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DISTANCE EDUCATION IN INDIA

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CHAPTER SIX

I. THE EDUCATION SYSTEM IN INDIA

The education system in India is vast and varied. It is a gigantic enterprise with about 755,000 institutions, 3.5 million teachers, 130 million students and an annual expenditure of Rs.30,000 million. The national stock of educated manpower is about 48 million, the annual increment to the stock now being of the order of 3.5 million.

There has been a great deal accomplished since Independence. As pointed out by the Seventh Five Year Plan any number which may be picked up as a parameter to define growth in education will show the magnitude of the quantitative expansion that has taken place. A brief account of the expansion in its different levels is attempted below.

Elementary education

The Constitutional directive for achievement of universalisation of elementary education has not yet been achieved but the progress made so far is significant. The number of institutions, enrolment and teachers at the elementary stage have shown a tremendous increase over the years. It is, in fact, the large increase in population which has depressed percentages and diminished to some extent the impressiveness of the achievements. During 1950-1982*, primary schools recorded an increase of 140 per cent and the middle schools recorded more than a nine fold increase. The coverage of population by schooling facilities has become more or less universal as far as education at the primary stage is concerned, while middle stage facilities have been made available within a walking distance of 3 km to more than three-quarters of the population of the country.

Non-formal part-time education has developed in a large way as an alternative to formal schooling. Under this system children who cannot attend the formal schools because of socio-economic reasons are offered elementary education of the same standard at places and times suited to their needs. Children in the age-group 9-14 (9-11 for the primary level and 11-14 for the middle level) are offered education in non-formal centres in a graded and condensed form. The major thrust of non-formal education is in the nine educationally backward states for which special central assistance is extended by the Ministry of Education. These nine educationally backward States, which among themselves hold more than 80% of the non-enrolled children in the age-group 6-14, are Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Jammu and Kashmir, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal. This central scheme was started in 1979-80.

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* Figures for this section have been drawn from the following sources: A handbook of Educational and Allied Statistics Ministry of Education and Culture, Government of India 1983: Selected Educational Statistics 1981-82 and 1983-84, Ministry of Education and Culture; and draft seventh five year plan.

While the increase in enrolment at the elementary stage during the past three decades has been satisfactory, the problems of stagnation and dropout have more or less overshadowed the progress achieved. In order to enhance enrolment and retention at the elementary stage of education, the Central and State governments have focused attention on overcoming the social and economic barriers which prevent children from continuing their education at least up to the end of the elementary stage. The provision of incentives in primary and middle schools is among the important programmes designed to prevent drop-outs as well as to increase the enrolment of children at the elementary stage.

The total number of primary and middle school teachers has increased substantially during the past three decades. The number of primary school teachers has increased from 538,000 in 1950-51 to 1,389,000 in 1982-83 and middle schools teachers from 85.000 in 1950-51 to 856,000.56 in 1982-83. The average number of teachers per school and the percentage of trained teachers have also increased during the last three decades.

If one looks at the current situation regarding girls education at the elementary stage, the scene appears to be highly disquieting. The main problem of universal elementary education, in fact, is the problem of enrolment of girls. Its magnitude can be assessed from the fact that the girls constitute 80% of the total non-enrolled children in the age group of 6-14. The incidence of wastage and stagnation is high among girls.

The deficiencies at the elementary stage of education are largely a consequence of inadequate investment. Although total outlay on elementary education has increased from Rs.930 million in the First Five Year Plan (1951-56) to Rs.9,050 million in the Sixth Five Year Plan, the percentage share of elementary education has decreased from 56% in the First Five Year Plan to 36% in the Sixth Five Year Plan.

Secondary education

The growth of secondary education since independence has, in fact, been phenomenal. Whereas in 1947, the number of secondary schools in India was only 4,000, in 1960-61 there were 17,257 secondary schools. By the year 1982-83 this number had increased to 52,279. If we add the number of Intermediate and junior colleges which offer courses equivalent to senior secondary stage the total works out to 56,602.

The number of students, which was 700,000 in secondary schools and Intermediate colleges in 1947, has risen to 14,000,000 in 1982-83. The participation rate has increased from 4% to 22%. The number of teachers in Secondary/Senior schools has increased from 93,000 in 1947 to 993,115 in 1982-83.

Although there has been a large expansion of secondary education since independence, 264,860 habitations (27.46%) do not have a secondary school within even 8 km. The Education Commission had recommended a secondary school within a distance of 4 km. According to Fourth All-

India Survey, 57 per cent of the total population does not have a secondary school within that distance.

Out of the total enrolment of 20,211,000 in high schools in 1982-83, girls constitute only 7,048,000 (34.65%). Similarly, out of the total enrolment of 7,685,000 in higher/senior secondary schools under new pattern, girls constitute only 2,471,000 (32.1%).

The percentage of trained teachers in high schools in the country (up to standard X) in 1982-83 was 89.3. Six states, namely, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Sikkim and Mizoram have less than 50 per cent of trained teachers.

There are now 1,700 or so existing higher secondary schools with vocational stream, we have nearly 5,000 vocational institutions with an intake capacity of over 7,000,000 students. These institutions train full-time students through formal institution- based programmes to meet the requirements of various organised sectors of employment. These institutions are: polytechnics, ITIs, junior technical schools, handicrafts schools, industrial technical schools, agricultural Schools, animal husbandry schools, pharmacy Schools, nursing and health visitors schools, commercial training schools, village officers schools, drawing and painting schools and a number of other private organisations. Other than the above mentioned institutions, the agencies/ programmes conducting non-formal vocational courses include: community polytechnics, TRYSEM, Krishi Vigyan Kendras, Nehru Yuvak Kendras, school welfare centre and the National Rural Development Programme.

Higher education

Though education at all levels contributes to national development, higher education in particular assumes particular significance by developing social capabilities among people in terms of higher order knowledge and skills and generating the new knowledge necessary for development and self-reliance. As higher education trains people for a wide variety of increasingly sophisticated and ever-changing capabilities needed in industry, agriculture, administration and services, it is in a sense the "mother profession".

Immediately after Independence there was an unprecedented linear expansion of higher education in the country. In view of the prevailing conditions at that time it was felt that expansion of education, even in purely quantitative terms, would lead to an accelerated growth of the national economy. Consequently, there took place a spectacular growth in the tertiary sector. In the initial phase, qualitative improvements, so essential for the proper growth of education, were neglected to some extent. Simultaneously, an unplanned proliferation of universities and colleges took place. The universities were also not able to withstand pressures for admission and adopted an open door policy.

During the last decade, efforts have been made to regulate the growth of higher education as well as the establishment of new universities

and colleges so as to ensure that higher education grows in response to the needs of society for trained manpower with appropriate levels of professional training, skills and specialisations.

The following points have to be kept in view in the context of growth of higher education since Independence:

(a) enrolment at the level of higher education as a proportion of the relevant age-cohort is hardly adequate in spite of the explosion in numbers;

(b) although there is a need to regulate expansion in view of the limitation of resources, it is not easy to deny expansion altogether, as weaker sections of society have looked to higher education as a means for social and economic mobility; and

(c) the demand for education should not be judged purely from the point of view of the labour market, but due consideration should also be given to the social, cultural and humanistic aspects of education.

Between 1951 and 1985 the number of universities and institutions deemed to be universities increased from 22 to 140. Similarly the number of colleges has gone up from 695 to 5,482 and the number of students enrolled has gone up from 174,000 to 3,538,000. In spite of this increase, the proportion of tertiary level students to the total population in the age group 17-23 is only 4.8% which compares very unfavourably with some Asian countries like the Philippines (25), South Korea (18) and Japan (30) as well as with USA (55) and USSR (18). These figures show that higher education in India lags far behind the above countries, some of which are in a comparable state of industrialisation. 87% of the secondary school leavers are in our country enrol in higher education. With the expansion of the school system, the number of students joining higher education is increasing rapidly.

Even conservative estimates for 2000 AD indicate that enrolment in higher education is expected to double, to roughly six and a half million students. Other estimates, strongly reasoned, suggest that enrolment will quadruple in the next twenty years, as it did in the last twenty years. It is clear that we will face a growing crisis unless the present problems are adequately tackled.

Another dimension is regional disparities in enrolment. The variations in enrolment per 100,000 of population are very large. It varies from 61 in Arunachal Pradesh to as high as 5,366 for Chandigarh, the all India average being 400 per 100,000 of population.

Resource needs of higher education have undergone a tremendous change, owing to the knowledge explosion, and introduction of new and sophisticated technology in the teaching-learning process and in research. The picture of resources actually available to higher education is indeed sad; per student per annum public expenditure declined in 1975-76 to Rs.3664/- from Rs.4011/- in 1950-51 in the case

of universities and institutions of higher education; at constant prices in the case of general colleges, the decrease was from Rs.486/- p.a. to RS.330/-. Even for professional courses, where high inputs are an imperative for quality education, per student resource allocation has been reduced to half of what it was in 1950-51.

The problems which affect the proper development of higher education and its quality as well as the role played by the UGC in determination and coordination of standards in Higher Education are categorised by the Ministry of Education, Government of India as follows:

(a) Planning, administration and resources
- lack of proper planning
- rigid and centralised administration
- poor internal efficiency of the system
- autonomy and accountability of institutions
- lack of coordination between different agencies
- lack of resources and defective procedures of funding
- inadequate measures to reduce inequities in the system

(b) Curricula, methodologies, academic autonomy and social concern
- rigid and centralised curricula without much social relevance or concern
- outdated methodologies of teaching
- external examination system leading to malpractices
- poor educational inputs

(c) Teachers
- their recruitment and opportunities for orientation, professional and career development
- poor living and working conditions
- poor work ethos and professionalism

(d) Exogenous factors
- politicisation of campuses
- place of education in the total socio-economic structure
- declining role of community

(e) Role of University Grants Commission
- UGC's role in determination and coordination of standards
- inadequate resources with UGC and lack of responses from State Governments
- lack of planning and monitoring system in UGC.

Vocational and technical education

Vocational and technical education has been defined as a comprehensive term embracing those aspects of the educational process involving, in addition to general education, the study of technologies and related sciences and the acquisition of practical skills, attitudes, understanding and knowledge relating to occupations in the various sectors of economic and social life. Traditionally, vocational

education has been understood as the education designed to prepare skilled and semi-skilled personnel, junior and middle level personnel and semi-professionals for one or more groups of occupations, trades or jobs. Vocational education is usually provided at the upper secondary level and includes general education, practical training for the development of skills required for the chosen occupation and related theory. The proportion of each of these components may vary considerably but the emphasis is usually on practical training.

Out of 22 States and 9 Union Territories in India, the 10 + 2 pattern of education has been introduced in 20 States and all the Union Territories. A vocationalisation programme has been introduced in 10 states (with the addition of U.P. in 1985-86) and 4 Union Territories and courses have been started in nearly 1,700 schools and junior colleges with a total enrolment of 60,000 students every year. At present, the states have organised vocational courses in six/seven categories with certain similarities of pattern. The categories include agriculture, business and commerce, engineering and technology, health and paramedical services, home sciences, humanities.

In 1947, there were only 53 polytechnics conducting diploma courses with a total intake of 3,700 students, and an output of about 1,500 per year. The corresponding figures in 1966 became 284 polytechnics with an intake of about 49,000 and output of approximately 23,500.

