Indira Gandhi National Open University
Staff Training and Research Institute of
Distance Education

MDE-414
Management of Distance Education

Block

3

PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT OF DISTANCE EDUCATION

MDE-414: Management of Distance Education

(New Course in place of ES-314 : Management of Distance Education)

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Dr. Rose Nembiakkim, STRIDE
Dr. Satya Sundar Sethy, STRIDE

COURSE TEAM (REVISION)

Course Contributors

Mr. C.R. Pillai (Units 1 & 2)

Prof. C.R.K. Murthy
(Units 3 & 4)

Prof. C.R.K. Murthy and
Mr. C.R. Pillai (Unit 5)

Course Coordination

Prof. C.R.K. Murthy
STRIDE, IGNOU
New Delhi

Content & Language Editor

Mr. C.R. Pillai
Ex-Director (Planning)
IGNOU, New Delhi

Unit Design &
Format Editor

Prof. C.R.K. Murthy
STRIDE, IGNOU
New Delhi

PRINT PRODUCTION

Ms. Promila Soni
Section Officer (Publication)
STRIDE, IGNOU, New Delhi

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MDE-414: Management of Distance Education

Course Outline

BLOCK INTRODUCTION

In the closing decades of the 20th century, a series of global conferences helped to build a worldwide consensus on key challenges to humankind, especially on economic and social issues. This consensus has been articulated in the form of an overarching guide known as the United Nations Millennium Declaration of September 2000. A set of Millennium Development goals (MDGs) defines the key components of a global agenda for the twenty-first century. These goals include: reduction of poverty, universal primary education, progress towards gender equality and the empowerment of women, and improvements in health and environment. Central to all these tasks is education, and the provision of quality education for all is the paramount challenge for all countries. The right to education is a human right and unless it is secured, no other goals are likely to be achieved. In order to make this happen, the right to education must be transformed from idea to reality.

How do nations go about it, especially the developing countries? Programmes like "Education For All (EFA)" addresses issues like equity, access, gender disparities, development of sustainable models of literacy, and overall improvements in the quality of education. To sustain these efforts, several other issues like expansion and improvement of teacher education, renewal and growth of secondary education, a higher growth of good quality higher education and reforms of universities have to be addressed. In order to make these happen, national governments need to consider changes in policy and planning frameworks focusing on transition from secondary to higher education, for example, and enhancing access and equity through diversified curricula, programmes of technical and vocational education and training and support to teachers and other education personnel for their professional development.

It has become necessary for nations to respond to these challenges and the opportunities they offer. The growing process of globalisation of education has added new dimensions to these challenges. Development of policy instruments for quality assurance and accreditation as well as increased applications of information and communication technologies for enhancing quality, access and equity is all part of this response. This is the context in which expansion of distance education systems through enhanced applications of ICTs has become a key element of these strategies.

As a student of distance education, you will have by now got fairly familiar with the special features and characteristics of distance education. Nevertheless, at the risk of being repetitive, it would be useful to recapitulate some of the distinguishing features of distance education at this point for a better appreciation of its unique nature from the perspective of its organisation and structure.

The growth of distance education methods of delivery is a key feature of education from the latter half of the 20th century. There are three primary reasons for this trend. The first is the need to promote the principle of inclusive education by providing opportunities to students who were denied access to traditional full-time institutions for several reasons: shortages in the number of places available, the students' inability to join full-time

institutions due to economic reasons, work commitments or geographical distances, and not infrequently, the poor quality and/or inadequacy of the prior learning experience of many students. Secondly, the social demand for education continues to rise and it becomes necessary to expand the provision for education to significantly large numbers of learners. And thirdly, the shrinking resources for education make the quest for alternate and more cost-effective forms of delivery of education an unavoidable necessity.

The contexts in which distance education provision is made also vary. Many tertiary education institutions introduced distance education programmes to meet national priorities or to reach specific groups such as rural community workers; some did so to provide working professionals to improve their knowledge or qualifications; some others adopted distance education strategies to support their teaching approach; some were fascinated by the opportunities for innovative teaching using distance education methods that ICTs have created; and some institutions did it simply to enlarge their student number and augment their income.

There have also been instances around the world in which countries, especially in Africa and Asia, faced with the problems of learner access to the conventional schooling systems, have established Open Schools at the primary and secondary levels to offer courses and programmes through distance education methods. We also know of instances of establishment of Open schools, prompted mainly by inherent weaknesses in the mainstream schooling systems that would have taken years of structural changes to make improvements effective. Open Schools offer a reasonably quick institutional solution to the problem as they function largely outside the mainstream schooling system and are not affected by the slow processes of structural changes in the mainstream school system.

The establishment and management of these new platforms and the organisation and maintenance of their structures and processes are vastly different from those of setting up and managing any conventional school or college at a specified location. Establishing distance education systems and managing them require new skills and new competences.

We shall look at the development of these skills and competences in this Block. Before we proceed, however, we wish to clarify that this Bock is addressed primarily to those who already have some broad familiarity with distance education systems and the ways of their functioning, and who wish to make distance education management as a career or profession.

This Block comprises of five units. Unit 1 tries to present the major concepts and the basic features of ODL in the Layman's language. Our attempt in this Unit is to acquaint you, as future distance education planners and managers, with the ideas and thoughts that drive open learning and distance education and to enhance your understanding of the major attributes of ODL. Unit 2 takes you, through the various methods and practices followed by distance education providers while Unit 3 provides with an insight into the organisation and structure of distance education institutions. Unit 4 and 5 seek to acquaint you with the issues involved in the management of distance education systems and institutions.

LET US BEGIN HERE

Study Guide

The course on Management of Distance Education is divided into five Blocks. This is the third of them. It comprises five units in all. A schematic representation of the design of units is given below to facilitate your access to the content presented here.

Unit X*

X.1 Introduction

X.2 Objectives

X.3 Section I (Main Theme)

X.3.1 Sub-section I of Section I

X.3.2 Sub-section 2 of Section I

.....

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Check Your Progress

X.4 Section 2 (Main Theme)

X.4.1 Sub-section I of Section 2

X.4.2 Sub-section 2 of Section 2

.....

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Check Your Progress

X.n Let Us Sum Up

Check Your Progress: Possible Answers

Wherever, check your progress exercises or their possible answers appear; they are in boxes to stand out from the rest of the text

* 'X' stands for the serial number of the unit concerned.

As the scheme suggests, we have divided the units into sections for easy reading and better comprehension. Each section is indicated distinctly by bold capitals[1] and each sub-section by relatively smaller but bold[2] upper and lower typeface. The significant divisions within sub-sections are in still smaller but bold** upper and lower typeface so as to make it easier for you to see their place within sub-sections. For purposes of uniformity, we have employed the same scheme of 'partitioning' in every unit throughout the course.

1 BOLD CAPITALS

2 relatively smaller but bold

** *Still smaller but bold*

We begin each unit with the section 'Introduction' followed by 'Objectives', which articulate briefly

- What we have presented in the unit, and
- What we expect from you once you have finished working on the unit.

In the last section of each unit, under the heading, 'Let Us Sum Up', we summarise the whole unit for the purposes of recapitulation and ready reference.

Besides, we have given self-check exercises under the caption 'Check Your Progress' at a few places in each unit and at the end of the unit is given possible answers to the questions set in these exercises.

What, perhaps, you ought to do is to go through the units and jot down important points as you read in *the space provided* in *the margin.* **(Broad margins in the booklet are there for you to write your notes on.** Make your notes as you work through the materials. This will help you prepare for the examination and also help in assimilating the content. Besides, you will be able to save on time. Do use these margins.) This will help you keep track of and assimilate what you have been reading in the unit, answer the Check Your Progress exercises and the, assignment questions and easily identify the item(s) to be clarified.

We hope that we have given enough space for you to work on the Check Your Progress exercises. The purpose of giving self-check exercises will be served satisfactorily if you compare your answers with the possible ones given at the end of each unit after having written your answer in the blank space. You may be tempted to have a furtive glance at the possible answer(s), as soon as you come across an exercise. But we do hope that you will overcome the temptation and turn to the possible answers (which are not necessarily the best answers) only after you have written yours.

These exercises are not meant to be submitted to us for correction or evaluation. Instead, the exercises are to function as a study tool to help you keep on the right track as you read the units.

On an average, each block will have at least one major part of the assignment. At times an assignment may expect you to work through more than one unit to prepare your responses. In all, you may have to work on one assignment consisting of few questions for this course. Assignments are sent separately and they are changed every year.

We suggest the following norms to be strictly practised while you are working through the assignments.

- Write your roll number legibly.
- Before you put anything down in words, assimilate what you have read, integrate it with what you have gathered from your experience to build your answer, and preferably prepare a concept map before starting to write it.
- Make the best use of the block and additional reading materials by diligently working through the assignments.

Mail us

At the end of this block, we have provided a questionnaire to be filled by you after you complete reading this block. Your feedback will be very useful for future revision and maintenance of the course. Please take note of the time you devote in studying this block. Maybe you complete this block after 5-6 sittings. But for every sitting, kindly note the time separately so that you can categorically say how much time you took to read this block. You can send the feedback questionnaire by post or you can e-mail the same to: crkmurthy@ignou.ac.in. You may also contact us for any difficulties related to the programme in general and MDE-414 in particular.

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THE PEOPLE'S
UNIVERSITY

UNIT 1 UNDERSTANDING DISTANCE EDUCATION SYSTEMS

Structure

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Distance education discourse in recent times has acquired its own vocabulary. From simple tuition through the postal medium of correspondence to most sophisticated use of communication technologies, distance education has traversed at least five generations of transformation. And yet, its hard core remains unchanged. And that, in simple terms, is the fact that learning takes place at some place away from where the teacher is. In order to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of that learning, a variety of support systems have been pressed into service. These include personal interaction with learners as well as technology-mediated learner support. The concept of open learning that has emerged with the launch of the UKOU has added another dimension to the use of distance learning practices often leading to the assumption that open learning and distance education are two sides of the same coin. We thought it was necessary to acquire some clarity about the several concepts and practices that presently constitute the hard core of distance education. We hope that what follows in this Unit will provide you with a clear understanding of the concepts uncluttered by the confusion that semantics often create. We must hasten to add that this presentation is not designed for any academic debate on distance education, but merely to enhance the understanding of the system of potential practitioners.

