the learners said that a conducive environment was needed for innovators. Interestingly, 21 % of the learners said the innovators were motivated enough to build their own environments for innovation. This latter group of learners indeed seems to have the quality of innovators. These observations call for a careful study, and the development of suitable environment and interventions to include more learners into the innovator ambit.

The learners said that the University, overall, has not been innovative. They did not find any noteworthy innovations in the areas of admission, study material distribution, orientation programme, counseling session, and student support, including technology support and learning support.

There were some innovations listed by the students as being helpful, which included mostly online services. However, the scalability and sustainability of these services need to be looked into and improved. The learners listed many areas in which the University needs to innovate that includes a robust student support system, use of new and upcoming technologies, creative content, international support, and creating an environment for research and innovation. At present the scenario looks dismal. It seems these aspects need a through relook with a strong intent for innovation.

Most of the learners did not seem to have got an opportunity to be innovative in their respective areas of study. A small number (9%), perhaps the research scholars, had however tried to be innovative in their respective fields of study. Clearly, the University needs to work harder in this direction to foster creativity and innovations among its learners.

The learners opted to participate in the innovation activities of the University in the capacity of a teacher, a researcher and also as a promoter of IGNOU courses. They listed 25 diverse subjects in which they were eager to contribute.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From the results of the study and the discussion, it is concluded that there is a strong need for IGNOU to take effective steps to foster creativity and innovation among its learners. The results of the study indicate that the learners are well aware of innovation and a number of them possess the requisite qualities of innovators. Those who are not aware need to be made aware of innovation; and their inherent creativity needs to be suitably nurtured by the University. This also holds true for all those learners who are currently pursuing their studies and also those who are the prospective learners of IGNOU. The learners of this study have clearly asked for a student-friendly environment that supports research and innovation. Furthermore, they are willing to be stakeholders in the University's mission of fostering such an environment.

Recommendations

A student friendly environment should be created at IGNOU through the following interventions:

1. A robust communication system using new and upcoming technology must be established to connect the learners with the teachers, academics, academic counsellors and the administrators in the University.
2. A 'May I help You' service for the students should be in place 24 x 7.
3. Quick updating of information on the IGNOU website should be done.
4. New and upcoming technologies should be used for teaching-learning and administrative purposes.
5. The University should effectively reach out to students abroad.
6. A strong student grievance management should be in place.
7. Creative study material should be developed and made available online
8. Creative teaching methods should be devised. More emphasis should be given on practicals in the counselling sessions.
9. Research work environment should be provided.
10. Alumni should be invited for innovations in teaching and learning.

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**Indira Gandhi National Open University
National Centre for Innovation in Distance Education**



Dear Learner,

As a student of IGNOU, we would like to seek your valuable opinion on innovations to enable us to design suitable solutions to further enhance the quality of education at IGNOU. Please spend a few minutes to fill this questionnaire. Your data will be kept strictly confidential.

Thanking you for your cooperation.

Team NCIDE, IGNOU

Name:

Mr./Ms./Other/_____ Programme:_____

Mobile:_____ Email:_____

1. In your opinion, what is innovation? Please define.

2. In your opinion, what are the qualities of an innovator? (Please tick (✓) only one option out of the five options).

Sl. No.	Quality	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Shortly disagree
a.	Innovators do things differently.					
b.	Innovators are constantly questioning things.					
c.	Innovators generate ideas.					
d.	Innovators take risks.					
e.	Innovators are curious and love to learn new things.					
f.	Innovators are highly creative.					
g.	Innovators are highly committed to their ideas					
h.	Innovators learn from their mistakes.					
i.	Innovators strive for excellence.					
j.	Innovators are persistent and hard workers.					

3. How would you rate yourself as an innovator? (Please tick (√) any one of the opinion in the scale of 1-5. 1 means the lowest and 5 means the highest.

Sl. No.	Quality	1	2	3	4	5
a.	I do things differently.					
b.	I am constantly questioning things.					
c.	I generate ideas.					
d.	I take risks.					
e.	I am curious and love to learn new things.					
f.	I am highly creative.					
g.	I am highly committed to any ideas.					
h.	I learn from my mistakes.					
i.	I strive for excellence.					
j.	I am persistent and hard working.					

4. In your opinion, do the innovators need a suitable environment to express their talents? If so, please mention those situations.

5. In your experience as an IGNOU student, in which of the following areas has the University been innovative in its services towards the students? (Please tick (√) only one option in the scale 1-5; 1 means the lowest and 5 means the highest).

Sl. No.	Areas	1	2	3	4	5
a.	Admission process					
b.	Distribution of study material					
c.	Orientation programme					
d.	Counseling sessions					
e.	Student support for the entire duration of your study					
f.	Technology support (e.g. Audio/Video material)					
g.	Learning support using ICT (email, discussion forum etc.)					

6. If, during your period of study, you have come across any innovation by the University that has been helpful to you, please mention.

7. Please provide your suggestions for the areas in which you think the University should innovate.

8. Have you designed any innovation that you would like to share with us? Please mention.

9. If provided the opportunity, would you like to participate in the innovative activities of the University? If so, specify the area in which you would like to contribute.

Date:

Place:.....

Signature

National Centre for Innovations in Distance Education

The National Centre for Innovations in Distance Education (NCIDE) at the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), Maidan Garhi, New Delhi, is an all embracing facility for promoting, supporting, engineering and disseminating innovations in Open Distance Learning/Education system. It is a ground for nurturing bright and inquisitive minds whose ideas and explorations are expected to revolutionize the Open and Distance Learning (ODL) system and thus provide for transforming India into a learning society.

The goal of the Centre is to develop a culture of continued search for new and innovative solutions to issues and problems on the way of University's mission to offer seamless education across the various levels, achieve cost efficiency in its operations and provide borderless access to quality education and training.

To achieve this goal, NCIDE:

- promotes, develops and pilots innovations in all aspects of the ODL system and operates on the principle of Build-Operate-Transfer (BOT) strategy.
- provides intellectual and technological support to the stakeholders for the growth and development of the ODL system.
- is a resource centre for prototype development that ensures quality assurance, cost- and learner-related effectiveness, and system efficiency.
- encourages innovations in distance education through collaborations within IGNOU and with other institutes in India and abroad.

Activities

- Innovative Learning and Support Solutions
- Research and Development
- Documentation and Dissemination of Innovations in ODL system
- Capacity building
- Collaboration and Networking
- Innovation Management

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