In 1968 due to industrial recession, admissions capacity were restricted to 37,000 students, with only 27,000 places actually filled. The intake was slowly restored to its original position by 1975-76 and continued more or less unaltered till the beginning of 1980s when new polytechnics were opened. There are now 410 recognised polytechnics, with another 105 in the private sector, and an annual intake of about 60,000 students (or 75,000 including the private institutions) and an output of more than 35,000 diploma holders every year.

Similarly there were only 39 degree level institutes with an intake of about 2,940 students in 1947. By 1965-66 the intake was about 24,000 in 137 institutes, reduced to about 18,000 in 1968-69 with an actual intake of 15,400. The trend set during the 1970s underwent a significant change during the eighties the with admission capacity in 156 degree level colleges increased to about 35,000 students. Including the new private institutions, the number of colleges offering degree programmes is 200 and intake is more than 45,000 students. Starting from scratch in 1947, 74 institutions today offer post-graduate programmes to about 6,000 scholars per year and by 1981 63 institutions were admitting 500 scholars to doctoral studies every year.

The average number of degree holders and technical personnel per thousand population is 3.2. The states which are far below the norm are Andhra (2.51), Bihar (2.29), Meghalaya (2.38), Nagaland (2.45), Orissa (2.22), Arunachal Pradesh (2.63), Dara and Nagar Haveli (1.79) and Lakshadweep (0.64). At the other end are Chandigarh (65.48), Delhi

(34.23), Andaman and Nocobar (10.67), Kerala (6.27), Maharashtra (5.51), and Punjab (5.13).

The resources for technical education come both from central and state sectors. The IITs receive funding from the centre, RECs are a shared responsibility and state engineering colleges get little central funding. Polytechnics are the responsibility of the states.

The data available indicate that the central allocation for technical education as a proportion of the total educational allocation was 8.14% in fourth plan, 6.66% in the sixth plan and 4.1% in the seventh.

Adult education

The significance of adult education as an instrument of developing the human resources potential of the country, arousing community consciousness and community participation for bringing about social change and development was recognised by the policy-makers and planners of independent India. A number of programmes were started after Independence to eradicate illiteracy among adults. Some of the important ones were social education, Gram Shikshan Mohim, farmer's functional literacy project, non-formal education, and polyvalent adult education centres

In 1978, a comprehensive National Adult Education Programme for the age group 15-35 was launched.

At present, the Adult Education Programme is being implemented largely through the following schemes:

1. Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Rural Functional Literacy Projects;

2. Central Scheme of Assistance to Voluntary Agencies working in the field of Adult Education;

3. The State Adult Education Programme in the State Plan;

4. Shramik Vidyapeeths for industrial workers and their families for which a hundred per cent central assistance is provided.

5. Scheme of financial assistance provided by the UGC to Universities and Colleges to organise adult education programmes and establish centres of Adult and Continuing Education in Universities.

Adult education programmes receive technical support from the National Resource Centre (Directorate of Adult Education), and the State Resource Centres where need-based and functional teaching-learning material on a wide variety of subjects are being prepared for adult learners. The State Resource Centres also print wall posters and magazines for the neo-literates. Regular training is provided to the field functionaries by the Resource Centres.

Considering the slow growth of literacy in the last three decades, from 16.67 per cent in 1951, 24.02 per cent in 1961, 29.45 per cent in 1971 to 36.23 per cent in 1981, while it may be difficult to envisage that an adult education programme could make any demonstrable impact in accelerating the rate of growth during the next decade, it has to be appreciated that the consequences of not placing adequate emphasis on universal literacy or ignoring the importance of adult education would entail very high social costs which the nation can ill afford to bear. It has been estimated that the total illiterate population of the world in the year 2000 AD will be 954 millions. More than 500 million of these illiterates are expected to be in India. According to the World Bank estimates, India will have 54.3 per cent of the world's illiterate population in the age group 15-19. This indicates the magnitude of the task ahead.

II. DEVELOPMENT OF DISTANCE EDUCATION

The background

The roots of distance education in India are not very deep. The goals of education in pre-British India were limited and restrictive in nature. Education was a privilege of only a few social classes and groups. Society was highly inegalitarian and stratified and this was reflected in education with disparities based on caste, sex, ethnicity and place of residence were.

Education was not related to the socio-economic development of the society. Its broad aims were preservation of ancient heritage and culture and training the upper castes in social and religious duties. It used a classical language, which was not the spoken language of the population. Elitism, thus, was the dominant future of the traditional system of education in India.

During British rule the objects, functions and purpose of education were different, but they too were restrictive and narrow. Education aimed to train personnel for administration, and develop a small class of educated persons by exposing them to the literature, science and philosophy of the West.

Equalising opportunities and democratising education were not the objectives. Communication technology was available for the British but it was not used for spreading education.

The system of education promoted and furthered in pre-independent India broadly continued in independent India. The University Grants Commission highlighted the major weaknesses as follows:

* It still continues to be dominated by models and value systems adopted during the colonial regime. For instance, it lays greater emphasis on narrow individualism, unhealthy competition to the neglect of social goods, verbal fluency (especially in English), and mere acquisition of information, while it neglects social objectives, co-operation, manual work, training in skills and building up of character...

* The system maintains a set of double standards. A small minority of educational institutions at all levels is of good quality and compares favourably with those in developed countries. But access to them is selective and is mostly availed of by the top social groups...

* Even in quantitative terms, it is mainly the upper and middle classes that are the beneficiaries of this system...

The major failures are described by 'Citizens for Democracy' in their 'Policy Frame for the Development of Education 1978-87'

(1) the failure to transform the existing structure of formal education so as to make it elastic, dynamic, and supportive of the maximum possible freedom to schools, teachers and students to experiment and innovate;

(2) the failure to develop large-scale and effective programmes of non-formal education at all stages;

(3) neglect of micro-level living cells of education (i.e. the millions of learning groups where action and the reaction continually takes place between the teachers and learners or between the learners themselves), many of which have become diseased or even dead;

(4) failure to orient the educational system to the needs and interests of the common man and neglect of elementary and adult education;

(5) over-emphasis on secondary and higher education and on the educational needs and demands of the upper and middle classes;

(6) failure to take the hard decisions, both political and academic; without which a radical reform of secondary and higher education is not possible;

(7) failure to generate a strong and nationwide movement for educational reform and to sustain it over the years, both within and without the educational system;

(8) failure to develop the social and political forces that can help the people to come into their own;

(9) failure to launch a programme of simultaneous and complementary social and educational transformation.

It is in this context that the idea of distance education began to emerge.

A. Distance Education at University Level

The start of university correspondence institutes

At one of the conferences of Vice-Chancellors of Universities jointly convened by the Ministry of Education and Culture and the University Grants Commission the Chairman of the University Grants Commission posed the following questions:

(i) Should the formal systems of education, which are often wrapped up in their 'neutrality and intransigence' have a monopoly for imparting knowledge or should there be alternative delivery systems like distance-learning comprising correspondence courses, radio and television programmes, part-time evening institutes and Open Universities?

(ii) Should education be fitted into a strait-jacket and constrained to follow a single track and a set pattern or should there be enough flexibility, choices and alternatives to enable the student to move horizontally as well as vertically?

(iii) Should the society become a hierarchy, in which those who are educated do not soil their hands and others who do manual work have no opportunity for receiving the benefits of education?

(iv) Should the centre of gravity be on teaching or learning; on mere acquisition of knowledge or on the student experimenting with his tools in the laboratory, browsing in the library and developing independent thinking, critical faculty and the capacity to apply knowledge to a solution of societal problems?

The society which scorns excellence in plumbing because plumbing is a humble activity and tolerates shoddiness in philosophy because it is an exalted activity will have neither good plumbing nor good philosophies. Neither its pipes nor its theories will hold water.

(v) Should not the system of education enable the learner to learn whatever he wants to learn and to learn the contents at his own pace and at a place of his choice? (vi) Should our paradigm of higher education be such that jobs and degrees become inseparably linked and education becomes subservient to the needs and requirements of the labour market and consumer society? Does not education lead to economic as well as cultural satisfaction?

Some initiatives in response to these questions were the beginnings of distance education in the country. To provide greater educational opportunities,, universities and started permitting students to appear for their examinations as private candidates. To enter, candidates need only to have prescribed the qualifications. The syllabus is the same as that prescribed for regular students. Students study on their own, with no help from the university. Most take the help of tutorial colleges.

Such external examinations were introduced by a large number of universities. Though the system quenched the thirst for higher education to some extent, it created several problems for the students. There was neither instruction nor guidance from teachers. Students were left to the mercy of tutorial and coaching institutions. The external examination system has attracted criticism as an irresponsible degree manufacturing system. It became a good source of income for many universities.

In 1961 the Central Advisory Board of Education decided to introduce the system of correspondence courses to provide educational opportunities to larger groups of pupils. The Ministry of Education, Government of India, appointed an Expert Committee on Correspondence Courses and Evening Colleges in 1961 headed by the then Chairman of the University Grants Commission Dr D S Kothari. The Expert Committee made many valuable suggestions; the Government of India accepted the recommendations and allowed the universities to start correspondence courses. The first correspondence course in B.A.(Pass) degree was introduced in 1962 by the School of Correspondence Courses and Continuing Education as a college established and maintained by Delhi University.

The Growth and Deterioration of the System

Within a year the correspondence courses attracted a large number of students. Encouraged by the success of the experiment, the Education Commission (1964-66) observed: "The correspondence or home study course is a well tried and a tested technique. Experience of correspondence courses in other countries of the world such as the USA, Sweden, USSR, Japan and Australia, where they have been used extensively for a long time ... encourages us to recommend fuller exploitation of the method for a wide range of purposes. The opportunities for part-time education through programmes like evening colleges and own-time education through programmes like correspondence courses should be extended as widely as possible and should also include courses in science and technology (either at the degree or diploma level). They will help reduce the capital costs to a substantial extent, especially as enrolments grow. They are the only means to provide higher education to those who desire to study further but are compelled on economic grounds to take up employment at the end of the school stage.

We suggest that by 1986 at least one third of the total enrolment in higher education could with advantage be provided through a system of Correspondence Courses and evening colleges."

A 1967 UGC committee considered the question of extension of correspondence courses to other universities, and made the following recommendations:

(a) Correspondence courses should be started only in well-established universities with strong faculties;

(b) Duplication of courses for the same degree should be avoided unless there are compelling reasons to do so.

(c) The universities providing correspondence courses should have centres in different places for contact classes. The colleges should be used as contact points and their laboratory and library facilities used as far as possible.

(d) Universities providing correspondence courses should have special library facilities for these courses such as multiple copies of textbooks and specially prepared books for correspondence courses. In addition, there should be a good collection of correspondence lessons prepared in other countries.

(e) It would be desirable to organise a workshop on methodology for the preparation of instructional material.

(f) The duration of the degree through correspondence should be the same as for the normal course.

(g) It would be desirable that only a selected number of universities undertake to initiate these courses in the first instance.

The correspondence courses started becoming popular and attracted a large number of students from different parts of the country. Many universities expressed the desire to start the courses.

The University Grants Commission, with a view to maintaining high standards, prescribed certain guidelines for starting these correspondence courses which have been revised from time to time. The guidelines have not been followed and this has led to an unhappy situation.