1.2 OBJECTIVES

After studying this unit, you should be able to:

- discuss as a potential distance education professional, the fundamental distinctions between different concepts and practices in open learning and distance education that have featured in its phenomenal growth in recent decades;
- analyse the basic concepts and their theoretical and practical underpinnings that will help you in planning and managing distance education systems;
- examine the specific objectives and purposes that distance education systems serve in different environments and contexts and relate their design and development to those environments and contexts;
- explain yourself with some significant lessons distilled from the experience of the last four decades of growth of open learning and distance education systems across the world; and
- appreciate the broad perspective in which open universities have emerged as a viable option to address the issue of access to education in the closing decades of the twentieth century.

1.3 THE EMERGENCE OF OPEN LEARNING AND DISTANCE EDUCATION

The revival of the world economy following the Second World War demanded extraordinary efforts. The death and destruction during the war ruined the world. It required large numbers of people with the knowledge, skills and competence to revive the industries, establish new ones and to run them. Educational provision, especially at the higher levels, needed to be expanded rapidly. Higher education that was essentially an elite pursuit so far turned into mass education. Traditional ways of education and training were not capable of sustaining this transformation. Governments and other educational providers started looking for alternate methods that could accelerate the process. Non-formal education that has thus far been peripheral to the mainstream educational processes began to move centre stage. The development of telecommunications technology in the latter half of the twentieth century provided a big boost to these efforts.

The distinction for being the first distance teaching university goes to the University of South Africa (UNISA) established in 1876 as an examining body in Africa for London University's external examinations. In 1946, UNISA was authorised through legislation to start its own teaching programmes using the method of postal tuition. Soon the UNISA and its correspondence tuition method became very popular in Africa, and the UNISA continues to function (with the merger of other distance teaching institutions in South Africa) as one of the 20 Mega Universities in the world today.

The former Soviet Union and China expanded their education and training provision vastly in the 1950s and 1960s using correspondence tuition supplemented with radio and TV broadcasts. The Chinese Radio and

Television University and the Shanghai Television Institute are two of the world's largest distance education institutions today. But the most powerful impetus for the distance education movement across the world was the successful launch of the UK Open University in 1969. This was followed in quick succession by the establishment of several open universities in many countries. We shall take a close look at the evolution of this movement later in this Unit. But first, let us understand a few basics.

1.3.1 What is Distance Education?

It is not as though distance education suddenly emerged in the middle of the twentieth century. It all started around the time the mail service was launched in Britain around 1840. The credit for launching the first ever postal tuition initiative must go to Isaac Pitman who started teaching shorthand in 1837 using post cards for mailing lessons and getting the practice work done by students back for correction by mail. In 1858, the University of London made a radical departure from convention when it decided that it was not necessary that a student should be presented by an institution where he/she has studied, to take its examinations. Perhaps, it was the first step in delinking formal institutional studies from earning university degrees; self- study became a part of the educational process. London University did not offer any tutorial support for self-study, but several private institutions stepped in to fill he gap and offered tutorial support, mostly through correspondence. Not unexpectedly, many among them also sensed a commercial opportunity in the field.

It was during the middle of the 20th century that pressure began to build on governments and the universities to expand opportunities for education to larger numbers. And, there were other pressures too. As we noted earlier, post-war reconstruction of economies, post-colonial nation-building efforts of many new countries, and still later, the rising costs of overseas education, have all contributed to distance education becoming an attractive option.

Distance education is not just one single method of teaching and learning. It is a configuration of several approaches and systems depending upon the specific needs and also upon specific situations. Distance education systems and institutions serve a variety of purposes ranging from:

- augmentation of educational provision especially for the adults and the working population;
- expansion of provision for professional, technical and vocational education for meeting the identified needs of specified industries and other productive sectors of the economy;
- meeting the needs of training of teachers; and
- the education and training of techno-managerial personnel required for emerging economies.

At its core, distance education is characterised by the following distinct features:

- the learner and the teacher are separated in time and space;
- the teaching-learning transaction has to be facilitated by some degree of interaction through appropriate mediation;
- comprehensiveness of the learning experience is an important influence on the learning outcomes;

- since most distance learners also happen to be mature adults, their learning styles and preferences vary as between individuals and groups.

With the recent growth of distance education that found the substitution of the traditional teacher with a variety of learning resources, the importance of resource-based learning as a means of improving the quality of education gained greater attention and recognition. The traditional universities also began to adopt resource-based teaching and learning practices as a means to improve the quality of their educational provision. Somehow, this trend, combined with the growing use of distance education methods by conventional universities too, to widen access, gave rise to the belief that resource-based learning and distance education serve the same purpose. It would therefore be useful, from the planning perspective, to clarify a few concepts at this stage.

Distance education describes a set of teaching and learning strategies (or educational methods) that can be used to overcome spatial and temporal separation between teachers and learners. These strategies or methods can be integrated into any education programme and, potentially, used in any combination with any other teaching and learning strategies in the provision of education (including those strategies that demand the bringing together of teachers and learners at the same time and/or place). Put differently, distance education is teaching and learning in which learning normally takes place at a place different from teaching.

1.3.2 Resource-based Learning

Resource-based learning involves the use of instructionally designed resources for the communication of curriculum between teachers and learners through a variety of different media. Resource-based learning methods can be integrated with any education programme, using any mix of contact and distance education strategies. Resource-based learning need not necessarily involve separation of teachers from learners in time or space; it is nevertheless, used to overcome such separation. In other words, while distance education can usefully employ resource-based learning strategies to enhance its effectiveness, it is not essential that all resource-based learning must essentially be part of distance education methods.

Arbitrary though this distinction is, it helps to understand that the move towards resource-based learning does not, by itself, achieve the goals of distance education or vice versa. Most distance education programmes seek to overcome separation in time and space with the use of resources; in some cases, telecommunication technologies such as video-conferencing are used only to get over the problem of distance. Conversely, many efforts to develop educational resources have not systematically focused on achieving economies of scale that have historically provided the central motivation to most distance education programmes.

The major objectives behind the drive towards resource-based learning are:

- breaking down the traditional notion that a talking teacher is the most effective strategy for communicating the curriculum;

- directing a significantly large proportion of total expenditure to the design and development of high quality resources, as a strategy for building and assuring the quality of educational provision;

- implementing strategies to shift the role of the teacher from simply talking to passive students to stimulating engagement and interaction between them and the teachers;

- investigating the potential that the integration of new educational technologies with teaching and learning environments has for supporting, improving or enhancing those environments.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i) Space is given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answer with the one given at the end of the unit.

What factors led to distance education becoming an attractive option during 20th century? (Answer in about 40 words).

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1.3.3 Technology-enhanced Learning

This is yet another misconception that is gaining ground, which considers that distance education' and 'education technology' are interchangeable, or is a single composite term. The lack of clarity about these concepts often leads to poor quality strategic planning. In many ways, it is similar to the conceptual integration of open learning and distance education (as open and distance learning) that led to a notion that all distance education is intrinsically "open". Similarly, many people in the developing countries who are harnessing educational technologies assume that these technologies ensure the benefits of good quality distance education. What they are really doing, in most cases, is simply finding technology-enhanced ways of replicating traditional, face-to-face education models. Many such projects have blazed a sad trail of failed educational technology projects, most notably in applications of broadcasting technologies to transmit lecture-type instruction, wasting huge amounts of time and money. The positive impact of these failures is that planners in developing countries that have still to launch distance education programmes on a large scale do not have to repeat these costly experiments.

It follows that attempts at harnessing the potential of different technologies to support interventions in education need not be regarded as distance education interventions. Technologies can be applied in a range of ways that can support an almost limitless combination of teaching and learning strategies, not all of which are necessarily distance education interventions.

1.3.4 Need for Increased Flexibility

As we noted at the beginning of this Unit, more and more countries and their education providers are now seeking to explore and implement new ways of providing educational opportunities to learners. Growing integration of distance education and resource-based learning methods and practices into education systems is putting tremendous pressure on the capacity of those systems to manage them effectively.

Unplanned changes undermine many attempts to widen access to education, and often, those who push such changes find themselves working against administrative systems that are designed almost entirely for traditional face-to-face education for students of particular age and educational achievements. It is not that these systems are inadequate or unresponsive, but it is only one type of configuration among many alternatives. Changes in institutional and national administrative systemshave generally lagged behind processes of building new educational configurations.

Views are gaining ground that removal of all artificial distinctions between distance and face-to-face education practices can help to simplify educational policy frameworks, while ensuring the type of flexibility needed to support continuing adaptation and improvement of education practices of all education providers. Within such national and/or institutional policy frameworks, it would be useful to consider the implementation of a a range of measures that include distance education, technology-enhanced education and resource-based education, each supporting and reinforcing changes at the institutional level.

The need for greater flexibility is particularly relevant to a large number of smaller countries that have relatively smaller populations, especially those in Africa and Asia. In most of these developing countries, the size of the education systems is also very small. It will be very difficult for most of them to establish and maintain parallel education systems based on the modes of delivery of educational services. Small nations will have little or no option but to diversify their delivery systems, and make provision for distance education along with conventional class-room based teaching. In other words, mainstreaming distance education provision along with traditional education suggests itself as a strong option for expanding educational opportunities and to sustain the overall development of the education system as a whole.

