

# Virtual Training Lounge

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## Background

The NCIDE strives to provide innovative solutions to the Open and Distance Learning (ODL) system. The Centre has undertaken training the ODL functionaries as one of its activities. The aim of these training programmes is to nurture creativity and innovation, and orient and prepare them to use the new and emerging technologies, and empower them to use the right technology. To impart these training programmes, the NCIDE has designed and developed an online platform- the Virtual Training Lounge (VTL).

## Need of the Innovation

In today's knowledge society, there is a need to develop the intellectual capability of every person. In the education sector, skill development through periodic training programmes, especially in the new and emerging fields of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), innovation and creativity, is important not only among the teachers and academics, but also among the administrative functionaries. With the ICT tools becoming the mainstay of teaching-learning and training, these ICT tools can be leveraged in various innovative ways to serve the specific needs of teaching-learning and training, not just in the Open and Distance Learning (ODL) system, but also in the conventional system of education.

## Description of the Innovation

The idea of developing the VTL came to us in a faculty meeting way back in 2009-2010. Dr. Jyotsna Dikshit, Dr. O. P. Sharma, Dr. Moumita Das and Ms. Sujata Santosh ideated and conceptualized the VTL in this meeting. At that time there was no such platform where the learning experience of the trainees could be sustained. Subsequently, the VTL was developed using an open source software, Moodle.

The VTL provides training and capacity building of the ODL functionaries through an online platform for interaction to the trainers and trainees. One such novel solution developed at NCIDE is the Virtual Training Lounge (VTL) through a web-based platform.

The objectives of the VTL are to :

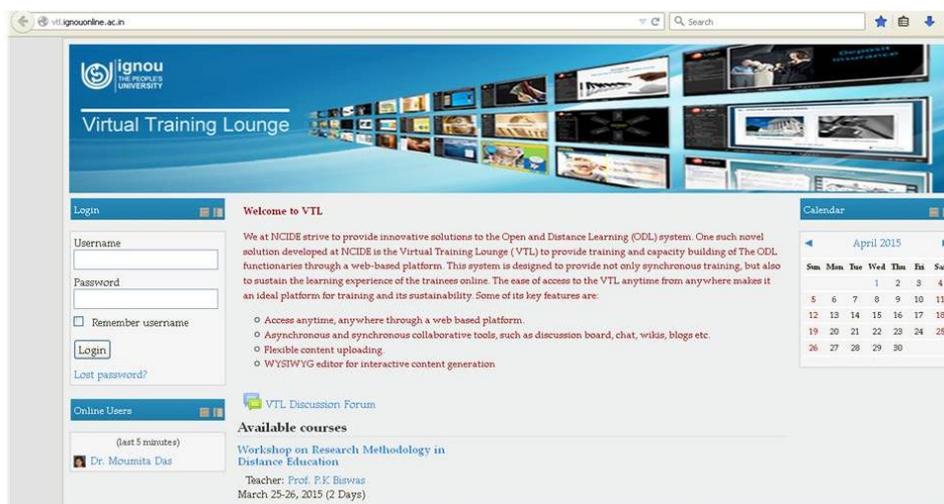
- provide training and capacity development to the IGNOU functionaries through online modes, and
- sustain the learning experience of the trainees online.

**Website :** <http://vtl.ignouonline.ac.in/>

## Innovative Features

The innovativeness of the VTL lies in its concept. A platform for the trainers and the trainees to sustain their teaching-learning experience was lacking at IGNOU, and perhaps the ODL system in India, at the time of designing the VTL. There was thus, a gap area and the VTL bridged this gap. The VTL is designed to provide not only synchronous training, but also to sustain the learning experience of the trainees online. The VTL can be accessed through personal mobile phones as well. The ease of access to the VTL anytime from anywhere makes it an ideal platform for training and its sustainability. Some of its key features are :