Limitations which have contributed to the ineffectiveness of correspondence education in India include the following:

(a) Most of the correspondence institutes do not have competent and adequate staff. The best teachers are not posted to work in these institutes;

(b) In some states, more than one university started correspondence courses, thereby duplicating efforts resulting in low enrolments;

(c) Lessons are often prepared in a hurry with no regard to quality;

(d) Not much attention is paid to the assignments; they are not evaluated, corrected and returned to the students on time;

(e) Most of the correspondence courses do not have 'study centres' and personal contact programmes are organised by only a few institutions;

(f) Too much reliance is placed on printed material and the latest communication technology is hardly used;

(g) There is considerable delay in the despatch of lessons to the students;

(h) Bodies charged with the running of these institutions are not organised properly;

(i) The system has the same rigidities in the courses offered as the formal system. Students offer the same courses and appear for the same examinations as the regular students;

(j) Laboratory and library facilities are rarely provided and where they exist they are much below standard;

(k) The institutes have no identity of their own as they work within the university structure. The latter pays perfunctory attention to the former; and

(l) Efforts are seldom made to evaluate and check the standards of correspondence courses. Their growth and working is haphazard leaving much to be desired.

Attempts to Strengthen Distance Education

Of late, a few correspondence institutes have started establishing study centres and organising contact programmes even outside university headquarters. Similarly, some institutes arrange radio lectures on a limited scale and some have started TV programmes and distribution of cassettes. These marginal improvements in a few institutes, however, do not change the structural functions and services of correspondence courses.

Institutes of correspondence studies of some universities have also started adopting some of the important features of the Open University system. Open admission policy is one such feature. For example, in Mysore University no eligibility qualifications are stipulated (except an age restriction) for enrolling into undergraduate and postgraduate courses. By incorporating this feature into their correspondence system, the University calls the systems an 'Open University System'. The S.N.D.T. Women's University, Madras University and Andhra University are examples of Open University schemes in correspondence institutes.

The fast spread of correspondence education, the meagre student support services and lack of innovativeness and flexibility in course structure caused alarm among educational planners and correspondence educators. In the early seventies efforts were initiated to strengthen correspondence education. A need was felt for the formation of an all-India body to coordinate and serve as a central agency for the proper development of correspondence education in the country and it resulted in the formation of National Council for Correspondence Education (NCCE) in 1976.

In 1972 the University Grants Commission set up a Standing Committee on Part-time and Correspondence Courses to advise and guide it on the effective functioning of correspondence education in the country. The committee in 1973 deliberated on the issue of setting up a National Institute for Correspondence Courses, but nothing concrete resulted. The reason for inaction probably was that the government was caught with the idea of establishing an Open University. The demand for a National Institute continued till the establishment of IGNOU.

In India, the first proposal for setting up an Open University was in the early seventies. The Ministry of Education and Social Welfare, in collaboration with the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, and the U.G.C., organised a seminar in December 1970 as part of a programme for the observance of International Education Year. Inaugurating the Seminar, Professor V.K.R.V. Rao, the then Education Minister, first mooted the idea of establishing an Open University in India and observed:

> "It must cover not only the comparatively limited number of university students, but should cover the much larger number of students who drop out from school at various points, the neo-literates, and eventually all adults who desire to avail these programmes of continuing education ... The new interesting programmes of instruction, based on modern science-oriented educational technology for students of higher education studying in the Open University should be made available to this much larger body of population which remains outside the so-called University system."

As a result of these suggestions, in 1971 the Government of India appointed a Working Group with G Parthasarathi, the then Vice-Chancellor of Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi, to examine the feasibility of establishing an Open University in India. The Report of the Working Group was submitted in 1975 and some spade work was done to establish a National Open University.

In 1982, the Committee appointed by the University Grants Commission to enquire into the working of the central universities, under chairperson of Dr (Mrs) Madhuri R Shah, made the following observations:

> "To satisfy existing thirst for knowledge as well as degrees, admission to formal courses on the basis of merit requires that opportunities for off-campus studies should be created on a large scale, for a great variety of courses of high quality. We already have a number of universities offering correspondence courses; we need to utilise and co-ordinate this expertise and infrastructure to create an effective system of learning. Mass media, such as radio and television, which are already beginning to be used in conjunction with correspondence education, and for which a greater potential is being created through the satellites, should be employed in a systematic manner to enlarge the scope and enrich the quality of distance education. We could create with available know-how in software and hardware a highly

proficient and attractive system of education for the whole country of which the present correspondence institutes could become focal points. Courses in new fields, particularly in science and some in technology could also be started, perhaps using college laboratories in off-hours and some of the best teachers could be involved in delivering lectures. Libraries of audio and video cassettes could be created to enrich both formal and non-formal education ... (The Committee) recommended that practical steps for creating a National Open University of distance education be taken up without delay."

The First Open University

The debate at the national level on Open University also stimulated thinking on the subject in various states. In Andhra Pradesh, proposals were made to start an Open University in 1978 but there was no progress. Osmania University made proposals for starting an Open Education College to strengthen distance education. The College was to have full autonomy but the degrees were to be awarded by the Osmania University. At last in 1982 the Government of Andhra Pradesh decided to establish an Open University to provide "access to higher education to the adult population of the State, for upgrading their functional capacities and improving quality of their life in context of broader social and political objectives and equalisation of educational opportunities and the emergence of a new concept of life long education". To give shape to this policy, the Government appointed a Committee and, based on the Committee's Report, established the Andhra Pradesh Open University in 1982, the first fully fledged distance education institute in India.

The Open University formally came into existence on August 26, 1982.

A National Open University

Realising its importance and immediate relevance the Government of India decided to establish a National Open University in early part of 1985. The Prime Minister, in his broadcast to the nation of January 5, 1985, spelt out the Government's Policy relating to education and announced the establishment of a National Open University. He observed "... Steps are being taken to establish an Open University to bring higher education within the easy reach of all." The National Open University named after the late Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was set up in September 1985.

The objectives of the University are "to advance and disseminate learning and knowledge by a diversity of means, including the use of any communication technology, to provide opportunities for higher education to a larger segment of population and to promote the educational well-being of the community, to encourage open university and distance education systems in the educational pattern of the country and to co-ordinate and determine standards in such systems ..."

The Act states that:

"The University shall endeavour through education, research, training and extension to play a positive role in the development of the country, and, based on the rich heritage of the country, to promote and advance the culture of the people of India and its human resources. Towards this end, it shall:

(a) strengthen and diversify the degree, certificate and diploma courses related to the needs of employment and necessary for building the economy of the country on the basis of its natural and human resources;

(b) provide access to higher education for large segments of the population, and in particular, the disadvantaged groups such as those living in remote and rural areas including working people, housewives; and other adults who wish to upgrade or acquire knowledge through studies in various fields;

(c) promote acquisition of knowledge in a rapidly developing and changing society and to continually offer opportunities for upgrading knowledge, training and skills in the context of innovations, research and discovery in all fields of human endeavour;

(d) provide an innovative system of university level education, flexible and open, in regard to methods and pace of learning, combination of courses, eligibility for enrolment, age of entry, conduct of examination and operation of the programme with a view to promote learning and encourage excellence in new fields of knowledge;

(e) contribute to the improvement of the educational system in India by providing a non-formal channel complementary to the formal system and encouraging transfer of credits and exchange of teaching staff by making with use of texts and other software developed by the University;

(f) provide education and training in the various arts, crafts and skills of the country, raising their quality and improving their availability to the people;

(g) provide or arrange training of teachers required for such activities or institutions;

(h) provide suitable post-graduate courses of study and promote research;

(i) provide the counselling and guidance to its students; and

(j) promote national integration and the integrated development of the human personality through its policies and programmes.

The University shall strive to fulfil the above objects by a diversity of means of distance and continuing education, and shall function in cooperation with the existing Universities and Institutions of higher learning and make full use of the latest scientific knowledge and new education technology to offer a high quality of education which matches contemporary need."

The Present State of Distance Education

At this point, it will be useful to present a summary of distance education in India. The facts are presented in Table 1.

TABLE 1 - CORRESPONDENCE INSTITUTES IN INDIA

S.No	University	Institute	Year of Establishment	Total number of students 1981/2	1982/3	1983/4	Cost per student (RS) 1981-2*
1.	University of Allahabad	Institute of Correspondence Courses & Continuing Education	1978	638	824	1,252	486
2.	Andhra Pradesh O.U. .	-	1982	-	-	6,406	530**
3.	Andhra University	School of Correspondence Courses	1972	11,851	13,998	18,737	315
4.	Annamalai University	Directorate of Correspondence Courses & Continuing Education	1979	11,594	18,388	na	275
5.	Bangalore University	Directorate of Correspondence Courses	-	na	na	na	
6.	Bhopal University	Institute of Correspondence Courses	1975	919	na	na	389
7.	University of Bombay	Directorate of Distance Education	1971	8,189	6,603	na	179
8.	University of Calicut	Institute of Correspondence Courses & Continuing Education	-				
9.	Central Institute of English & Foreign Languages	Department of Correspondence Courses	1973	717	na		
10.	Cochin University of Science & Technology	School of Continuing Education	1971				
11.	University of Delhi	School of Correspondence Courses	1962	6,759	9,832	13,786	853
12.	G B Pant University of Agriculture & Technology	Directorate of Extension	-				
13.	Gujarat Agricultural University	Directorate of Extension Education	-				
14.	Himachal Pradesh University	Directorate of Correspondence Courses	-	11,701	na	na	303
15.	Indira Gandhi National University	-	1985				
16.	Jadavpur University	Adult, Continuing Education and Extension Centre	-				
17.	Jamia Milia Islamia	Urdu Correspondence Course	1970				
18.	University of Jammu	Institute of Correspondence Education	1976	1,258	na	na	528
19.	Jawaharlal Nehru Krishi Vishwa-Vidyalaya	Directorate of Extension	-				
20.	Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University	Centre for Distance Education	1984				

TABLE 1 - continued

21.	Kakatiya University	Department of Education	-				
22.	University of Kashmir	Department of Distance Education	-	650	722	na	
23.	University of Kerala	Institute of Correspondence Courses	1976	3,842	1,795	na	321
24.	Kurukshetra University	Directorate of Correspondence Courses	1976	2,720	na	na	64
25.	University of Madras	Institute of Correspondence Education	1981	46,600	45,887	na	246
26.	Madurai Kamaraj University	Institute of Correspondence Course and Continuing Education	1971	68,554			
27.	Meerut University	Institute of Correspondence Courses and Continuing Education	1969	543	na	39	
28.	Mohanlal Sukhadia University	College of Correspondence Studies	1979				
29.	University of Mysore	Institute of Correspondence Course	1970	15,724	14,726	na	400
30.	Osmania University	Institute of Correspondence Courses	1977	1,347	1,851	1,368	
31.	Punjab University	Directorate of Correspondence Courses	1971	9,148	8,575	na	705
32.	Patna University	Institute of Correspondence Courses	1974	1,535	1,567	na	370
33.	University of Poona	Distance Education Centre	1983				
34.	Punjab Agricultural University	Department of Extension Education	-				
35.	Punjabi University	Directorate of Correspondence Courses	1968	4,717	2,441	na	634
36.	University of Rajasthan	Institute of Correspondence Studies	1968	7,046	7,767	na	
37.	SNDT Women's University	Department of Correspondence Courses	1979	5,309	6,087	3,677***	
38.	Sri Venkateswara	Institute of Correspondence Courses	1972	496	676	684	
39.	Tamil Nadu Agricultural University	Directorate of Extension Education	1974	616	na	378	1269
40.	Utkal University	Directorate of Correspondence Courses	-				

* Figures based on data collected by Vijaya Mulay Project team regarding correspondence courses in Indian Universities
** For source see Table 4
*** Incomplete data

IGNOU's Future Academic Programme

At the time of preparation of the Project Report for establishing the National Open University, we commissioned a Survey to identify the academic Programmes and Courses which different sections of the community would like the Indira Gandhi National Open University to offer. The job was entrusted to the Institute of Economic and Market Research, New Delhi. The Survey covered three metropolitan towns, Delhi, Madras and Bhubaneswar. A total of 224 respondents were interviewed of whom 113 were employees representing 30 different institutions. The rest included both employees and housewives. This was intended to be a pilot study to be followed by a more comprehensive study/studies.