1.3.5 What is Open Learning?

The founding of the UK Open University in 1969 was a big breakthrough in many ways. First, it established the philosophy of open access to university education, that is, anyone who is interested and willing to pursue a university programme, irrespective of their prior learning attainments, could join the UKOU. Second, it developed new approaches to curriculum design, course development and delivery of educational programmes. Third, it enlisted the support of broadcast television in a big way to reach out to widely dispersed student groups across the United Kingdom. And finally, it laid out its systems and processes in a manner that inspired credibility and assured the quality of its products and services.

By all accounts, the launch of the UKOU was a big success. It was a dramatic move not just to widen the gates of the university but more importantly, it was a statement about what proper public involvement can do for distance education that was so far dominated by the private sector. Distance education systems and methods acquired credibility, respect and a place in the education landscape in most education systems across the world. The establishment of the UKOU was followed in quick succession by the establishment of similar universities in South Korea (1972), Pakistan (1974), Thailand (1978), China (1979), Indonesia (1984), India (1985) and so on. These institutions are generally known as single mode open universities.

1.3.6 What is Open and Distance Learning?

At this point, it would be worthwhile to pause for a moment and reflect on the commonly used expression "open and distance learning", and understand what it really means. Open learning and distance education are two separate and distinct concepts each with its own identity and context. As mentioned in the context of the UKOU, open learning refers to a philosophy or approach that underpins the organisation of educational provision at the higher education level. This approach does not insist that prior educational attainment of a specified type is pre-requisite for the next higher stage of education. Thus, any mature student who is willing to learn and is motivated, could enrol in a degree programme even if he/she has no previous educational qualification that would normally entitle him/her to join a university. This is the approach that the UKOU defines as "open to all, irrespective of prior educational requirements".

Distance education, on the other hand, refers to the methods of delivery of educational programmes and services. What defines the distance mode is the physical separation of the learners from their teachers. In this mode, teaching-learning transactions do not take place synchronously, or at a specified place. Learners have the choice to determine when they want to learn and where. Add to that another choice about what they want to learn. Having made their choices, distance learners are provided the freedom and the facilities to access a variety of learning resources to learn from. Most often, a range of technological means are deployed to enable learners to access these resources. They include printed materials, audio and video tapes, radio and television broadcasts, CDs/DVDs, worldwide web and the Internet. Web-based interactive tutoring as well as traditional face-to-face interaction is also part of the learner support provision.

While most of the open learning programmes are normally delivered through the distance mode, it is not necessary that all distance learning programmes should necessarily be open learning programmes as well. Advances in technology have made it possible for several universities to deliver classroom teaching of their normal programmes to large groups of students on or off campus or even after hours or on holidays. Most of the universities in the developed countries, as we noted earlier, now use some form of distance teaching and learning in their programmes. However, the greatest push for distance education in the latter half of the twentieth century came from the open universities. This association of distance education with open learning became so strong that the two concepts came to be clubbed together to denominate a new genre of educational provision. The globalisation of education provision that now transcends national boundaries has given this association greater substance and strength.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: i) Space is given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answer with the one given at the end of the unit.

What do you understand by the concepts 'Open Learning' and 'Distance Education'? (Answer in about 40 words).

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1.4 WHY DISTANCE EDUCATION?

The perception about higher education as an elitist pursuit has changed radically in the second half of the twentieth century. The relevant age-group participation ratio in higher education has vastly increased in recent times across the world. In the developed world, it is now well over 50%. Most developing countries are now trying to catch up. Expansion of campus-based institutional provision is no longer a realistic or practical solution. Across the world, distance education systems are gaining acceptance and most governments are making heavy investments in distance education. Why?

1.4.1 Widening Access

Widening access to education at all levels is now accepted as an important component of the development agenda especially for all developing countries. The extent of the educational provision at the university and college levels currently available in most of these countries is far too inadequate and their age participation ratio does not even touch double digit levels. In most cases, they may have to double the current provision to reach that level. That involves setting up double the number of institutions that now exist, providing them with the necessary physical infrastructure, and appointing as many more teachers as are currently in place. Most of these countries simply do not have the resources to venture into that effort.

Traditional institutions of higher education like the universities have over long periods acquired several rigidities with regard to their methods and processes. For instance, those who wish to enter these institutions have to satisfy several requirements like age, previous qualifications, residential requirements and so on. These attributes often tend to create barriers between institutions and people for whose benefit they were established in the first place. What kind of alternative systems could address these concerns? Distance education offers the answer.

1.4.2 Augmentation of Provision for Education and Training

In its early days, distance education was an instrument for meeting the needs of technical and vocational training. The City and Guilds of Britain is one of the earliest examples of providing training through home study methods in several vocational trades and awarding qualifications.

In New Zealand there is an Open Polytechnic which was established in 1946 as a Technical Correspondence Institute. It offers technical and vocational courses by home study methods. It offers some 600 programmes in three major fields, namely, technology, commerce and general studies. Almost 25% of all New Zealand students pursuing technical and vocational education and training are students of the Open Polytechnic.

From these traditional home study methods, there emerged more innovative, industry-specific and custom-made technical and vocational education and training programmes using modern information and communication technologies in several parts of the world. In the UK, for example, the Wye College of the University of London offers diploma and Master's degree programmes in Agricultural Development and the National Extension College in the UK offers several technician training programmes.

The Cleveland Open Learning Unit (COLU) in the UK was set up to respond to the changing needs of Industry and Education. Beginning with the

Process, Oil and Engineering industries, the COLU now offers a wide range of training programmes that integrate all aspects of academic and vocational requirements. The Manchester Open Learning (MOL) was set up in 1979 as a national provider of client-customised, tutor-supported, accredited open learning programmes to meet the training and personnel development needs within organisations, specially at the junior and middle management levels. The Open College of Arts (OCA) in the UK has developed a wide range of courses in Art and Design, Calligraphy, Drawing, Creative Writing, Garden Design, History of Art, Interior Design, Music, Painting, Photography, Video Production, etc., which are delivered through methods similar to those of the UK Open University.

The Open Learning In Scotland (OLIS) was established in 1990 to offer a complete range of open learning services to industry including advice on the availability of open learning materials, and programmes that would meet the specific needs of a particular industry or organisation, tutorial support, provision of practical training, etc. The OLIS offers a range of Process and Engineering programmes to industry, from multi-disciplinary engineering process plant operations to instrumentation and electronics at the higher National Certificate level. The OLIS is, in fact, a joint venture between the Petroleum Open Learning which was created in 1988 to provide a comprehensive range of open learning services to oil and gas industries and a College of Further Education in England.

The National Technological University (NTU) in the US makes televised lectures available through satellite at specially set up reception centres, which are based within firms. The NTU's clients are big firms which buy its services and enable their employees to take NTU's courses. The NTU is essentially a network service provider, linking educational institutions and large companies for meeting their personnel development needs.

Augmentation of educational provision is surely one important function of distance education. Just as important is the question of expanding the educational opportunities for large numbers of people who, for one reason or another, remained and continue to remain outside the scope of education. That includes the accumulated unmet demand for higher education due to shortage of places in the existing institutions, people at work who are looking for opportunities to improve their qualifications, those who wish to acquire new knowledge and skills to switch jobs or for relocation of their families, unemployed youth and women who wish to become earning members of their families and those who missed opportunities for education early in life or had to drop out from schools.

1.4.3 The Changing Labour Market and its Needs

Recent trends indicate that today's labour market needs people with specific ready-to-use skill sets to meet the varying demands of the globalised economy. In a fiercely competitive market, the old-fashioned approach of recruiting young people and training them on the job is no more an option. While industry is prepared to support such programmes of education and training, they prefer to spin it out of their immediate area of responsibility. It helps existing institutions to use their resources better, supplement their earnings and above all bring them closer to real life and understanding of the needs of industry and other employing sectors of the economy.

Developments in technologies also changed the nature of the workplace. Most of the manual work is now replaced by automation. Yet, this development did not replace the need for people. What it did was to replace the skill sets required for running the automated processes. The new workforce required more knowledge, higher and sophisticated levels of skill, and not the least, enhanced levels of managerial and supervisory or coordinating competence. This transformation of the workforce needed new approaches to education and training that integrated theory with practice. And what better way to do it than making the workplace itself the theatre for education and training?

Distance education methods and techniques, advancements in ICTs have made the ideal of lifelong learning a reality. An ideal that has been talked about for decades has found a means for making it a workable proposition. It has also made it possible to transform learning as a means for livelihood and indeed for development itself.

Check Your Progress 3

Note: i) Space is given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answer with the one given at the end of the unit.

Identify and elaborate briefly two major objectives for establishing open/ distance education institutions. (Answer in about 50 words).

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1.4.4 Economic Competitiveness

Equally important is the concern of governments to improve the living conditions of their people, accelerate the pace of their economic and social development, and improve their national competitiveness in a globalised economy. Human development and capacity building is the key to realising this goal.

Most of the developing countries do not have the resources or the infrastructure to develop the manpower they need nor can most of them afford to send their people abroad for higher education. As we have noted, collaborative educational initiatives in which overseas institutions provide education and training to nationals of developing countries by using distance education methods and techniques provide an answer. Soon enough, distance education emerged as an effective and affordable alternative to overseas education.

1.4.5 Education and Globalisation

Developments in distance education have made cross-border education a reality. In the past the traffic from developing countries to the West in search of higher education and professional and technical training was indeed very high. The high cost of education and the trends initiated in the early eighties in the UK and other countries to charge overseas students the full cost of education put paid to the hopes of nationals from many poor countries for

overseas education. That led to the search for ways that could help and facilitate nationals from the developing countries in their pursuit of higher education abroad. The establishment of agencies like the Commonwealth of Learning to support developing countries of the commonwealth to meet their higher education needs through the instrumentality of open learning and distanceeducation was a major outcome of these efforts. It significantly reduced the cost of travel and residence for the poor students from the developing countries; high quality programmes from the best universities of the world were now available at their doorstep.