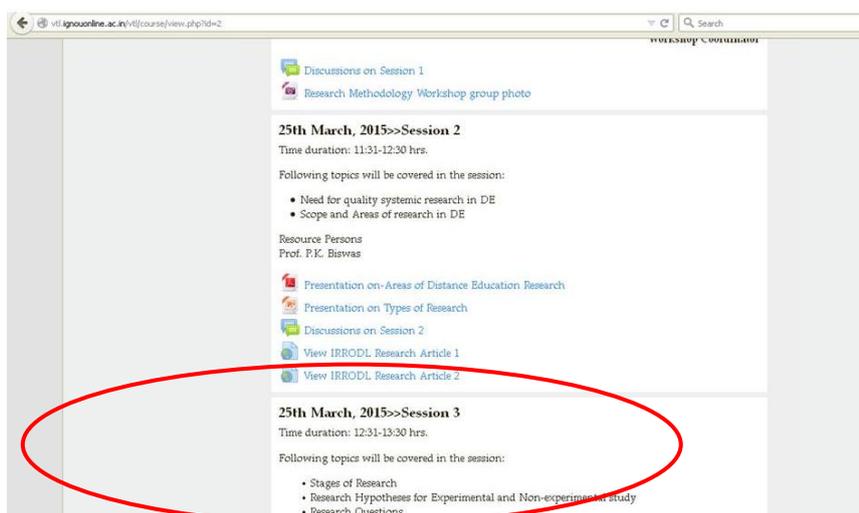
- It can be accessed anytime, anywhere through a web based platform.
- It provides asynchronous and synchronous collaborative tools, such as discussion board, chat, wikis, blogs, etc.
- It is flexible having a provision of content uploading by the trainers.
- WYSIWYG editor has been used for interactive content generation.



**Figure 1 : Interface of the Virtual Training Lounge**

The VTL is designed to facilitate the trainees by providing :

1. quick access,
2. quick upload at all times, where documents in Word, PDF, PPT, photos, etc., can be uploaded easily, and
3. quick response.

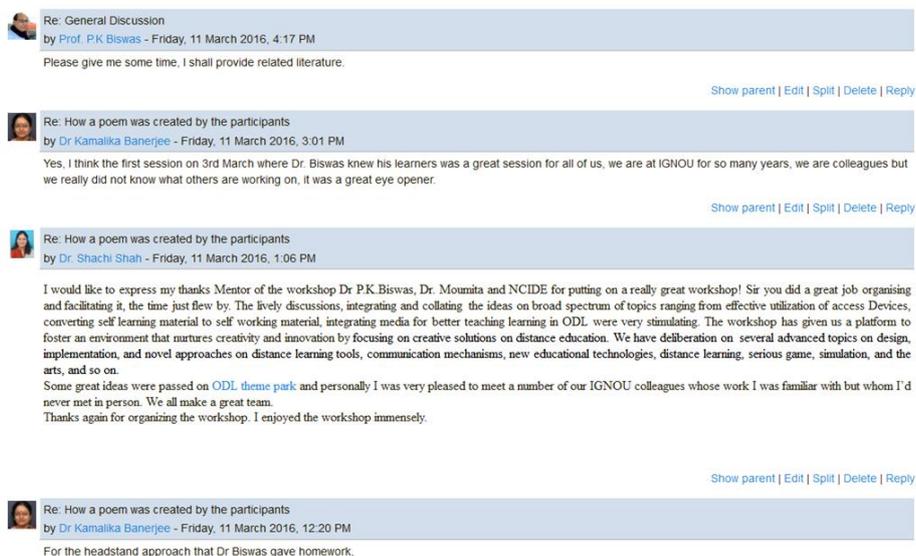


**Figure 2 : Training Resources uploaded on the Virtual Training Lounge Sessions**

## Achievements

The VTL has been successfully used in several training programmes organized by NCIDE. It was used successfully in its workshop organized in 2013, and later on by the Staff Training Research Institute in Distance Education (STRIDE), IGNOU in its Workshop on

*Research Methodology* held on 25-26 March 2015. Another successful workshop was organized by NCIDE and STRIDE on *Creativity and Innovation in ODL* from 9<sup>th</sup> March to 14 March, 2016. The trainers successfully used the VTL and could access from anywhere anytime. They could post their contents and engage in discussion on VTL.



**Figure 3 : A Screenshot of the Discussion Forum of the Virtual Training Lounge showing the Responses of the Participants**

## Applications and Uses of the Innovation

The Virtual Training Lounge has the potential to be an effective tool for training the distance education teachers and staff. The familiar philosophy of distance education, namely accessibility anytime anywhere is being employed in the VTL which was helpful by the users of VTL. Further, the VTL could be accessed through various devices, such as laptops, tablets and mobiles, making it extremely flexible.

## Way Forward

As suggested by the users, some improvements to this innovative training tool needs to be made for its complete functionality. The Virtual Training Lounge can be scaled up to be used in many more workshops by the ODL system in the future. It can be used for follows updated about the developments pertaining to the area of the workshops.

The feedback of the participants of the training programmes using the VTL indicates that the VTL needs to be made more accessible and navigable. For enabling navigation, the design of the VTL needs to be worked upon. For the accessibility part, a more robust IT support is needed from the University so that this training tool can be used by all Schools/Divisions/Centres/Units of the University intending to offer training and capacity development programmes.

## Innovators

**Dr. Oum Prakash Sharma**

**Dr. Jyotsna Dikshit**

**Dr. Moumita Das**

**Dr. Sujata Santosh**

**Period : 2010 onwards**