The respondents felt that the Indira Gandhi National Open University should offer different certificate, diploma, under-graduate and post-graduate programmes as well as research programmes. Other respondents emphasised certificate and diploma programmes.

A certificate course in computers was suggested by about 60% of our institutional respondents and 40% of household respondents. Courses in the area of management came next. In management, specific areas like business management, secretarial practice, marketing management, office management, accountancy, or export management, were suggested by our respondents. Other courses suggested include interior decoration, tailoring, and carpentry.

More or less similar courses were suggested for diploma programmes also. Diploma programmes in computers and management studies found favour with a majority. Diploma programmes in management studies include business management, marketing management, personnel management, secretarial practice, executive development programmes, organisational behaviour, and industrial management.

The responses for degree programmes, however, differed. Graduate programmes in computers, managements and arts, commerce and science were emphasised. This indicates that those people who did not have access to education for a variety of reasons in the past now would like to possess a general 'Degree' in one of the disciplines as this has its own value in the employment market as well as enhances one's social status. Certain new areas like education, defence studies, engineering studies, were also suggested by some. Household respondents suggested, apart from the formal degrees referred to above, degree programmes in nursing, hotel management, home science, music and dance.

In the postgraduate programmes, M.B.A. and M.Com. found favour with a majority. Many suggested conventional postgraduate courses. An important aspect is the slant towards administrative and management studies. Courses in organisational behaviour, public administration, office management, travel management, and marketing management. were suggested by a majority of our respondents.

The foregoing indicates that our respondents wanted Indira Gandhi National Open University to offer a variety of academic programmes leading to certificate, diploma and degree, postgraduate and research degrees. But their preference is for courses in the area of management and computer studies. Women respondents wanted courses in home science, interior decoration and child care. A few others wanted courses in nutrition, beautician and health care. But these are not their first choice.

As a part of the survey, interviews were held with key personnel of several public sector organisations to find out which programmes and courses will be beneficial to their employees and what they expect the National Open University to offer. Courses in organisational behaviour, management and computers were preferred by a majority. Each of the organisations, keeping their specific requirements in view, made marginal changes here and there. Similarly, senior officials of the Government Departments also preferred courses in computers and management and administration.

IGNOU's Role of Coordination of Distance Education

Section 4 of the Indira Gandhi National Open University Act states the objects of the University as:

> "to advance and disseminate learning and knowledge by a diversity of means, including the use of any communication technology, to provide opportunities for higher education to a larger segment of the population and to promote the educational well being of the community generally, to encourage the Open University and distance education systems in the educational pattern of the country and to co-ordinate and determine the standards in such systems."

Section 5(2) of the Act further states:

> "Notwithstanding anything contained in any other law for the time being in force,..., it shall be the duty of the University to take all such steps as it may deem fit for the promotion of the open university and distance education systems and for the determination of standards of teaching, evaluation and research in such systems, and for the purpose of performing this function, the University shall have such powers including the power to allocate and disburse grants to Colleges, whether admitted to its privileges or not, or to any other university or institution of higher learning, as may be specified by the Statutes."

The University, thus, is under the statutory obligation to evolve and implement measures (a) to encourage the Open University and distance education systems in the country, (b) to co-ordinate the Open University and distance education systems, and (c) to determine standards of teaching, evaluation and research in the Open University and distance education systems. To achieve the above objects, the University is empowered to take the necessary measures.

Before initiating any measures to fulfil its objects, the University initially desired to know all the problems of the open/distance education institutions in the country. In January 1986, it convened a meeting of heads of all such institutions (one Open University and thirty one Institutes of Correspondence Courses of Universities). The meeting which was attended by twenty three representatives of University/Institutes discussed and debated in detail several issues including the nature and scope of relationship between IGNOU and the State Open Universities, IGNOU and Correspondence Institutes, and, finally, the State Open Universities and Correspondence Institutes.

The following problems and their possible solutions were identified:

1. Status of the institutes

Most of the institutes were treated as a constituent college of the university. However, some of the progressive universities have given them the status of a university teaching department. A couple of universities have gone a step further and created a fully-fledged faculty of non-formal education or distance education.

It is desirable to have a faculty of distance education in the university offering correspondence courses. Faculty status besides enhancing the prestige of the institute, would pave the way for instituting, conducting and guiding research on various aspects of distance education. The institutions of Correspondence Courses need to be designated as departments of distance education and treated as fully-fledged multi-faculty teaching departments of the universities.

2. Status of the teachers

In several of the universities the teachers in correspondence education are looked down on and are discriminated against in many ways. In some cases they have not been given designations equivalent to teachers in the university teaching departments.

Some institutes do not have their own faculty at all, and some have very limited faculty. Of course a few institutes are over-staffed. Teachers who are deputed/loaned from the teaching departments to the institutes for specific periods do not have commitment and involvement in the system. No institute with uncommitted teachers can function well.

The designations of teachers in the institutes, their qualifications and selection procedure should be similar to those in the teaching departments; they should have representation on university bodies as university teachers and be associated in guiding research if they are qualified to do so. They should have the same promotion opportunities as teachers in the teaching departments have.

3. Lack of proper training to teachers in the distance education methodology

Most of the institutes experience problems because the teachers have not received any proper training in this new system. They have been just put on the job and left to learn from experience. Unless a teacher develops commitment to the distance education system, he cannot contribute much. Seminars and workshops occasionally organised by the U.G.C., N.C.E.R.T. and the universities help to some extent, but participation is limited and the majority of teachers do not get a chance to participate in training programmes.

There is a need for a training programme for teachers in the institutes of correspondence courses and state open universities. The Diploma Course in Distance Education designed by IGNOU might fulfil this need.

4. Lack of rational planning for determining the strength of academic and administrative staff

Lack of planning has resulted in overstaffing in some institutes and understaffing in others.

Although U.G.C. has laid down norms for core staff both for the undergraduate and postgraduate courses, there is need to look into this matter, and evolve proper guidelines for determining the strength of academic as well as the administrative staff.

5. Duplication of courses

There is large scale duplication of correspondence courses in some regions and even within the state in a few cases. This adversely affected enrolments in some institutes leading to starvation for funds.

Duplication of courses within the same state needs to be avoided. Even within the region also it needs to be avoided as far as possible. In fact, duplication of institutes within the same region/state should be discouraged.

6. Finances

Many universities regard correspondence courses institutes as revenue earning departments and channel these savings to cover deficits in other departments or divert the funds to the general university funds. The State governments expect correspondence course institutes to be self-supporting and are reluctant to provide them with grants. The reality is that with revised pay scales teachers and administrative staff, and rising costs of paper and printing, most of the institutes go into deficit. Lack of funds inhibits the growth and development of correspondence courses institutes and affects their efficiency.

7. Accommodation problems

Some institutes have good buildings, but some of them do not have independent accommodation and are hard put to it. This affects the efficiency and status of the institutes.

Careful planning and liberal building grants are required to improve the situation. The institutes must have proper accommodation for their teachers and office staff, and for library, classrooms, storage, despatch and the various sections in the institutes.

8. Private appearance

Some universities, even though they have instituted correspondence courses, still allow private appearance at the University examinations. This adversely affects enrolment for correspondence courses and creates financial problems for the institutes.

In order to ensure academic standards and financial viability, universities which offer correspondence courses should abolish the practice of private appearance at the university examinations.

9. Media and student support services

Except for about half a dozen institutes, institutes do not provide any radio support for the correspondence courses.

Most institutes do not have any study centres, and those which exist are just apologies for study centres. Lack of financial resources and initiative are the main reasons for this state of affairs.

The Government, universities and IGNOU must provide adequate financial assistance to the correspondence courses institutes to set up proper study centres at different places with well organised library and media support, counselling and tutorial facilities.

10. Innovative, interdisciplinary, job-oriented courses

Most of the institutes are a sort of extension wings of the universities offering their traditional courses. Even if they propose innovative courses, they are not approved by the university bodies. This prevents the institutes from experimenting with new ideas and from exploiting the potential of making education relevant to the needs of society. This problem could be solved if the universities established faculties of non-formal or distance education, and constituted special expert committees for starting innovative courses.

11. Course material

The production of course material is most crucial to the success of distance education. There is need to enhance remuneration for course writers and to involve experienced teachers in the preparation of course material preferably on the team basis. Strict quality control needs to be exercised on designing and printing.

12. Evaluation of response sheets

Very few institutes insist on timely compulsory submission of student response sheet assignments (SRAs). evaluation of SRAs is also not done properly. Casual and erratic marking is done. This practice defeats the very purpose of assignments. Students must be required to submit a fixed number of SRAs in every subject, evenly spread over the academic session, and obtain at least 35% marks on the average. It would be a good incentive if the score of evaluation of the SRAs is added to the students' score in the examination in the ratio 20:80, 25:75 or 30:70. There must be effective monitoring of the evaluation of SRAs to eliminate or at least reduce erratic or careless marking. Teachers must offer detailed comments and suggestions on the students' performance.

13. Personal contact programmes

Very few institutes insist on compulsory attendance at the personal contact programmes, and some institutes organise these programmes only at their headquarters. Attendance at the PCPs should be made compulsory. Lectures by specialists should also be arranged at the PCPs.

14. Administrative problems

Most of the institutes do not enjoy administrative and financial autonomy. This adversely affects their functioning and efficiency. Institutes need reasonable autonomy. They should have their own bank accounts for the receipt of income from students' fees. The directors should be empowered to incur expenditure on all items provided for in the budget without the need to seek periodical sanctions from the Vice Chancellor or the Registrar. The decentralisation of powers would lead to better functioning and efficiency.

The above account of the first meeting of heads of correspondence institutes served as a basis for the University for planning methods and procedures for playing the role of co-ordinator of distance higher education in the country.

In the light of the problems posed and possible solution suggested at the meeting, the University convened a meeting of the Vice-Chancellors and Officers on Special Duty of Open Universities in May 1986. The Vice-Chancellor of APOU and Special Officers of proposed Open Universities of Maharashtra and Kerala attended the meeting. The meeting mainly discussed the issues of the pattern of academic programmes, linkages of courses, standards of instructional materials, basic components of an open university system, and the relationship between IGNOU and State Open Universities.