The acceptance and popularity of distance education systems across the globe also made it possible for several universities in the developed world to make their programmes available to nationals of other countries through the distance mode. This led to the emergence of large scale cross border education that soon developed in many cases into purely commercial enterprises. It is another matter that this trend had to be addressed and systems had to be put in place to protect the interests of students from developing countries from cross commercial exploitation. We have discussed this issue in detail in Unit 3 of Block 2.

1.4.6 Some Lessons for Planners

There is pretty much for aspiring planners and managers to learn from the brief discussion of the growth and development of open learning and distance education systems across the world during the last four decades or so. Given the significant role that distance education plays in expanding educational provision, and the explosive growth in the use of ICTs in education around the world, it would be useful to bear in mind some useful lessons that can be drawn from the applications of new technologies in education, including some expensive failures. These include:

- Imposition of inflexible technological choices without taking the educational needs and contexts into account;
- Inadequate investments in integrating curriculum and course design and development processes;
- Applications of technologies that have not been tested for their pedagogical soundness for particular programmes;
- Unexpectedly high operating costs that neutralise economies of scale;
- Cost escalation in the provision of learner support that matches the delivery technologies;
- Inadequacies in designing and implementing effective management and administrative systems that are compatible with the technologies used; and
- Shortage of personnel with the skills and competence necessary for programme development and delivery.

1.5 THE OPEN UNIVERSITY PARADIGM

The first generation distance education programmes have a history of over 150 years. We have seen that Pitman's short hand lessons, known to be the first model of the modern distance teaching enterprise, started as early as in the 1830s. Pitman designed his shorthand programme and developed the

instructions to learn it. He mailed it to his students asking them to do the exercises and return them to him for correction and further refinement. This was the origin of correspondence education. It took all of a century and a quarter for a new generation of distance education to emerge. In the following sections, we shall explore this exciting journey and the many milestones it has traversed.

1.5.1 Early Distance Education Initiatives

We have seen that distance education was in significant use for training in skills and for developing the competencies of the workforce. However, this mode of education delivery had not had the parity of esteem with the formal face-to-face mode of higher education for a long time. The scepticism about its legitimacy was indeed a major block in its gaining acceptability as an effective means for acquiring knowledge and depth of understanding which required close interaction with teachers.

By the middle of the twentieth century, several universities across the world adopted this practice to train manpower in critical areas of shortages. Most universities in the former Soviet Union were offering correspondence tuition in several subjects of science, technology and the professions to people working in the farms, factories and other establishments. In the People's Republic of China too, many universities were offering correspondence tuition in the 1950s to large numbers of people. The objective of this initiative was to train as large a number of people as possible in a short time to meet the country's demand for technical manpower. Over 800 of the 1000 or so Regular Higher Educational Institutes in China were offering correspondence education during this period. China also established four exclusive Higher Correspondence Institutes to meet the urgent needs of manpower. The main purpose of correspondence education was to train large numbers of in-service personnel making use of the facilities and personnel available with the formal institutes. In the early 1990s, China had over one million students enrolled in correspondence education.

The success of correspondence education in the Soviet Union and China during the post-war reconstruction era prompted other countries to adopt similar practices. India was one such country that launched correspondence education in 1962. By the turn of the century, over 60 Indian universities were offering correspondence education programmes in which more than one million students were enrolled.

1.5.2 The First Open University

The launch of the UKOU in 1969 marked a new beginning that heralded the second generation distance education initiatives. If correspondence education relied almost exclusively on printed materials and postal tuition, the second generation distance education initiative, namely, open universities used other communication channels like radio, television and other audio and video technologies to support interaction between learners and their teachers. We shall take a close look at these methodologies later in this Unit. For now, let us take a look at the some of the major open universities that came into existence in the latter half of the twentieth century across many parts of the world.

The UKOU which in many ways was the pioneer of the open university system was established in 1969 to provide a second chance to adults who had not received higher education, and fuller professional training and

qualifications for those who prefer to study while continuing to work and to improve continuing education facilities in the UK. Apparently, meeting the higher education needs of the adult learners was the major aim of the British Open University. Its mission statement reads:

- Open as to people, playing a leading role in the transition to mass higher education by serving an increasingly large and diverse student body:
- Open as to places, contributing to the widening of educational opportunities by making its programmes, courses and services available throughout the European Union and more widely in the world;
- Open as to methods, using distance teaching methods and new learning technologies and teaching techniques to serve home and work based students;
- Open as to ideas, being a vibrant academic community dedicated to the expansion, refinement and sharing of knowledge.
- *(This mission statement is the revised version after the European Union came in to existence)*

We shall look at the organisation and structure of the UKOU in greater detail later in this block.

Check Your Progress 4

Note: i) Space is given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answer with the one given at the end of the unit.

What is the major difference between first and second generation distance education initiatives? (Answer in about 30 words).

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1.5.3 Other Major Open Universities in the World

The Korean National Open University (KNOU) was established in 1972 as a part of the Seoul National University to offer two-year junior college programmes through the distance mode. In 1982, KNOU was separated and set up as an independent open university to offer undergraduate programmes in a number of fields. It now offers both Bachelor's and Master's degree programmes in a number of fields, and is the largest university in South Korea with an enrolment over 150,000.

The Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) in Pakistan was established in 1974 for providing facilities for the educational uplift of the masses, including those who are unable to attend conventional institutions by carrying education to their doorsteps. The programmes offered by the university are in four major areas: functional education, general education,

teacher education and professional education. The functional education programmes of AIOU combining basic education with the development of skills/competences has been acclaimed as one of its major successes.

The Universidad Nacional Albierta in Venezuela was founded in 1977 on the open university principle in response to the scarcity of study opportunities for adults, and the spectacular growth of the social demand for higher education. The main aims and objectives of the university are to train professionals in areas that are priorities for national development and to offer educational opportunities for those who have been unable to attend traditional higher education institutes.

The Universidad Estatal a Distancia was established in 1977 by the Government of Costa Rica to alleviate the shortage of places in higher education and to make higher education accessible both to those who could not take advantage of traditional courses and to the agricultural and working population. Education and training of teachers and educational administrators and personnel engaged in health services, cooperatives and agriculture were the major focus of the university's programmes.

The Sukhothai Thammathirath Open University (STOU) in Thailand was established in 1978 with the objective of providing lifelong education, expansion of educational opportunities for secondary school graduates, personnel development and training of skilled manpower, and promotion of democratic values. The STOU offers programmes at the Master's and Bachelor's degree levels besides certificates. Almost three-fourth of its student are from rural areas.

The Anadolu University in Turkey, established in 1958, was authorised in 1982 by law to launch open education programmes through the distance mode. It has emerged as one of the mega universities in a short time. Its open education system had an enrolment of over one million students in 2003. The university offers junior college and associate degree programmes in Business and Administrative Services, Health Management and Services, etc.

The Open Universteit in Netherlands (OUNL) was established by the Government of Netherlands in 1984 (it is the only government-funded distance education institution in the Netherlands). The OUNL charter identifies the following objectives:

- To provide adults with a second chance to enter higher education;
- To offer an alternative form of higher education to people who are not attracted by the traditional forms (second route);
- To create a more affordable form of higher education;
- To encourage innovation in higher education as regards both content and methods.

In 1985, the Government of India established the **Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) t**o expand educational opportunities for large numbers of people using distance education methods and ICTs. We shall look at the organisation and structure of IGNOU in greater detail later in this course and therefore, at this stage, we only take note of this development.

The Ministry of Culture and Higher Education in Iran set up the **Payame Noor University (PNU)** in 1987 as a unique single mode distance teaching state university. The main aims of the University are:

- To promote the scientific and cultural development of the society;
- To provide skilled manpower in areas critical to national integration and development;
- To create opportunities for individuals with family and work commitments to pursue their studies towards a degree;
- To present degree level programmes to under qualified and unqualified teaching staff of schools at the Bachelor's degree level;
- To satisfy the ever increasing demand for higher education while holding cost to society within acceptable bounds;
- To arrange public training and short and long term updating courses to keep people informed of the latest scientific and technological achievements;
- To make higher education accessible to residents of the rural areas and outreach sectors.

In any discussion on distance education institutions, the **University of South Africa** occupies a special place. It was not established as an open university in the sense that most of the institutions described in the preceding paragraphs came into existence. And yet, it is the oldest distance teaching institution in the world. It was founded in 1873 as an examining agency for Oxford and Cambridge Universities, In 1946, it was given a new role as a distance teaching university and continued that role since then. In 2004, Technikon, SA was merged with UNISA and also incorporated the distance education component of the Vista University (VUDEC). The combined institution is still known as UNISA offering certificate, diploma, degree and research programmes in many fields. It has over 200,000 students on its rolls.

The trend of establishing single mode open universities appears to have got reversed in the last decade or so. The 1990s saw only two new open universities, one each in Bangladesh and Tanzania. We shall look at this development in some detail later.

1.5.4 The Role of Open Universities

This brief survey of the open universities highlights the emergence of a new genre of dedicated open universities across the world. Within a short period, nearly all of them came to be called "Mega Universities" enrolling over 100,000 students each. It speaks eloquently of the popularity of the open and distance learning movement and the credibility and quality of its performance.

A cursory reading of the objectives of the open universities that we looked at in the preceding sections brings out several common features. Notable among them are:

- Nearly all of them seek to provide education and training to adults and people at work;
- Besides regular programmes of education leading to university degrees, most of them offer short programmes for upgrading knowledge, skills and also qualifications;

- Most of them have their targeted audiences in rural areas and usually inaccessible locations for whom higher education id out of reach;
- Open universities are conceived as instruments of lifelong education;
- A second chance or an alternative route is a recurring theme in the objectives of most of these universities;
- Affordable costs and acceptable quality run across the primary considerations in establishing these universities.

