ES-313

POST GRADUATE DIPLOMA IN DISTANCE EDUCATION

01774

Term-End Examination

June, 2012

ES-313 : LEARNER SUPPORT SERVICES

Time : 3 hours   *Maximum Weightage : 75%*

Note :   (i)   *Attempt all the three questions.*

(ii) *All the three questions carry equal marks.*

1.   Answer *any one* of the following questions in about 1200 words :

(a)   Explain the learner support services in distance education. Discuss how these services facilitate learning at distance?

OR

(b)   Describe the functions or study centres in distance education? Explain how it empowers distance learners.

2.   Answer *any four* of the following in about 300 words each :

(a)   Write the different types of teaching and non-teaching comments in assignments in distance education.

(b)   Differentiate between tutoring in distance education and teaching in the face-to-face situation.

(c)   Distinguish between sympathy and empathy with special reference to distance education.

(d)   "Distance education is a self-directed form of education". Explain why an element of face to face counselling is required in it ? Explain with suitable examples.

(e)   Discuss the functions of a Regional centre in an open learning system.

(f)   Describe the characteristics of learning material used in distance education.

3. The following is an excerpt from an actual assignment response (see-Appendix-1) Write your marginal comments and global comments on the space provided. Award a degree to assignment response on a given print scale' using letter grades A.B.C.D. and E with national correlater as Excellent, Very good, Good, Satisfactory and Unsatisfactory respectively. After finishing the task attach Appendix –1 to your answer script.

Enrolment No : [＿＿＿＿＿]   Grade : [＿＿＿]

APPENDIX I

ES-313 : Support Services

Space for comments   Assignment Response

Answer the following in 900 words

1. **What suggestion you suggest to bring reforms in Open and Distance education particularly with special reference to its delivery strategies.**

    If distance education institutions are to compete effectively, then they must in common with other institution, adopt strategies that will bring their costs down; increase the quality of their services, and improve their responsiveness to customers. This means:

    *   Removing middle management layers. The job of those managers who remain will be to set goals, direct strategy, put work processes into place, set performance levels, monitor and evaluate work, and establish the conditions under which work can be done effectively and efficiently.

    *   Adopting team structures, based around the needs of the 'customers'. We can see this in the Open University, in the development of the Regional Enquiry and Admissions teams. It is crucial that such teams are focused on 'customer' needs and wants.

    *   Establishing clearly what customers need and want. The adoption within the Open University of 'Resource Flow Models' under which external Higher Education Funding Council funding and internal budget setting follows student numbers, while potentially divisive in so far as it encourages internal competition, will at least focus everyone's minds on the need to reflect and satisfy demand.

    *   Empowering front-line staff to respond directly to the customers' (enquirers applicants and students') needs, without having to seek approval from superiors. In distance education institution such as the open University these are the clerks

who execute admission, advisory, and student progress functions, and the (part-time) tutors and counselors. Decisions should be made at the lowest possible level. Thus tutors, for example, might decide whether or not a student can submit an assignment late; and clerks could decided whetheror not a student may be excused residential school. One implication of this is that the distinction between academic decision making and administritive execution would disappear. The decider would always execute. The amount of discretion front-line workers exercise can be reduced by clearly defining the essential service, and using rules and criteria to govern decisions on student progress. Cases will come up which fall outside the rules. Ideally such cases should not be referred up for `special' consideration. Contact staff should be encouraged to use their discretion creatively through the application of principles which encouraged to use their discretion creatively through the application of principles which encapsulate what one is trying to achieve. Major principles might be to protect the academic quality of the awards which students obtain; to meet student needs; to ensure that the institution is fair to its customers; to ensure that the institution does not lose money; and to try to retain customer/student loyalty. In such cases, decisions can be made in the light of principles about outcomes rather than rules governing processess (Stewart 1990:p23).

All tutors counsellors clerks need to be networked to the central computer, with access to information on courses and (appropriate) student records, thus giving them access to the information they need to advise students and take decisions, and the means of recording the results of their actions.

However, there are, as I have pointed out, human costs associated with the adoption of lean approaches, which are not inconsiderable, and which involve `down sizing' through the elimination of middle management tiers, and the use of stress as a mechanism of management control.

Conclusion

In this article I have sought to address the current enthusiasm for post-Fordist approaches to distance education. There are advantages to be gained from lean production and lean supply approaches, and from approaches, which increase the flexibility of the firm. Many of the advantages are economic, and, as educational institutions, from publishers, from in-house likely to see more institutions adopt these approaches. Some of the advantages reflect a rational wish to maintain flexibility in the face of increasingly rapid change.

I have sought to show that lean supply is a particular form of collaboration, in which businesses are integrated in a way that reduces individual business autonomy for the sake of the whole `quasi-business', while remaining in the final analysis easily disbandable, because made up of formally independent bodies. At the present moment I do not perceive any significant growth in lean supply in distance education because the individual institutions remain wedded to autonomy, and I remain skeptical of collaboration between autonomous partnership. I do detect increased use of peripheral staffing, at the expense of the core. I have tried to indicate some of the dangers of this.

I also detect pressures to increase the productivity of knowledge and service workers, through approaches which engender increased stress. I have sought to show that there are human costs to these developments, including job losses, increased insecurity on the part of staff on the periphery, and increased stress for all staff. The drive is on to increase the productivity of knowledge workers. Academics, in common with other professionals, are finding their traditional autonomy circumscribed. Of course, the pressure is not all one way. The institution relies heavily on its knowledge workers, but this dependency is being countered by the development of a powerful ideology which, to cite Bratton (1992: p.33) 'goes beyond a fair day's pay' to mutual commitment and identification with the company's philosophy and values'. Against this perspective, the UK Open University's stress on the agreement of strategic aims (what the University wants to achieve), the adoption of new directions (basically behavioural exhortations encapsulated in slogans such as `from complexity to simplicity' and the drive to achieve `investors in People' status (a commitment to train people to do jobs designed to achieve specific business objectives), takes on new meaning.

Realistically, I am doubtful if we have a choice. If we do not go this way, we may well not survive in an increasingly competitive world. Survival , however, has its price. The degree of cultural change required is immense, and the effect on structures, jobs and employment practices will be significant and not without pain. And-to return to the beginning of this article - while small scale distance education institutions may well match the rather utopian vision of the post -Fordist world put forward by Campion and Renner (1992:p.11), this is not what a post-moderist, lean Open University will look like. But, having said this, there is still room for debate - and I hope that this article will contribute to the discussion about the future organization of the Open University, and of distance education in general.

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ASSESSMENT SHEET

(To be filled in Duplicate)*

Enrolment No. _____   Programme _____   Assessment

Student's Name _____   Course _____   Grade [   ]

Assignment No. _____

Study Centre Code No. _____

Evaluator's Comments

If the space is not sufficient, please use back paper

Please tick ✓ in the relevent box below

CONTENT				STRUCTURE AND PRESENTATION			
Accurate Information	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	Inaccurate Information		Well Planned	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	Inadequately Planned	
Adequate Coverage	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	Inadequate Coverage		Concise	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	Too long or Too short	
Good Conceptual Analysis	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	Poor Conceptual Analysis		Clearly Expressed	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	Not Clearly Expressed	

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