A broad consensus was agreed as follows:

(1) It would be advantageous if there is a common framework of academic programmes in the Open University system particularly at

the undergraduate level. The undergraduate programme can be a three year course with the following components:

(a) foundation courses in the first year
(b) core courses in the second year
(c) applied courses in the third year

A mix of the core and applied courses could be offered in the second year depending upon the nature of the course and the subjects.

(2) Unless course material for six months study is readily available, the registration of students should not start.

(3) The credit system would be adopted in all Open Universities and the details of units for each credit and the number of credits required for each course may be worked out.

(4) The nonemclature of degrees would be B.A., B.Sc., B.Com.

(5) Students who stop with the undergraduate programme would be free to take any combination of subjects. For those desirous of proceeding to a Master's course, a certain minimum number of credit courses at the undergraduate level is to be specified as the condition for admission to a Master's course.

(6) The foundation course would include two languages. In IGNOU study of English and Hindi will be prescribed, in the other Open Universities any two languages will be suggested.

(7) Attendance at the Contact Programmes for the students would be necessary and certain credits may be awarded for attendance.

(8) It should be possible for the students of one Open University to specialise in a course offered by another Open University, e.g., a student registered with IGNOU wanting to do a course in South Indian Music may take this course from, say, Tamil Nadu Open University where Karnatic Music is taught widely and for which the credit awarded by the latter University would count. It should be possible for a student registered with an Open University in the South to do a course in Hindustani Music from the Open University, say, in Chandigarh or elsewhere in the North, the credit awarded for this course being counted. This principle could apply to other courses as well. Linkage of courses and the transfer of credits in the Open University system should be established, as this would be helpful to the students.

(9) It is absolutely essential to maintain quality of the course material, as the very credibility of the Open University system depended on the quality of its material. It is necessary to evolve a mechanism by which quality control of the material is ensured. An external quality control mechanism would ensure quality of the material better than an internal system. Essentially quality control is an on-going process and should be

internal, while external quality control could only be occasional and done easily at the end.

(10) A separate board under the IGNOU statutes could be thought of for the purpose of monitoring the quality of standards of the Open University system.

(11) In order to distinguish the Open University from correspondence courses in the formal University system, it is essential to insist on certain basic components for an Open University system. The following essential components must be present in a Open University:

(a) course texts
(b) radio and TV broadcasting
(c) audio-visual aids
(d) computerisation of services
(e) study centres with audio-visual aids and library facilities
(f) contact programmes

(12) A draft note on the minimum physical and other facilities required for an Open University's efficient functioning would be prepared by the IGNOU and circulated to the other Open Universities for their consideration and approval.

(13) The headquarters of an Open University should be located in an area, where communication and printing facilities are readily available, and where sufficient land is available.

(14) The relationship between IGNOU and the State Open Universities could be governed by any of the following three models:

(a) A model, in which each University would be free to act in a manner it thought fit,

(b) A model in which there would be programmes by the IGNOU and the State Open Universities,

(c) A model, where there would be greater interaction between the IGNOU and the State Open Universities - like IGNOU preparing course material and State Open Universities adopting changes necessary to suit their local/regional requirements.

The relationship is voluntary and the State Open Universities would be free to choose model/s suited to them. However, this would not absolve the IGNOU of its responsibilities of maintenance of standards as provided in its Act.

To discuss further the role of co-ordinating the distance education and evolve some guidelines for assistance to open universities and correspondence institutes of universities, the University convened

another meeting of distance education planners and administrators and specialists in education.

The Chinese experience of distance education particularly Chinese Central and Provincial Radio and Television Universities was discussed while exploring the alternative models for adoption in the country.

The Committee felt that certain guidelines can be prescribed which should be followed by all State Governments, whenever they take decision to start Open Universities and assistance should be provided to only those which would set up as per prescribed norms. The Committee suggested the following guidelines:

(1) Assistance by the National Open University will be provided for improving the printed material and audio material of the Institutes of Correspondence Courses/State Open Universities, if such Universities are eligible for the UGC under Section 12B of the University Grants Commission Act. The assistance shall also cover intensive training programmes in distance education and guidance for course writing.

(2) State Open Universities can be started with a great deal of caution. Once the State Open Universities are established the existing Institutes of Correspondence Courses in the State should be discontinued. This should be done selectively as certain institutes of correspondence courses are good resources. The possibility of strengthening correspondence institutes and converting them as State Open Universities should be considered.

(3) Distance education is cost effective only when the enrolment is big.

(4) The courses run by the Institutes of Correspondence Courses if necessary should be evaluated. Evaluation of course material is an integral part of distance education system and should be done at periodic intervals.

(5) The Regional Centres of the National Open University should, in addition to administrative co-ordination, also provide academic inputs to the concerned State Governments in its efforts to spread distance education.

(6) The system of private appearance in existing universities would be continued for the present. As the Open University system spreads and is found to be effective, the numbers of private candidates would be automatically reduced as more and more candidates would join the open university system.

(7) The assistance by the National Open University shall not cover either deemed universities or other central universities.

(8) The problems of distance education in the country should be studied by a group of experts and recommend measures for its improvement.

(9) Assistance by the National Open University would be different for each of the following categories:

(a) Where the State Governments do not want a State Open University and request the National Open University to take care of requirements.

(b) Where the State Governments intend to start Open Universities.

(c) When the States have already Open Universities.

(10) To make effective use of resources, one institution either the Institute of Correspondence Courses or State Open University could be supported.

The Committee suggested that the above guidelines be communicated to the appropriate authorities for evolving a policy framework for the operation of the National Open University, the State Open Universities and the Institutes of Correspondence Courses in a coordinated manner.

It is difficult to visualise how the coordinating role assigned to IGNOU will be successfully played. IGNOU is at the apex of highly disjointed pyramid. Its success greatly depends on the willing co-operation of present and future State Open Universities, conventional universities and State Governments. There is a possibility of State Open Universities seeing in IGNOU a threat to their strength. Correspondence Institutions and their host universities, particularly those which are income spinners, might hesitate to extend full co-operation to collaboration and co-ordination with IGNOU. The already strained relations between the Union and the States may acquire a new dimension of tension with the efforts of IGNOU to co-ordinate the distance education plans and operations in the country. As Mr Rajiv Gandhi, the Prime Minister, put it "Perhaps the most difficult question to tackle is that of the Centre-State relations with regard to education. It is necessary to look into this aspect further to see how education is to be developed and how Central funds and State funds can be best utilised for a better education."

The forums of periodical meetings of Chief Ministers, Education Ministers, Secretaries of Education, Central Advisory Board of Education, Association of Indian Universities, and Conferences of Vice-Chancellors need to be utilised for developing a commitment for a well co-ordinated system of distance education in the country. The desirability of a balanced, integrated and high quality system of distance education as an answer to some of the ills of the present day formal system of education needs to be recognised and furthered by educational planners and administrators. It is hoped that IGNOU will provide the necessary leadership in this direction.

B. DISTANCE EDUCATION AT SCHOOL LEVEL

The idea to start correspondence education at school level gained acceptance and recognition at the Conference of Boards of Secondary

Education in 1964. The primary consideration that led to the decision to extend distance education to secondary stage was to improve the level and quality of education attained by candidates who used to take secondary-level examinations as private candidates. Among the Boards of Secondary Education, Madhya Pradesh Board was the first to start correspondence courses in 1965. The Boards of Secondary Education of Rajasthan, Orissa and Uttar Pradesh later followed the line. In the capital city of India a Directorate of Correspondence Education (Patrachar Vidyalaya) was also set up in 1968, mainly to provide opportunities of secondary education to drop-outs, housewives or in-service personnel residing in any part of the country.

Distance education at the secondary stage gained strength after the establishment of the Open School by the Central Board of Secondary Education in July 1969. The Open School opened an alternative channel to formal schooling. The Open School offers (a) secondary school level course (classes ix and x), and (b) bridge/preparatory courses (classes vi to viii). The Open School aims at expanding and extending secondary education to working adults, housewives, school drop-outs. The present strength of students getting education through the Open School is over 10,000. The School has taken a decision this year to offer courses at Intermediate stage (+2 stage in 10+2+3 years of schooling). This would strengthen the correspondence education base at school stage and also link the secondary level with the higher education level of correspondence education.

Though distance education at school stage began nearly two decades ago, its growth has not been promising. The system has failed to attract a large number of students. The total enrolment at secondary and senior secondary stages in the country is about 56,000 which is just about 0.3% of total enrolment at this stage.

Research studies revealed several organisational weaknesses and academic deficiencies of the system. The system needs to be restructured and reoriented to enable it to fulfil the goals of secondary stage distance and further education. The establishment of the Indira Gandhi National Open University which has a statutory obligation to coordinate and maintain standards in the distance education system, it is hoped, would link different levels and sectors of distance education in the country.

C. DISTANCE EDUCATION IN AGRICULTURE

Green Revolution has brought in several significant changes in agriculture. To sustain the tempo of development, to reinforce the modernisation process and to sensitize the farmers towards the benefits of the developments in science and technology, Agricultural Universities in India initiated distance education programmes as a part of their extension work. Since the mid 1960s some Agricultural Universities have started correspondence courses with the following objectives:

(a) to carry new knowledge and information about different facts of agriculture to farmers at their doorstep;

(b) to educate farmers with the latest technology and skill for increased production of food and fruits;

(c) to educate youths engaged in farming regarding scientific farm operations for increased agricultural production;

(d) to improve socio-economic conditions of farmers as a result of higher agricultural production;

(e) to provide continuing useful educational opportunities to rural school-drop-outs and neo-literates engaged in agriculture;

(f) to build a network of key communicators through whom the message of new and scientific agriculture could be spread far and wide specially in the area of the university.

Current courses cover a wide range of agricultural topics.

D. EDUCATIONAL BROADCASTING

The tradition of educational broadcasting in India is not very old. Today, educational broadcasting is viewed following lines suggested by the National Workshop on Educational Broadcasting under Unesco's Asian Programme of Educational Innovation for Development held at New Delhi in December 1980:

(a) as a means of motivation by informing and encouraging people to participate in national development;

(b) as a major component of the non-formal education system by providing an alternative approach to the education of out of school children, youth and adults;

(c) as a direct instructional medium dispensing with the need for an intermediary;

(d) as an enrichment of the formal system of education where it can fill instruction gaps, up-to-date knowledge and bring in new learning experiences;

(e) as a training component for teachers (instructors) and supervisors;

(f) as a means of imparting vocational (agricultural and industrial) and professional (medical and engineering) skills.

Radio

Even before All India Radio came into existence there were occasional broadcasts for schools from Bombay and Calcutta. It was only in 1937 that organised school broadcasting started in Calcutta at the request of the University of Calcutta and the Department of Education of Bengal. The broadcasts were bi-weekly and for half an hour at a time.

Later the programmes were extended to schools in Delhi, Madras and Bombay. It was laid down as a principle "that educational broadcasts should not attempt to replace the teacher but to supplement his work."