Check Your Progress 5

Note: i) Space is given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answer with the one given at the end of the unit.

Why do you think that dedicated Open Universities emerged all over the world? (Answer in about 40 words).

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1.6 LET US SUM UP

It has been our endeavour in this Unit to take you through different forms and structures that distance education systems and institutions have acquired in various contexts and environments. Our purpose in doing so is, as we mentioned in the introduction to this unit, to acquaint you with the range and diversity of distance teaching and learning structures and organisations. What we wish to emphasise is that there is no unique structure for a distance education system and that its organisation and management can be shaped and developed according to the needs and circumstances of the environment. In this process we addressed various conceptual issues related to distance education such as – resource-based learning, technology-enhanced learning; open learning etc. We also dealt issues related to widening access, the changing labour market and its needs, globalisation and competitiveness and emerging Open University paradigm.

In describing the existing systems, and in analysing the principles and practices followed in their organisation and management, we are aware that we might have been repeating what has already been stated elsewhere. However, we also realize that while it is easy to present knowledge and information, understanding requires the use of redundancy or discussion, and preferably both. Redundancy involves communicating the same idea in many different ways, and contexts. What we have presented here, and what follows in the remaining units of this Block have all a particular contextual setting, and that is in the manner in which distance education managers would look at the problems and concerns, which may be quite different from the perspective of those concerned mainly with subject matter specialisation or pedagogy.

1.7 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: POSSIBLE ANSWERS

Check Your Progress 1

Many factors such as pressure on governments and the universities to provide and expand opportunities for education and higher education to large numbers; reconstruction of economies after the second world war, post-colonial nation building efforts of many new nations; rising costs of overseas education and resource crunch etc. led to distance education becoming an alternative and viable option.

Check Your Progress 2

These two concepts are distinctly separate and each one with its own identity and context. 'Open Learning' refers to a philosophy or approach to provide education with openness an flexibility and thus reduce rigidities/ hurdles in any from of education. 'Distance Education' refers to the method of delivery of education programmes and services. In delivering its programmes distance education uses large extent of the philosophy of open learning i.e. flexibility in terms of age, experience, course combinations etc.

Check Your Progress 3

Widening access and equity through augmentation of educational provision, and ensuring relevance for programmes through significant expansion of technical/professional/vocational education are two important objectives that distance education institutions seek to fulfil. The flexibility in the structures and process as well as its ability to reach out to large numbers through the use of information and communication technologies provide distance education institutions with an edge in realising both these objectives.

Check Your Progress 4

First generation DE initiatives relied exclusively on printed material and postal tuition where as second generation DE initiatives use various communication channels like radio, T.V. and other audio-video technologies to support interaction between learner and their teachers.

Check Your Progress 5

Every country realised the need for continuing and life long learning which is essential for the development of the country. To fulfil that need dedicated open universities emerged in many countries to provide an alternative to adults who want to continue their higher education and to provide opportunity to upgrade their skill and knowledge.

UNIT 2 DISTANCE EDUCATION METHODS AND PRACTICES

Structure

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This unit is designed to run you through the complex world of distance education organisation, its styles and methods, its approaches and practices, and what makes a distance education system successful and effective. It is also intended to build on the brief treatment of technology interventions that we discussed in the previous unit, and explain how different technological interventions achieve the purpose of education in different environments and contexts. We shall also look at some of the key elements in the organisation of distance education systems, different types of organisational structures and the main features of each of them in relation to their specific objectives and functions. Needless to say, it would be the specific objectives and functions that would influence the organisation and structure of any system and it is, therefore, important to be clear about the specific objectives to be achieved before embarking upon the design and development of their organisational structures.

2.2 OBJECTIVES

After studying this unit, you should be able to:

- describe the different methods and practices that distance education systems employ to achieve different objectives and purposes;
- acquaint yourself with various technological means that have been deployed in running successful distance education systems;
- appreciate the factors that influence and shape the organisational structures of distance education systems;
- analyse the basic features around which a purposeful distance education system should be designed, organised and developed;
- critically assess the factors that would ensure the success and sustainability of distance education provision in specific environments and design the organisational systems to suit those environments.

2.3 DISTANCE EDUCATION METHODS AND PRACTICES

In Keegan's words, "in traditional education, a teacher teaches; in distance education, it is the institution that teaches". The uniqueness of distance education is the separation of learners from teachers in time and space. This separation is made up by some form of mediation between the two parties to the learning contract. In order to make this mediation effective, an organisational presence is essential. The structure and pattern of this organisational mechanism depends on the methods and styles that it intends to use for mediation between its teachers and learners. In order to understand the essential features of this mediatory role, and how it works, it would be worthwhile to look at the functions and tasks of the organisation in meeting the demands of, and the provision of various services to, its distance learners.

2.3.1 How does Distance Education Function?

The most important task of any distance education institution is to promote its products (programmes and services). The programmes will be determined by the specific objectives with which the institution was established and the specific groups of potential learners to whom they are addressed. The programmes and courses may all be developed internally, or may be acquired from other distance education institutions.

The first important task, therefore, is to ensure that the institution has the necessary programmes at its disposal. If internal development of all programmes is the preferred option, it has to ensure that the people who can produce the learning materials are in place. But then, this is what all institutions do: recruiting teachers and staff. If, on the other hand, the choice is to acquire materials, it is then necessary to identify institutions that offer their materials, negotiate the terms for acquisition, either in bulk or as single copies with rights for reproduction. In either case, it is necessary to make arrangements for the production and storage of a sufficient quantity of learning materials well before the academic operations commence. Therefore, a major functional requirement of a distance education institution

is to ensure that arrangements are in place for the preparation or acquisition, production, storage and distribution of its learning materials.

The finalisation of programmes is followed by arrangements for enrolling students at a number of places nearer their work/stay as they cannot be expected to travel to the headquarters of the organisation that offers the programmes. It is just not enough to enrol students and collect fees from them, it has to be ensured that they get their learning materials in time, and have access to different kinds of support like tutorial assistance, assignments and practice training, examinations and grade cards, and a variety of other information that is so vital to students who have no physical contact with their institutions. A distance education institution normally makes these arrangements by identifying and designating an appropriate number of centres at suitable locations within its areas of operation. They could be existing educational institutions, workplaces or other establishments and need to be suitably staffed and equipped. It would also be necessary to arrange for academic counselling and tutorials which again could be contracted out to teachers and other professionals in the neighbourhood of the identified learning support centres. Provision of this learning support to a widely scattered student body is one of the key functions of a distance education institution.

Monitoring student progress, preparation and distribution of their assignments, collection and assessment of these assignments and provision of feedback on them, holding examinations and getting the answer books assessed, preparing grade cards and final awards of qualifications are equally important functions. It is true that all educational institutions perform all these functions. Then, what is so special about the distance education institutions? Distance learners deal with a faceless institution, and so does the institution. They still have to be brought together, kept engaged and their needs satisfied. The organisational and managerial tasks involved could be massive, and often, extraordinary efforts would be needed to accomplish them. The internal systems and processes are key elements in the successful operation of a distance education system.

As we noted, technologies play a very important role in linking learners with the institution and the learning resources it provides. We have briefly discussed the evolution of the distance education technologies from its initial form of correspondence education to its latest ICT enabled versions in the previous unit.

2.3.2 Distance Education Technologies

Most distance education systems now use multi-media packages in their teaching-learning transactions. The most widely used medium still continues to be the printed learning packages. These printed packages are specially prepared for the distance learner in the form of self-instructional materials which attempt to build the teacher in to the text. The preparation of these packages requires specialised skills that combine subject matter competence, pedagogical skills and linguistic and writing proficiency. Very often, teams of experts drawn from each of these areas of competence work together in the preparation of these materials.

Printed materials are only one part of the distance learning kits. These are supplemented by most institutions with electronic media that add to the learning material packages or to the interactive processes of learning. These may include:

Radio: By far, the most ubiquitous and the most affordable electronic medium for communication is the radio. Radio lessons are regularly broadcast at specified hours by most distance education institutions. These broadcasts can reach the remote learners, distributed across vast and often inaccessible regions. Improvements in the broadcast mode are progressively being made in many cases by providing two-way audio communication to facilitate interaction between learners and teachers. Community radio continues to be a powerful medium in most of the developing countries even today. Multiplication of FM radio stations and arrangements for phone-in question-answer sessions have significantly contributed to the effectiveness of this medium in distance education.

Audio cassettes supplement radio broadcasts and provide the additional advantage of play back that broadcasts do not permit. Learners can use audio tapes any time at their convenience.

Television: Television has been pressed in to service as a medium of education during the last several decades. The Chinese Television University with over a million students enrolled in various programmes has established the primacy of this medium in distance education. Many other universities use this medium in different ways, mainly to supplement the printed materials. The association of BBC with the British Open University in its early days clearly established the effectiveness of educational TV. Specially designed and prepared video cassettes related to the curricular content of distance education programmes are telecast at fixed hours over national television networks or specially established satellite-based communication networks. The National Technological University in the USA exists because it has access to satellite communications.

This medium is also used to provide live academic counselling to learners through teleconferencing and videoconferencing. These systems use one-way video and two-way audio for communication as well as two-way communication for both voice and image. In some cases, even Cable Television Networks are pressed into service to reach educational software to learners' homes.

There are instances in which broadcast television is being replaced by DVDs that can be played on television and computers. For instance, the UKOU that used to broadcast its course materials over the BBC network from its inception for over three decades, has now switched over to use of DVDs (the last broadcast of UKOU course material over BBC Channel 4 was in December 2004).

Computer-mediated Communication: This is a fast developing area in educational technology. Computer networks – Local Area Networks (LAN) and Wide Area Networks (WAN) – are extensively used for transferring information and learning materials from the institution to the learners' homes or workplaces. A large part of the learner-institution transactions are carried out through the electronic medium- securing forms, registering applications, payment of fees, submission of assignments, issue of grade cards, and so on. The growing popularity of the Internet has in fact ushered in a new era of distance education technologies.

Electronic communication by written message, by audio interaction and by video exchange comprises the world of educational telecommunication. Three broad categories within which current technologies support distance education are:

- Text-based systems, including electronic mail, computer conferencing, real-time chat systems, fax and many uses of the Worldwide Web;
- Audio-based systems such as audio conferencing and audio graphics and audio on the Web;
- Video-based systems such as video conferencing – one way and two ways – video on the Internet with various products like webcasting, visual media like video clips on the Web, etc.

Text, audio and video are discrete media. While this is partially true today, the evolution of all these systems is towards integration – of real-time and asynchronous access, of resource materials, and communication of text and video: in short, of writing, speaking and seeing.

Web-based Education: There is a new category, perhaps the best, of this convergence. It is the Web that integrates text, audio and video, both as pre-prepared clips and as live interactive systems, both real-time and stored-to-be-accessed-later modules, and furthermore, providing text-based interactions as well as access to educational resources of unprecedented magnitude. The defining characteristics of the Web are:

- The use of URLs (Universal Resource Locators) that provide the addressing systems;
- The HTTPS (Hypertext Transfer Protocol Standard) by which the delivery of the requested information is transacted;
- The development of the HTML (Hypertext Mark Up Language) through which links between documents and parts of documents are made.

From train travels and cheaper posts to the newer ways of telecommunication, distance education systems have been impacted tremendously by technologies in the last few decades. Easier and more frequent interaction between learners and tutors has given opportunities to universities to reach out to new learner groups. Still, much of the developing world uses the new media on a modest scale. High costs of creating the technology infrastructure and the still higher costs of accessing new technologies, both for the providers as well as a large body of learners, force them to stay with printed material with the support of radio/television broadcasts or the use of audio/video cassettes. Television broadcasts have also become too expensive and there have been instances of a marked decline of the television broadcast components in several countries.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i) Space is given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answer with the one given at the end of the unit.

What is the advantage of audio/video cassettes over broadcast technologies for a distance learner? (Answer in about 30 words).

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2.3.3 Distance Learners: Problems and Needs

It is essential for distance education managers to be fully aware of the problems of distance learners and to understand their needs to be able to respond to them. It has to be accepted that a distance learner is an isolated client of a large system who is very likely to feel neglected. It is for the system to find ways in which this isolation is broken and they are made to feel that they belong and that there are systems and practices in place to address their needs and concerns.

To begin with, it would be a good idea to familiarise the learners with the methods and processes of the system, what they can expect and who they need to approach and where, and how to secure any support or assistance. When once this is done, distance education manages should ensure that it is done as promised. Any breach of this promise, and continuing frustration with the inadequacies and failures of the system to respond to their needs could lead to the system losing its goodwill and credibility.

From the distance learner's point of view, it would be useful to have some idea about what it means to be a distance learner. This package of pre-enrolment information should include:

- Information about course and programmes. This should clearly indicate who are likely to benefit from particular courses and what benefits might accrue to them in terms of job opportunities, including job changes, career opportunities including advancement in careers, further education, etc.,
- Some ideas about distance education methods and processes including study skills and techniques, time management and pacing of studies, balancing work and study pressures, and the availability and methods of accessing learning materials and other resources;
- Comprehensive information about the institutional processes including when to apply and where, how and when to pay fees and to whom, the likely costs, what facilities and services are provided for each course and programme, where assignments are to be submitted and when, what, when and where tutorial support is available, the arrangements made for practical experience and experiments, the mandatory requirements for completion of each course and programme, the methods and arrangements for holding examinations and their schedule, and so on.

This information package is very crucial as it provides the essential inputs for the conclusion of the learner's contract with the institution.

After their enrolment, students will require a variety of services and facilities. The provision of these services and facilities constitutes what is commonly called the "Learner Support Services" system of a distance education organisation. The organisation and maintenance of these services and facilities is critical to the success of the system. How are they organised?

Distance education managers have several strategic options to choose from. The choice will depend on one or more of the following:

- Delivery of different services face-to-face or at a distance. For instance, while course materials can be delivered by post or through electronic transfer, tutorial support can be provided face-to-face or through electronic media;

- Delivery of these services at the homes or workplaces of the learners or at a designated centre in their neighbourhood;
- Provision of services, especially tutoring and academic counselling, synchronously as in face-to-face mode, or asynchronously with gaps in time for giving and receiving, as in correspondence tuition;
- The delivery of services in standard format as in handouts, newsletters and schedules and those that are differentiated as in the case of programmes, courses and special groups of students.

The system of delivery of services could be structured in different forms and patterns. The critical factors that determine these forms and patterns are the nature of the institution, the range and levels of its programmes, the size of the enrolment, the territorial spread of its enrolment, the methods of delivery including infrastructure available and accessible, and so on.

2.4 DISTANCE EDUCATION SYSTEMS: ORGANISATION AND STRUCTURE

You will have noticed from the foregoing discussion that the key to the success of a distance education system is its organisational effectiveness. The management and organisation functions are, therefore, central to the system itself. The form and nature of these functions as well as their organisation and structure will vary depending upon the objectives of the system, the range of programmes, the technologies used, the student characteristics, and the general education and training environment in which the system operates.

We shall now look at some typical organisational models that will help us draw the general principles governing the organisation and management of distance education systems.

2.4.1 Distance Education as an Extension Function

For long, higher education was perceived to be an elitist pursuit and the universities were known to be ivory towers far removed from the reality of life. This was primarily because entry to higher education institutions was highly selective and often, it was only the upper strata of the society that managed to gain entry into them. With pressure mounting on these institutions to open up, many of them took up extension work by offering their facilities and resources to the community to run short, unstructured programmes, organising lectures and taking up problem-solving initiatives. Many of them encouraged people who were not formally admitted to their programmes to take their examinations through private home study and qualify for their degrees. Soon enough, many of them began to get involved with external students by offering them postal tuition, besides encouraging part-time studies and off-campus teaching. These earlier initiatives of extending the benefits of higher education institutions to persons who were not formally admitted to their privileges were, perhaps, the beginning of what has now evolved as distance education. The limitation of these initiatives was that they did not become part of the mainstream activities of universities and neither the faculty nor the community considered them as constituting the core functions of universities.

Even after distance education has evolved into its present form, most universities consider these activities as add-on efforts and, therefore, are peripheral to their primary purposes. In consequence, distance education programmes of many universities suffered from poor resource allocation, inadequate facilities and little or no attention to qualitative improvements.

2.4.2 Dedicated Open Universities

Open Universities dedicated exclusively to open learning have now a forty-year old history. It all began with the establishment of the UK Open University in 1969. Initially conceived as a University of the Air, the UKOU, within a short period earned considerable popularity and goodwill and soon emerged as a viable model for similar initiatives in other countries. The shortcomings in the approach of the traditional universities to distance education, and the imperatives for introducing innovation and flexible learning initiatives in higher education prompted governments in several countries to establish open universities as part of their higher education reform measures. The emerging information and communication technologies (ICT) also provided the necessary impetus. The success of this experiment in providing good quality higher education at an affordable cost to large numbers of people made it an attractive and imaginative approach to meeting the ever expanding demand for higher education.

We have seen in Unit 1 how the establishment of single mode open universities captured the imagination of the political establishment as well as the education planners and policy makers across the world in all continents. The rapid growth of these institutions and their increasing popularity and acceptance, especially by most employing organisations has made these institutions an effective alternative to the traditional universities. They also established that:

- higher education can truly and effectively be delivered through mass education programmes;
- high quality higher education programmes can be offered at an affordable cost;
- education can be provided on a global scale without affecting its local and regional relevance;
- They can raise new and additional resources for higher education even as the traditional sources of funding for higher education are drying up;
- Traditional functions of universities as well as the established ways of their functioning need to be reviewed and refined if they have to become effective instruments of change.

2.4.3 Radio and Television Universities

In the discussions on the emergence of open and distance learning in the last 70 years or so, no great attention seems to have been given to the establishment of Radio and Television Universities in the People's Republic of China and Myanmar. The China initiative had made significant contribution to the growth of higher education in that country. We shall take a close look at this innovation.

Higher correspondence education had become a massive enterprise in meeting the manpower needs of the emerging Chinese economy. During the 1950s, some 840 higher education institutions in China were offering correspondence education to over one million students.

During the 1960s, China decided to involve radio and television in a big way in augmenting educational provision. The Beijing Television University was established in 1960, and it was followed by the creation of similar universities in other metropolitan areas as well. There was however a serious interruption to this experiment during the Cultural Revolution (1966-76). Thereafter, the experiment was revived and a comprehensively reorganised system of Radio and Television University Network was put in place in 1978. The Chinese Radio and Television 'Universities Network consists of:

- A Central Radio and Television University (CRTVU) responsible for planning, policy making, macro-management and development of core curriculum in key areas of national development;
- 28 Provincial Radio and Television Universities (PRTVUs) with similar responsibilities and functions at the regional/provincial levels. These Provincial universities are also involved in the design and development of the curricula for key areas of regional development. They perform the functions of production and distribution of multi-media learning packages for all programmes (national and provincial), holding examinations as per standards prescribed by the CRTVU, training of teachers and undertaking research in higher education through distance mode;
- 330 or so District centres, called Branch Schools to which are attached over 2200 or more TV classes and work stations supported by an unlimited number of ground level TV classes located within local communities. This three-tier structure of district, county and community level networks support the teaching-learning transactions of the CRTVU network.

In the initial stages, the network operated through microwave links. From 1980, the network is using satellite-based communication to link the whole country.