Akashvani (All India Radio) stations broadcast educational programmes in 16 languages. The emphasis is on primary and informal education to effect universalisation of primary education and support national educational projects. Akashvani has educational programme production units at 44 stations in its network of 88 stations. The programmes produced by these units for primary and secondary school students are broadcast by 74 stations. The primary school broadcasts are for general enrichment and are broadcast for a duration of 15-20 minutes on 3 to 5 schools days in a week. The broadcasts for secondary school students are syllabus oriented and are put on air for a duration of 15 to 20 minutes on all school days of the week. The programme schedules for school broadcasts are prepared with the cooperation of educational authorities and State Institutions of Education and are approved by the Consultative Panel attached to each station. Besides, Adult Education Programmes are broadcast by 14 stations by way of support to National Adult Education Programme (NAEP). On an average, the number of such programmes broadcast per week is 3 to 4 and the duration of each is about 15 minutes. The time available for educational broadcasts is obviously inadequate, and the government is aware of this shortcoming. To overcome this weakness, the Department of Education, Government of India, has projected that 4 hours of radio time per day would be required for each State for school broadcasts, and 40 minutes per day for adult education programmes from 1987 onwards.

Teacher training through radio has achieved considerable success in the States of Kerala, Gujarat and Assam. With the introduction of an enriched syllabus, there arose a need in Kerala for training about 120,000 primary school teachers, which would have taken a long time but for the introduction in 1975 of radio-cum-correspondence course for in-service training, as a joint effort of AIR and the Kerala State Government. The State Institute of Education in Assam in collaboration with AIR has been running a radio-cum-correspondence course for science teachers ever since 1978-79. The aim was to train all science teachers in a phased manner. To improve the teaching of English in primary schools, the H M Patel Institute of English in collaboration with All-India Radio, Ahmedabad embarked upon a Kerala type radio-cum-correspondence course. Similarly the EB Units at Madras and Tiruchi support a training programme of Tamil teachers by weekly broadcasts on the lines of Kerala. Nagpur and the Pune stations support a broadcast training course for two months of the year. Teacher training through radio has become popular as it saves a lot of movement of teachers and expenditure.

AIR Delhi has been providing broadcast support to the undergraduate correspondence courses of Delhi University since 1966. These broadcasts, known as the University of the Air, are in English and Hindi for a total duration of 40 minutes. From 1977 onwards the stations in Tamilnadu started giving support to the correspondence course of the Madurai University. The broadcasts, which are funded by

the University, are recorded at the studios of AIR Tiruchi. The programmes are distributed to other stations through tapes, though relays over the air/ telephone line also takes place. The broadcasts are now put out simultaneously at 10.30 p.m. from all the stations in Tamilnadu. This is the first time a total state-wide radio support has been given to a correspondence course, thus bringing the course to the homes of practically everyone who wishes to avail of it. The Jullundur station also supports the correspondence course of the Punjab and the Punjabi Universities. These broadcasts are daily for 20 minutes except for the summer holidays. AIR has played a significant part in bringing the new technology in agriculture to the door of the farmer by giving support to various farmer's training and functional literacy programmes of the Ministries of Agriculture and Education. In fact, the Farm and Home Units of Akashvani were started in 1966 to support the Intensive Agricultural District Programme and the coming of new 'wonder' seeds, the high yielding varieties. One such variety - ADT27 - came to be known to the farmers of Tanjaur as 'Radio Rice'.

In 1965, the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, in consultation with Ministry of Agriculture and Education started Farm and Home Units at 10 stations, Jullundur, Lucknow, Patna, Cuttack, Raipur, Pune, Hyderabad, Bangalore, Tiruchi and Delhi. The objective was to provide timely and problem-oriented technical information on agriculture, horticulture, animal husbandry, use of inputs, farm and home management, family health and nutrition to farmers of small homogenous areas with similar agro-economic conditions. There are now 71 Farm and Home Units in the country. Each unit is headed by a Farm Radio Officer, who is a graduate in Agriculture and trained in extension methods. He is assisted by one or two Farm Radio Reporters and a scriptwriter. Each unit is provided with ultra portable tape-recorders and a vehicle. The total staff of Farm and Home Unit of AIR is two hundred and forty.

Farm and Home Units broadcast one to one and a half hours programme in all three transmissions daily.

A recent innovation is farm schools on the air, in which intensive training on a specific agricultural or allied subject is broadcast, and after completion of a course, examinations are held and certificates and prizes given to farmers. This programme was enthusiastically received by farm women and farmers, thousands of whom enrolled at different stations.

Expert committees have given various recommendations for improving rural/farm and home broadcasts. Their suggestions are extending the duration to two hours in the evening and one hour each in the morning and afternoon; more coverage to rural news; more field-based programmes; training programme officers of All India Radio, block development officers, village level workers and experts; greater coverage of programmes for Harijans, women labourers and landless labourers; and maintenance and repair of community radio sets.

In view of the rapidly increasing importance of farm radio as a means of communicating new technologies and timely strategies to farmers all over the country, various steps have been taken by the Ministry of Agriculture and an action plan has been formulated for improving media support to agriculture.

On October 2, 1978 the National Adult Education Project began on a massive scale. Backed by the Government of India, it aimed to remove illiteracy from the country. The AIR also has committed itself to supporting the project with suitable programmes for publicity, motivation and training of instructors/helpers. This service is now being provided by 14 stations of the country. Since learning directly from the teacher is minimal and there is more emphasis on learning through various mass media, educational broadcasts are expected to play an important role in the non-formal system.

Television

Television has been used for educational purposes right from its introduction in 1959, but major steps were taken in the 1970s. Following the success of the Satellite Instructional Television Experiment (SITE), 1975-76, the Government of India initiated and implemented a multi-purpose Indian National Satellite (INSAT) programme. The main objectives of this have been:

(a) to provide nation-wide direct TV broadcasting to rural communities in the field of education, social advancement, health and family welfare, rural development, etc., and

(b) to use INSAT for relay of television programmes by a large number of Doordarshan Kendras which have facilities for transmission only.

The INSAT-based TV service produces educational programmes for primary school children as well as area-specific programmes for rural viewers in selected three-district clusters of Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Orissa and Uttar Pradesh. The educational TV programmes in Hindi for Uttar Pradesh and Bihar are relayed by all transmitters in these States as well as the transmitters in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh.

To produce Educational Television (ETV) programmes, the Government of India has set up a Central Institute of Educational Technology (CIET) at the Central level and also taken steps for establishing State Institutes of Educational Technology (SIETs) in the six INSAT States for production of ETV programmes. At present, ETV programmes are being produced by CIET and Doordarshan on a 50:50 basis. CIET, in fact, produces ETV programmes in Hindi and English and has them dubbed in the respective regional languages, Telugu, Oriya and Marathi. ETV programmes in Gujarati are produced by SIET, Ahmedabad, with the help of the Space Applications Centre (SAC), Ahmedabad. Doordarshan produces its share of ETV programmes in the respective regional languages.

ETV programmes are for general enrichment, that is, they are not school curriculum-based, though they are addressed to school children in the age groups of 5-8 years and 9-11 years. The duration of ETV programmes in each language is 45 minutes and they are telecast for five days a week, followed by a programme for teachers on the sixth day. It is surprising that the Open School though set up in 1979 does not have a provision to put on air its programmes.

Originally, it was envisaged that the ETV programmes under the INSAT scheme would be available only in the selected 3-district clusters. At present, however, they are broadcast from Delhi via INSAT-1B and relayed by all TV relay transmitters in the six INSAT States. One of the two S-band TV transponders (S-2) of INSAT-1B is utilised for this purpose during 09.00 - 12.45 hours every day in what is known as the "time-sharing" mode. Moreover, the ETV programmes in Hindi (meant for the 3-district clusters of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar) are also relayed by all TV relay transmitters in the other Hindi-speaking States of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh.

Present and future developments

Educational technology can play a vital role in increasing the professional competence, capability and communication skills of the teacher. In the present context of non-formal education, educational technology will be very useful in the programmes of adult and continuing education and extension and correspondence courses as also in the restructuring of courses of study at the university stage. In view of this, the University Grants Commission gives importance to the introduction of mass communication and educational technology in the university system on a priority basis. Accordingly, during the Sixth Plan period, the Commission assisted the universities on a selective basis with mass communication and education technology programmes. The Commission constituted a Working Group to advise on various matters connected with the setting up of centres of mass communication and educational technology in Indian universities after is was made known that it would be possible to ensure transmission time of one hour every day in the afternoon for programmes of higher education once INSAT became operational. On the recommendations of the working group a Task Force was appointed in August 1982 to prepare a plan of action. The recommendations of the Task Force and the Working group were accepted in July 1983 and a plan of action was initiated.

The satellite can be used with advantage for educational programmes, among many other purposes. In principle, everyone desirous of receiving an educational programme can do so through community viewing. With this facility, the whole country can be unified by some common educational thrusts and at the same time each region can be served according to its needs.

There are exciting possibilities for using the satellite for class room situations, seminars or tutorial sessions, conducting vocational and technical courses requiring a great deal of visuals, and running programmes for teachers' further education without their having to

leave their institutions. These programmes and facilities could form the core of a university of distance education.

The Commission, as an agency concerned with maintenance of quality and standards, has taken the initiative by providing standard equipment in six selected centres, namely, Mass Communication Research Centre, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi, Educational Media Research Centres (EMRCs) at Poona University, Gujarat University and CIEFL, Hyderabad and Audio Visual Research Centres (AVRCs) at Osmania and Roorkee Universities. The Commission also agreed to provide assistance to Anna University, Madras and Jodhpur University, Jodhpur during the 7th Plan period for setting up of Audio Visual Research Centre. A Central Programme Committee has been set up to advise on the scope, nature and schedule of the software. It has been decided to produce what are called enrichment programmes at the undergraduate level. Topics in different disciplines are being chosen so that the largest number of students, and indeed any educated person, may benefit. Some topics will relate to national development and national concerns such as agricultural or industrial visions, achievements, shortcomings, future perspectives, national integration, secularism and socialism. These subjects will receive scholarly attention and will help to give breadth of knowledge and awareness to the viewers.

There is provision for special programmes for teachers in higher education to enable them to handle their class and examination work better, to give them up-to-date knowledge and particularly to make them familiar with the educational goals of their professions. For this purpose, a committee on higher educational TV programmes in teacher education has been constituted. Efforts are being made to produce some TV programmes in teacher education also.

The University Grants Commission has set up a mass communication unit in the UGC office for implementation of the programme of development of mass communication system and programmes in the universities and to co-ordinate the activities of the Educational Media Research Centres and Audio-Visual Research Centres. This mass communication unit while co-ordinating the functioning of the EMRCs and AVRCs is looking into the administrative aspects of funding the Media Centres.

Since the programmes to be produced by the university sector will only be small in number initially, it is desirable to select suitable material from that which is either commercially available or available on loan from universities or other institutions in India or abroad. For this purpose a UGC INSAT project unit has been set up in Jamia Millia Islamia to examine available video-tapes, audio-tapes and films to determine their suitability for being televised through INSAT-1B.

The academics in universities and colleges who are to be involved in producing suitable programmes have little acquaintance with the TV or radio medium. The Educational Media Research Centres have organised workshops to expose them to programmes and equipment, familiarise them with broadcasting, and motivate them to experiment.

A Standing Committee on Electronic Media/Mass Communication has been constituted to advise on programmes and mass media for distance education, classroom enrichment and continuing education.

The telecasts of the University Grants Commission programmes in higher education, entitled "Country-wide classroom", began on 15th August, 1984 on an experimental mode. Colleges which are within the transmission range of the Doordarshan Kendras have been asked to buy colour TV sets with part assistance from the University Grants Commission. The response and reaction from the audience has been overwhelming. The programme is being monitored and evaluated.