The overall structure of the network is designed on the principle of vertical interdependence of a five-layer edifice. Till about 1986, the whole system functioned on the basis of centralised planning and control structures. There was uniformity in all spheres – planning, enrolment, curricula and syllabi, course materials, radio and TV lessons and examinations. The regime of liberalisation and economic reforms initiated in 1986 witnessed several changes in the management of the CRTVU network as well. The constituents of the network now function on the basis of a decentralised system with much greater initiative at the regional and local levels in the management of the network.

It would be interesting to look at the learning models established by the CRTVU network. The learning activities include:

- Independent study with the help of printed materials provided to every student;
- Learning with the help of audio-visual lessons in groups which are based at the workplaces or in local communities at the grassroots levels;
- Watching TV or video programmes or listening to radio lessons or audio tapes in groups at fixed venues;
- Compulsory face-to-face tutorials as prescribed for each course;
- Compulsory assignments and practical work.

TV classes are organised at different levels depending upon the size of enrolment, nature of courses and such other relevant factors. These include:

- Single independent TV classes organised at the grassroots level;
- Joint TV classes organised by several medium and small size units;
- TV classes organised by the local government departments;
- TV classes held by the Regional and Provincial Radio and Television networks;
- TV classes organised by local communities and social organisations.

By 1990, the Television universities had enrolled 1.83 million students, produced 1.25 million graduates and had 420,000 students on roll. In 1996 China reported that 1.4 million or 24.4% of its 5.8 million students in higher education were studying through distance education (H.D. Perraton , 2000; Open and Distance Learning in the Developing World, Routledge)). According to Herraton, Chinese Television Universities are significantly different from other open universities in the world. Most students are enrolled full-time and receive a salary and benefits similar to those of other full-time workers. They attend classes in which they work from printed texts, but also follow broadcast lessons which are distributed terrestrially and also by satellite and made available through video cassettes. Learning is a classroom activity. The strength of the system is its use of centrally prepared materials and its capacity to expand university level education with more modest, and less costly, buildings than conventional universities (Perraton, ibid).

The University of the Air established in Japan in 1985 is another variation of the Chinese experiment. It uses radio, television and other technologies in its teaching-learning processes. Since radio and television are the principal media for its teaching, the University of the Air functions not as a teaching institution within the discipline of a university framework, but as a licensed broadcaster under the national broadcasting law. It was set up with the objective of: (a) providing working people and housewives with a chance for college education (b) providing an innovative and flexible system of higher education which is open to all high school graduates; and (c) cooperation with existing universities in making full use of the latest knowledge and the newest technology in order to offer a system of higher education that meets contemporary needs.

The University of the Air offers teaching through satellite-based video transmission which reaches the entire Japanese Archipelago. It has to be remembered that the inhabitants of many of these isolated islands would have had no access to higher education if it were not for the opportunities provided by the University of the Air In order to reach its students, the University of the Air sets up study centres which are in fact video reception centres that also function as fully equipped video libraries. Countrywide over 70 such video centres disseminate the university's courses and programmes.

2.4.4 Networking Systems

This preliminary discussion on the organisation and structure of the distance education systems will not be complete without drawing attention to the more recent trends of distance teaching networks emerging in

different parts of the world. The emergence of these networks can be attributed to the following reasons:

- It is no longer possible for any single institution to satisfy all the learning needs of vastly heterogeneous learner groups;
- As learner groups get diversified, so do their learning needs and no single institution can respond to all these needs;
- Emerging globalisation of education provides a unified market; organisational ingenuity lies in the fact that resources and facilities at the providers' level are pooled to respond to these needs to cut costs and enlarge the market;
- Modern communication technologies offer the means to bring together a number of consumers and providers on a single platform.

The National Technological University (NTU) of the USA is one such network. A small central coordinating unit functions as the vehicle for accreditation and delivery of graduate programmes in engineering recorded on video tapes at over 30 engineering schools of the US universities. These video lessons are delivered by NTU at client sites which are generally large US firms. NTU's courses and services are bought by these firms for the benefit of their employees. The NTU"s role in this enterprise is effectively to link a number of providers with a number of clients without having to create any significant infrastructure except the communication network.

Another example of a networked system is the Open Learning Foundation in the UK established in the early 1990s. At a time when the UK was considering a major expansion of higher education enrolment from 20% to 50% (of the relevant age group), and when it was evident that changes in learning techniques were significantly influencing teaching patterns (the impact of distance education methods), some 30 or so institutions of higher education/universities came together to create a network for providing flexible(open) learning materials and faculty training support to its members. The OLF does not enrol students, but it does help member institutions to raise their enrolment by pooling and sharing teaching resources and helping them maintain the highest quality in education.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: i) Space is given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answer with the one given at the end of the unit.

What is the main reason for the establishment of networking systems all over the world? (Answer in about 50 words).

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2.5 KEY ELEMENTS IN THE ORGANISATION OF DISTANCE EDUCATION SYSTEMS

As a student of distance education, you have already learnt a good deal about the foundations on which the whole body of knowledge of, and practices in, the field of distance education have been built. While discussing the specific aspects of distance education as a system, we may repeatedly have to come back to the theoretical foundation to ensure a better appreciation of the practical dimensions of its organisation. In the following sections of this Unit, we shall run through some of the essential elements that will influence the nature and type of the organisation that one has to design and develop to establish a sound system of distance education.

2.5.1 Openness

We have already discussed at some length the major features of open learning and how distance education is distinct from open learning. We also noted that nearly all open learning systems adopt distance education practices though the converse is not always true. From the organisational and functional points of view, the composite term 'open and distance learning' emphasises too much on learning, and too little on all other activities that guide and support the process of learning, normally known as teaching, training, etc. The 'open' nature of education is institutionalised by such policies and practices as open admission, freedom to choose the subjects for study, and pacing the studies according to the choice and convenience of the learners themselves. In other words, 'openness' implies flexibility in several requirements normally associated with formal, classroom-based education, namely, well defined prior learning attainments, fixed duration, pre-determined course combinations set by the institutions for most programmes of studies, and so on.

As most open learning systems adopt distance mode of delivery for their programmes and services, distance education planners and managers need to be fully aware of the principles on which open learning systems need to be structured and organised. Open learning systems are built around and defined by certain key principles, each of which is aimed at opening up particular features or aspects of learning for the benefit of learners. These are the principles that can effectively inform and transform educational practices. We shall now look at some of these key principles in the following sections.

2.5.2 Learner-centeredness

The whole principle of openness is structured around the idea that programmes of education and training are organised to respond to learner needs. Learner-centeredness is, therefore, one of the primary pre-requisites for openness. This principle, in essence, acknowledges that the learner should be the focus of the educational process and should be regarded as an active participant in an interactive process of curriculum transaction. It implies that education is not a transmission procedure in which there is a one-way flow of information from the source of knowledge to a passive learner. Education should, in reality, be a process that encourages independent and critical thinking; it should help learners develop problem-solving skills and competencies. Combined with independent and critical thinking, these skills empower learners to engage confidently and effectively with society. Learner-centred education also builds on learners' own

experiences, using them as the starting point and the basis for any structured learning process. While the academics and instructional design experts would take care of these features in designing and developing the learning materials and other learning resources, planners and support system designers too need to be fully aware of these requirements.

2.5.3 Autonomous Learning/Learner Independence

Open learning and distance education methodologies encourage learning as a resource in itself, and not simply as an end. In order to make teaching/ learning processes effective in the open learning and distance education system, learners have to become independent and rely more on themselves than on their teachers, tutors or institutions. The separation between the teaching and learning process places the responsibility for learning on the learner rather than on the teacher. It is this learner maturity that good distance education systems foster. Academic performance depends as much on the proper design of courses as on the acquisition of efficient learning skills that ultimately develop learner independence.

2.5.4 Lifelong Learning

Openness and lifelong learning mutually support each other. Although the idea of lifelong learning was being talked about for some decades now, it was not until the emergence of the structured open learning systems that it turned out to be a workable proposition. If the concept of lifelong learning is central to openness, openness is the engine that drives lifelong learning. If learning has to continue throughout life, and not limited to childhood and adolescence, such learning should be of direct relevance to the needs and life experiences of the learners. Also implicit in this concept is the acknowledgement of the reality that all people are inevitably involved in the process of learning all their lives, and consequently, it would be useful and necessary to make structured educational opportunities available to them throughout their lives to enrich their learning experiences. It needs to be emphasised here that it is beyond the physical capacity of the conventional education systems to venture out with lifelong learning opportunities to all who seek such opportunities. Open learning systems are ideally suited to make this happen.

2.5.5 Flexibility in Learning

We have already talked about flexible learning systems in some detail in Unit1. That was mainly in the context of traditional systems incorporating flexibilities in their education delivery methods by integrating distance education methodologies with face-to-face education. But flexibility also involves, from the perspective of learners, availability of provisions and facilities to choose learning programmes that respond specifically to their needs, and to determine when and how they want to learn. Building these provisions in to the system at the design stage requires a critical understanding of learner styles and preferences and the competence to organise, manage and maintain complex data management systems effectively and efficiently.

2.5.6 Removing Barriers to Access

Open learning is all about removing all barriers in accessing educational opportunities. These barriers take a variety of forms and contexts. For some, it could be economic reason that forces them to opt out of education to join the work force early in life. For some others, it could be family life, requiring

them to stay at home to help parents or siblings; for many, it could be geographical isolation; quite a few might not make it in a competitive environment that determines entry into institutions of higher studies; and some could feel discriminated against for reasons of race, religion, gender, language, age or physical disability. Another barrier could be the prevailing practices that restrict entry into certain professions by denying access to learning and development of expertise. Whatever the reason, there are large numbers of people who encounter the problem of exclusion. Any attempt to establish open learning systems will have to acknowledge the existence of such barriers and make provisions to ensure their removal.