Non-formal adult education programmes, for general enrichment, are telecast by all programme-producing Doordarshan Kendras, as a part of their regular programme service. The duration and frequency of these programmes are, however, not fixed and these programmes can be viewed only within the coverage zone of the respective TV transmitters. The Directorate of Adult Education has also prepared some programmes.

Distance education in its various forms and stages is now more than 20 years old in our country. Yet the available technology has not been harnessed to support this system amply. It is only recently that it has begun to be used to unite broadcasting and distance education.

As indicated earlier radio programmes are broadcast from stations at Delhi, Jullundur and all stations in Tamil Nadu, to provide radio support to correspondence courses offered by some Universities. The duration of these programmes ranges between 15 to 60 minutes and the frequency from 5 to 7 days a week. Such programmes are broadcast from Hyderabad-B station to provide radio support to the courses offered by A.P. Open University. The duration of each of these broadcasts is 30 minutes, five days a week. As far as the use of TV is concerned, the A.P. Open University has not so far been allowed time on Doordarshan so it depends mainly on video cassettes. The University had produced 836 radio programmes, 145 audio programmes and 75 video programmes by the middle of 1986.

The Indira Gandhi National Open University needs large scale support from Akashvani and Doordarshan for broadcasting its programmes which constitute an important component of the University's multi-media instructional system. The University has already started preparations for producing audio-video programmes and also has already approached the Government of India for the following requirements of radio and TV time on national radio channel and national network respectively:

Radio time:

- 5 hrs 20 mts/week during 1986
- 11 hrs 20 mts/week during 1987
- 17 hrs 20 mts/week during 1988 (up to August 1988)
- 25 hrs 20 mts/week during 1988-89 (Sep. '88 - Dec. '89)
- 31 hrs 20 mts/week during 1990

TV time:

- 2 hrs 40 mts/week during 1986
- 5 hrs 40 mts/week during 1987
- 8 hrs 40 mts/week during 1988 (up to August 1988)
- 12 hrs 40 mts/week during 1988-89 (Sep. '88 - Dec. '89)
- 15 hrs 40 mts/week during 1990

The Government of India is sensitive to the needs of Open University and is expected to allocate adequate time for broadcasting the University's radio and TV programmes. The Government of India has increased the outlay of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting in the current year from Rupees 1,100,000,000 and Rupees 2,420,000,000 - an increase of 120% for "enlarging the broadcasting infrastructure" for educational purposes.

Radio-audio-video materials for distance education are limited both in terms of numbers and use. This is partly due to the paucity of resources, shortage of technical/media personnel, rigidity of the formal system of education to which distance education has been tied and partly because of the lack of appropriate policy inputs. The present political will and the concern to promote distance education with the help of mass communications and educational technology may lay a strong foundation for the spread of Open and distance education in the country.

III. TRENDS AND GAPS IN DISTANCE EDUCATION

Private
education/training/
coaching
institutes

Educational
broadcasts

Formal
universities

DISTANCE
EDUCATIONAL
STRUCTURE

Professional
education/training
institutes

Open Universities

Secondary
education
institutes

DISTANCE EDUCATIONAL STRUCTURE

Private education/ training/coaching institutes	Formal Universities	Autonomous Open Universities	Independent Secondary Education institutes	Professional training institutes recognised by Government	Educational broadcasts
- The British Institutes	- Correspondence Institutes of Conventional Universities	- Indira Gandhi National Open University	- Open School	- Association of Indian Universities	- AIR Farm schools
- Indian Correspondence Institute	- Directorates of Extension of Agricultural Universities	- Andhra Pradesh Open University	- Institute of Correspondence Education, Allahabad	- All India Management Association	- AIR ETV programme
- Agrawals	- Distance Education Centres of Technological Universities		- Institute of Correspondence Education, Delhi	- Computer Society of India	- AIR STV programmes
- Brilliant Tutorials			- Correspondence Divisions of Boards of Secondary Education		- University Grants Commission TV broadcasts
- International Institute of Management Studies			- Board of Secondary Education, Bhopal		
- Indian Management Development Institute			- Board of Secondary Education, Ajmer		
- International Institute of Management Science			- Board of Secondary Education, Cuttack		

There are large regional imbalances in the development of distance education:

Four major states in India as shown below have no strong correspondence institutes.

State	Population	Students (1982-83)
Bihar	69,915,000	1,567
Madhya Pradesh	52,179,000	1,925
Uttar Pradesh	110,862,000	1,367
Maharastra	62,784,000	12,690
	295,740,000 out of 685,185,000	17,549 out of 159,712

Distance education by and large provides general education such as courses leading to:

BA, BAL, B.Com., B.Ed.
BGL, B.Sc., LL.B, MA,
M.Com., M.Ed., M.Sc.

Distance Education in higher level professional subjects/areas is limited. Generally the courses offered are:

(i) M.B.A. in limited number of institutions
(ii) B.Tech/B.E. in one institute

Distance Education in Vocational Subjects/areas is limited to Diploma and Certificate courses such as:

(i) Diploma courses in bookkeeping, computer, journalism, marketing by a few Correspondence Education Institutes.

(ii) Certificate Courses in computer, journalism, medical laboratory technology, by a few correspondence education institutes.

Enrolment in Distance Education Institutes is low and uneven:

(i) Less than 5% of total enrolment in higher education. In 1982-83 out of a total enrolment of 3,296,698 only 159,712 were in correspondence stream.

(ii) Negligible percentage of students in secondary levels.

Enrolment in independent/autonomous distance education institutes is increasing fast.

(i) A.P. Open University enrolment is as follows:

1984-85 - 11,244
1985-86 - 15,702
1986-87 - 19,271

(ii) IGNOU is getting a large number of requests for application forms for its first two courses Diploma in Management and Diploma in Distance Education.

Fees for Distance Education are more than for Formal Education.

Formal institutes charge less than Rs.200 per year in an undergraduate programme whereas correspondence institutes charge over Rs.400/-. For diploma programmes in professional subjects the fee is very high.

Distance Education Institutions are mostly single media based and not multi-media based:

(i) Almost all Correspondence Institutes of general universities have a single medium instructional system

(ii) Radio Broadcasting is used in a limited way by 3 or 4 Institutes

(iii) Television Broadcasting is almost nil at higher levels of instruction

(iv) Radio broadcasting is limited in school level instruction

(v) The Open Schools' instruction system lacks TV/radio Broadcasting Components

Student support services are very weak. There are

(i) not many regional study centres
(ii) limited tutoring/counselling
(iii)inadequate library and other facilities

The evaluation system is traditional and imperfect:

(i) mostly based on annual examination similar to that of conventional institutes

(ii) absence of continuing assessment system

Planning and Management of DE institutes are to a great extent unscientific and do not follow any principles of sound educational administration:

(i) Courses are started without any needs assessment

(ii) Organisation structures are built in an ad hoc way.

Some Distance Education Institutes are treated as money earning agencies. For example the Institute of Correspondence Education, Madras University, contributes considerable share of its receipts to the University Fund. The receipts in the last five years are shown below:

1981-82 - Rs. 7,975,113
1982-83 - Rs. 7,725,073
1983-84 - Rs. 14,203,000
1984-85 - Rs. 16,927,824
1985-86 - Rs. 34,848,940

The Institute has to provide 20% of its receipts to the General Fund of the University every year.

Distance Education Institutes lack resources. Correspondence Institutes get limited grants from UGC and practically nothing from their Universities or State Governments. Some Institutes have become non-viable.

Co-ordination among various sectors and institution of distance education is lacking. There is no co-ordination among State Open Universities, Correspondence Institutes, Open Schools, Agricultural Universities, Adult Education Directorates, etc. Each institute runs its programmes in its own way. No attempt is made to co-ordinate education at primary, secondary, higher and non-formal levels.

IV. COOPERATION IN DISTANCE EDUCATION*

There has been little experience of cooperation in distance education in India at any level. This section describes this experience, and goes on to cover needs and possibilities for future cooperation at some length.

1.0 National Co-operation

1.1 In India, central government has responsibility for the coordination and maintenance of standards of education, while education itself is a state responsibility. In the past, this has meant that each state takes little interest in what happens in distance education in the others. Some correspondence and distance-teaching institutions enrol students outside the state boundary. In particular the Open School, which is under a national body, the Central Board of Secondary Education, operates nationally. Language is one of the key limiting factors in inter-state enrolments: while correspondence institutes normally offer courses in the local languages and English, the majority of students elect to study in the local language, and thus choose the local institution. In addition, the university correspondence directorates have largely seen themselves as affiliated to the parent university rather than other correspondence directorates - only a few have been outward looking. These factors have resulted in a history of little cooperation or collaboration.

1.2 The University Grants Commission (UGC) has been responsible directly or indirectly for attempts to coordinate to date, resulting from the fact that the Government of India assigned to the UGC responsibility for the coordination and maintenance of standards in higher education. In 1961 the UGC set up a committee to consider correspondence education, which resulted in the establishment of the University of Delhi Directorate of Correspondence courses. As other universities followed suit, the UGC established a committee for part-time education and correspondence courses. Anxious to improve standards, the committee supported new initiatives, and backed the early plans for an Open University documented in part 1 of this paper. It also tried to promote coordination through encouraging meetings and associations. In 1972 the first national seminar on correspondence education commented on the lack of collaboration and the 'needless duplication' of courses. Meanwhile an educational delegation to the USSR had brought into focus the potential of correspondence education. Late in 1972 the UGC held a special meeting to consider a proposal from Professor Bakhshish Singh to set up a National Institute for Correspondence Education. This would be a central body for coordination, training and research. The proposal was accepted, but deferred in 1973, probably because a proposal for an Open University was again on the agenda.

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* This section was compiled by Janet Jenkins in collaboration with P Satyanaryana

In 1974 the UGC sponsored a conference of directors of correspondence courses. On this occasion, there was little mention of collaboration. Two years later, a National Seminar on Correspondence Education at Punjabi University resolved to form a National Council for Correspondence Education. This Council was established with Bakhshish Singh as its first president. Initially the Council was quite active. In 1978, India hosted the world conference of ICCE, with Professor Bakhshish Singh as conference host. The NCCE produced a special publication for this conference, and provided other support. Professor Singh then began a term as President of ICCE, and the national association has not been very active since. A third National Seminar on Correspondence Education in 1982 again complained of 'Correspondence Course Institutes ... functioning in isolation from one another', and a fourth seminar urged that, while the NCCE should remain 'the only representative body of distance education in the country', a 'central organisation' was needed for research, training and coordination of activities in distance education. The NCCE thus recognised its own limitations.

1.3 Some isolated efforts have been made to encourage collaborative work, mainly on the initiative of Punjabi University, Patiala. Two workshops occurred for writers in specific subjects, one for history, the other for political sciences. In addition, a course in defense studies offered by Punjabi University was also offered by Punjab University. These initiatives were some years ago, and have not been followed up.

1.4 Other attempts at National Cooperation have been limited to training. Over the last 10 years 24 regional seminars on correspondence education were conducted.

1.5 1985 brought a major change and the scene is now set for greater collaboration. The Act of Parliament establishing the Indira Gandhi National Open University assigned to it the task of coordination and maintenance of standards for distance education.

As yet, it is too early to say how successful IGNOU will be. But initial action promises well:

* a conference of directors of correspondence institutes in January 1986 (see section x);

* a small committee with a representative from each of the concerned sectors has been established to devise guidelines for coordination and oversee their implementation;

* a national conference on distance education was jointly organised by IGNOU, the Association of Indian Universities and Gujarat University to coincide with the annual meeting of Vice-Chancellors November 1986. This gave considerable publicity to distance education;

* in an attempt to improve standards nationally, IGNOU is introducing in 1987 a diploma course in distance education. This will provide training to personnel in all kinds of distance teaching. As a result of initial publicity, the course has attracted 3,000 enquiries. A Masters level course will be introduced as a follow on.

* the university has established a partnership with the Union Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development for its course for rural development officers. It is free to establish other such cross-sectorial links for its professional courses.

* IGNOU is beginning to include staff from other universities in training visits. Some staff from Andhra Pradesh Open University were nominated by IGNOU for ODA-sponsored visits to Britain.

1.6 Recently, two states, Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra, have taken steps to establish State Open Schools. The Director of the Open School, New Delhi, is on the board of both these schools, and the Open School course material is freely available to these schools to use as a model, to translate or adapt.

2.0 International cooperation and links have been on the same small scale as national cooperation.

2.1 In recent years, the most notable regional linkage has been through Unesco, particularly the Consortium on innovation within the framework of the Regional Cooperation Programme in Higher Education for Development in Asia and the Pacific. This includes an attachment programme at the Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University (STOU), Thailand, which was attended by two delegates from India (1985), a workshop on the production of distance teaching materials in 1985 at STOU; on broadcast materials at Allama Iqbal Open University (1986); two Indians attended each; finally a national workshop on production of distance education materials took place in India in October 1986. People from correspondence institutes and open universities attended. Finally, Unesco organised a mission to look at distance education in China, and the Vice-Chancellor of the IGNOU attended from India. Unesco has also had a role in the development of distance education through its support for INSAT and the development of educational broadcasting at CIET. The current Unesco programme is due to end in 1987.

2.2 Internationally, the hosting of the ICCE conference and the subsequent Presidency of Professor Bakhshish Singh strengthened contacts. India has not so far, however, been much involved with regional distance education associations. IGNOU, however, hosted an international seminar on distance education and experiences of open universities in November 1985, and is working to create links with Open Universities in China, Thailand, Pakistan and Indonesia. Some of these links are already strong and beneficial.

2.3 The most substantial bilateral links have been and remain with Britain. From the mid seventies there have been several contacts with

the British Open University: for example, it provided personnel for one of the workshops listed in section 1.3, a series of workshops in 1978, and some more recently. Indians have attended the International Extension College short course on distance teaching at the University of London Institute of Education. One of these now heads the Open School, New Delhi, while the Director of the EMRC Pune took his Masters degree at ULIE with a specialisation in distance education. The British government has sponsored most of these activities, and has also supported occasional study tours, including some state-level visits to Britain and its Open University. The UKOU model of distance education has as a result had some influence on the development of distance education in the region, although ideas have been adapted rather than borrowed wholesale.

2.4 With the advent of IGNOU, further bilateral links are developing, with Britain through the British Council, ODA (funded by ODA) and with universities in other Commonwealth countries, such as Athabasca University, Canada. Proposed links include staff exchanges, supply of equipment, consultancy, training, and in the case of Athabasca University and the International Extension College, joint planning and development of some materials for mutual use.

3.0 Experience of cooperation in India at all levels has thus been rather limited. National cooperation is not easy, given the huge size and relatively weak infrastructure of the country, the fact that education is the responsibility of the separate states, and language differences which affect education at all levels. International collaboration has also been limited. In the past, this has to a great extent been because it has not been seen as important. Many of the Correspondence Institutes have been and remain parochial in their outlook, relating only to the university of which they are part. Some are demoralised and of a poor standard. Despite these weaknesses and constraints, India has built up considerable expertise in distance education and has confidence in her ability to develop indigenous models. There is also amongst the more dynamic sectors an awareness of the need to change, and the conditions for that change to take place are now being created. Indian distance educators are now beginning to look outward, and have articulated a number of ways in which international collaboration could help the development of distance education in India.

V. POSSIBILITIES FOR NEW INITIATIVES

These suggestions have arisen from discussion with distance education in India. The presentation below does not imply any order of importance.

1.0 Information

The following information needs were identified:

1.1 Information on distance teaching institutions, their organisation and structure, staffing patterns, methods of course production, and other

administrative features. This would be of particular use to institutions in process of development or change. This could also include detailed explanations of institutions of special interest, either within the Commonwealth or of interest to Commonwealth countries, for example, studies of China and USSR. Such information could include the translation of documents into English.

1.2 Information on courses and course materials available, including print, audio and video media. The information would need to enclose a brief description of the item to a standardised format and distribution of information would imply a willingness to distribute a sample to any other interested institution, and possibly readiness to agree terms of sale or reproduction.

1.3 Information such as articles, abstracts, reviews, conference articles, reports, possibly in a form to feed local journals or newsletters.

1.4 Information on other resources would also be valuable: this could include collections of extracts or papers available for subject teaching or on distance education; it could also include lists of suitable recommended equipment for production, record keeping, or distribution, possibly with concessionary rates arranged.

This information would best be disseminated by a central body, which would collect from and distribute information to regional centres following a standard format. To cover India effectively, there would probably need to be a main centre and some subsidiary centres. Ideally, the main regional centre would not only hold information but also hold a collection of all materials listed as available for exchange, and a regional specialist library on distance education.

2.0 Materials

It would be useful to explore possibilities of institutions using each others' courses. At the university level, it should be possible for each user to allocate a credit equivalence to materials without too much difficulty. Materials most suitable for sharing, because less culture bound, are in science and technology; arts subjects, including languages, are next, with social sciences least suitable.

Materials exchange can take two forms, one-way traffic where one institution offers the courses of another, and full exchange, where two institutions mutually offer the same courses. In the first case, IGNOU intends to encourage sharing on a national scale, with only one institution of open learning developing materials in a particular subject and making those materials available to others. The Open Schools are starting to do this already. The idea that this should be tried internationally is therefore feasible; a start could be made if each open university were to select and offer a few credit courses from others abroad.

As for the full exchange, the IGNOU and Athabasca University are starting to experiment with this on a pilot basis; each university will develop a credit course, IGNOU in Indian Art, and Athabasca in a

subject to be agreed, and each course will be on offer in both universities. The details of this experiment are currently being finalised.

A central organisation would be helpful to support such exchange on a large scale. In particular, besides providing information and helping establish links, it would be needed to negotiate terms of use quickly, and probably to arrange credit or provide a bridging loan while foreign exchange arrangements were made.

3.0 **Training**

Staff training was given high priority by numerous distance educators. There are some experienced trainers in India, and some centres which have already organised training are a useful resource both nationally and regionally. These include NCERT for distance education, DECU for rural television, and some of the EMRCs for broadcast applications. The CIEFL, Hyderabad, has a special expertise in training for teaching English as a Second Language, including design and development of distance teaching materials. Some of the better distance teaching institutions such as the Open School and the Andhra Pradesh Open University have staff who can make valuable contributions to training. The Indira Gandhi National Open University is, however, set to become the main training institution in India, with the launch of its Diploma in Distance Education in early 1987, followed by a Masters in 1988. Besides its current expertise in materials production, it also has capacity to train staff in teaching English as a second language at a distance. It will also by necessity develop expertise in training for audio and video production even before its studio facilities are complete.

These facilities will not however be sufficient. There is a need to train the trainers. Such training could take the form of internationally run refresher courses or specialist courses; it could also include training attachments to institutions elsewhere; and exchange visits could serve as vitalising refresher courses. The development of interinstitutional links for such exchanges is seen as most important by many of the state institutions.

There is probably also a temporary need for more inputs into basic training, in particular for the design and development of multi-media materials and the production of audiovisual components. Another kind of training could be subject-specific, for example for history writers and tutors. There is a strong feeling that such training should be short and take place in India in order to benefit larger numbers.

4.0 Joint materials development is hardly considered by most institutions, who are tied to the syllabuses of their partner universities. The Open Institutions are however interested in this as a future possibility.

4.1 One model would be to form an international group to examine a particular subject area. An example quoted was management. The group would identify topics where the content varied little from country to

country: in management, these would be post-elementary topics, as the basic material is more closely tied to culture and environment. After identifying topics, the team would examine course materials submitted by various institutions, select suitable ones, and adapt them for common international use. This would only be possible for a restricted number of topics.

4.2 Another model is bilateral, and IGNOU and the International Extension College are planning to experiment with this in the joint development of parts of their diploma and Masters courses in distance education. After working together on syllabus development, the two institutions expect to use some of each others' units, and to work together on the development of other units, while yet further units will be separately developed.

4.3 These proposals tie in with other suggestions that international interest groups are needed. These could include subjects areas, particularly relatively new subjects like women's studies, and sectors such as disabled students. A further interest group might be concerned with promoting research, although this is unlikely to be successful internationally without a strong local research base.

5.0 Two special cases where international collaboration could be beneficial are the use of distance education for first, technician and vocational education, and second, agriculture, rural and community development, including health.

In the first case, a strong shift is needed in attitudes to get technical and vocational subjects accepted generally, and to convince people that distance methods may be used well for such education. In the latter case, effective education right through the sector is inhibited by barriers between ministries, although IGNOU has already crossed one barrier by working in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development for its course for rural development cadres. There is also considerable resistance to the idea that distance education can be effective as a tool for mass education and rural development. In India, it is seen largely as something for tertiary studies. These two sectors are so important, and these problems so familiar from other countries, that there may be a case for establishing international units to promote distance education for these purposes.

6.0 **Evaluation**

Evaluation of distance education in India is weak. The attitude of many is negative. The suggestion was made that distance education institutions in India badly need to introduce the following kinds of evaluation:

6.1 Materials evaluation

This could be approached in three ways:

(a) the institution could do it;

(b) an institution could invite another (with its responsibility for maintaining standards, IGNOU is likely to develop expertise);
(c) interest groups such as those described in section 4.1 could do it on behalf of an international body.

6.2 Evaluation of other parts of the system such as student support services.

6.3 Evaluation of the institution as a whole every five years or so.

All these would benefit from international guidelines on evaluation and standardisation of guidelines. Evaluation as described in 6.3 would normally need the participation of an external evaluator, and an international service could nominate suitable people.

7.0 International gatherings

A number of opportunities are available to Indians for national regional and international gatherings of distance educators. Some people however suggested that regular Commonwealth conferences of distance educators would provide a useful additional forum, particularly since the Commonwealth shares the English language and communication is thus easy. Such conferences should provide opportunities to attend to those who seldom get such a chance.

8.0 Implementation

The IGNOU is well placed to become a regional centre for new initiatives. It is already developing a strong resource base, and with its obligation to coordinate and maintain standards, it will be the most effective organ in India to carry out these tasks. It is also likely to become a resource for other Commonwealth countries in Asia. Any initiatives, however, should be carefully coordinated with steps towards regional collaboration taken in non-Commonwealth countries (see Asia region paper).

There will probably be a need for subsidiary centres in India at least to carry information. These could be designated by IGNOU as appropriate.

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