2.5.7 Prior Learning Experiences and Current Competencies

We have just mentioned the prevalence of practices that restrict access to educational opportunities. One of the most restrictive of practices is the insistence of prior educational attainments at a specified level, and standing. As we noted earlier, people generally learn all their lives, especially those at work. Practice creates knowledge and education is all about acquiring knowledge in structured forms. The knowledge base of people at work is generally sound though unstructured. Recognition of current competencies that potential learners possess as prior learning experience is a sure way to open up opportunities for people at work. These might include short courses that people at work often attend, unfinished formal education programmes and, of course, the learning at work. Systems need to be built to assess and accredit such experiences and competencies and establish their equivalence with appropriate stages in the curves of learning outcomes.

2.5.8 Learner Support

Efforts to open educational opportunities cannot become effective without the provision of adequate support to learners. Though we talked about learner autonomy and independence, it is possible that many new learners might lack the essential learning skills. Many among them might need relevant information; some might need advice and counselling; and most of them would need to know clearly what they are being offered and what the implications of their learning choices are. It might also involve provision of continuous support, advice and counselling throughout their stay with the programme. Generally, the type of support would include both face-to-face contact and other forms of communication (telephone, post, computer links, etc.) and encouragement of interaction between learners on both group and one-to-one basis. Provision of access to the necessary facilities including space in which learning activities and interaction between learners can take place, as well as access to computers, laboratories, and other resources that might be necessary requirements for the learning processes, are all essential components of the learner support system that contributes to making any distance education environment effective.

2.5.9 Expectation of Success

Open learning is not just about opening access only; it is also about providing people with a fair chance of success. It involves provision of an environment in which learners feel that they have the opportunity to complete learning programmes successfully, and also that the qualifications they earn have value in the employment market place. Educational providers can do this by consulting both employers and workers in their curriculum development process. Associated with this is the issue that the education offered is of the highest quality that can meet the expectations of

success created by opening learning opportunities. Accreditation of institutions, programmes and qualifications as well as the implementation of a range of measures that assure the quality of the teaching and learning processes can help build this confidence in potential learners.

2.5.10 Cost-effectiveness

Another critical principle of open learning, which draws together and expresses many of the tensions inherent in combining the various issues discussed earlier, is the one related to cost-effectiveness. Cost-effectiveness is distinct from cost-efficiency. The latter is about input-output relationship, that is, the product is the least costly relative to the input, while cost-effectiveness is about striking the optimal balance between cost, student numbers, and educational quality; a balance that will be entirely different for different educational contexts. In many ways, the concept of cost-effectiveness influences decisions on the choices for educational provision and represents the balancing act that favours open learning. Cost-effectiveness needs to be measured on an ongoing basis.

2.5.11 Working with Legacy Systems

The whole concept of open learning and distance education is significantly undermined if is not located within the practical context of the existing education system and the ways in which it is providing opportunities for education. It is simply unrealistic to assume that open and distance learning systems can be put in place without exploring the strengths and weaknesses of what already exists and its impact on the strategies for incorporating elements of open and distance education systems. Commitment to working with what already exists, and an understanding of the need to improving legacy systems is implicit in any effort to expand educational opportunities through open learning and distance education. This commitment does not imply maintenance of status quo. The central trust of innovations is to effect ongoing changes in what already exists, and decisions to implement new systems have to be taken with direct reference to their impact on existing systems.

Check Your Progress 3

Note: i) Space is given below for your answers.

ii) Check your answers with the ones given at the end of the unit.

i) Why do you think learners need support in DE? (Answer in about 30 words).

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ii) What do you understand by working with legacy systems? (Answer in about 30 words).

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2.6 LET US SUM UP

In this unit an attempt is made to discuss the basic principles of distance education and related technologies; distance learners needs and their problems. Organisation structure of DE institutions namely dual mode, single mode and networked systems have been dealt briefly. Key elements that are essential for any DE system such as – openness, learner centeredness, lifelong learning, flexibility in learning, learner support, cost effectiveness etc. have been explained in brief.

2.7 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: POSSIBLE ANSWERS

Check Your Progress 1

Broadcasts over radio and television require that the learners are glued to their sets at the scheduled time. They have no opportunity to pause and absorb what is broadcast. Audio/Video cassettes on the other hand, are capable of being stopped, replayed and repeatedly listened to, or viewed, depending upon the inclinations of the learner and at any time of his/her choice.

Check Your Progress 2

No single institution in the world can cater to all the diverse client groups and their needs which are increasing continuously in a competitive global society. Pooling of resources and expertise of various institutions through networking systems with modern technologies would help to meet the growing needs of heterogeneous client groups.

Check Your Progress 3

i) Though DE promotes autonomous and independent learning, many learners particularly newly joined ones need support to choose their courses, to know the processes and rules, to understand the instructional design and related study skills etc. Hence learner support has to be provided by DE institutions.

ii) Any innovation even the present case i.e. distance education institutions cannot be established and operated in isolation, without looking into the strength and weakness of existing educational institutions or legacy systems whether conventional or any other form. So that DE institutions can be strengthened alongwith existing institutions and bring in the expected change.

UNIT 3 ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE OF HIGHER DISTANCE EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

Structure

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous units, we took a close look at the variety and diversity of the distance education systems functioning across the world. A critical analysis of this survey will have provided you with a deep insight in to the evolution of distance education systems in different environments and in meeting a variety of objectives and goals. The presentation would have also helped you to understand the typology of organisational models in terms of their organisation and structure.

The emergence of distance education was a global phenomenon. Education systems across the world experimented with new innovations and experiments. What innovations were tried, and how new systems evolved, depended substantially on the environments in which these experiments were conducted. It is therefore time that we now turn to take a close look, from the management perspective, at the organisational designs and structures of distance education systems and institutions, on a more general theoretical framework. The descriptive treatment of the evolution of distance education systems and institutions in the previous unit, we hope, will have provided you with the perspective to understand and assimilate the more theoretical models of management dealt with in this Unit.

3.2 OBJECTIVES

After studying this unit, you should be able to:

- analyse and identify the critical factors that influence the organisational designs of distance education institutions in different environments;
- design and develop appropriate organisational structures for distance education systems, both existing as well as new, that can deliver specific objectives and purposes;

- relate the design of the organisation to the existing as well as emerging environment in which the organisation has to function; and
- build innovative models of organisation that can effectively deliver distance education programmes keeping the environmental and resource-related constraints in view.

3.3 DISTANCE EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS: THE TYPOLOGY

The discussions so far focused on two fundamental issues: (i) the nature and type of distance education as a system and (ii) the models of organisation that deliver distance education. As we have noticed, distance education as a systemhas evolved through several stages, each with a distinct feature. If we were to identify each of these features as a type, we find the following systemic models emerging:

- Learning for sitting in examinations and obtaining qualifications;
- Learning with the help of postal or correspondence tuition;
- Group learning through distance education delivered at identified learning centres (Central Radio and Television University of China :CRTVU);
- Distance education by harnessing multiple mass media (the post-UKOU distance education systems).

As we have seen, within each of these major systems, there are several organisational types, each of which with a distinct typology. Depending upon their primary focus and thrusts, the organisational types vary. Nevertheless, they can be identified with the scope, nature and range of the functions they perform. As the functions of distance education institutions are far more comprehensive than those of conventional institutions, their organisational patterns and structures as well as operations tend to be very complex. At the same time, it is also true that there can never be an absolutely right way, or just one single way, to organise effective distance education systems. All these systems, however, have similar goals and share two common features:

- They are designed primarily to meet the needs of adult or mature learners who are unable to attend campus-based programmes;
- Because they are not campus-based, the teaching-learning processes need to be mediated by a variety of means.

As we noted earlier, in distance education, it is the institution, and not the teacher, that teaches. It is this feature of distance education that lends itself to a variety of organisational designs and innovations, depending upon the ways in which its teaching functions are organised in different environments. It is important to keep this factor in mind while attempting to examine the organisational models of distance education systems.

There have been a number of attempts to identify the typologies of distance education institutions, especially those offering higher education. The number of variables that characterise these institutions, and the rapidity of

change that a particular type of system undergoes within a short period of time, are the two major factors that make it difficult to classify them into any fixed organisational type.During the past half a century or so, developments in distance education systems have been diverse and revolutionary in more ways than one. However, a broad classification of these in to four broad types remains manifestly dominant, as it is supported by both descriptive as well as analytical literature on distance education. We have another reason for our preference for this classification; it is the institutional status that defines the main criterion. As we discuss the management of distance education, in which the institution plays the lead role, we find it important to consider the institutional models.

Broadly, there are four distinct types of distance education institutions. They are:

- Traditional institutions engaged in campus-based education also delivering their programmes at a distance. These are known as dual mode institutions;
- Multiple mass media models also known as single mode or dedicated institutions;
- Network-based distance education systems; and
- Virtual distance teaching universities.
- We shall now look at each of these models in some detail.

3.3.1 Dual Mode Institutions

As we have seen, the practice of distance education evolved from the attempts of traditional institutions to reach out to students who are not on their campuses. In some ways, therefore, the credit for pioneering distance education methods in delivering traditional programmes of education to non-campus students must go to traditional universities. The University of London and the University of South Africa played this pioneering role. Many other universities followed their example in the 1960s and 1970s, and today, the number of traditional universities engaged in distance education is indeed very large. For most of these institutions, in the early stages, distance education programmes were a means to widen access, and enlarge educational opportunities for larger numbers.In more recent times, with technologies playing a critical part in delivering educational programmes, distance education practices have entered campus-based education as well. This emerging trend of convergence of different modes of delivery somewhat obfuscates the distinction between the traditional and distance modes of education. But the reality is that distance education as an effetive mode of education delivery is gaining acceptability, credibility and recognition.

A dual mode institution is one that caters to student needs using both the modes-conventional face-to-face teaching and distance teaching with or without student support. It needs to be noted that the majority of distance learners across the world are enrolled in dual mode institutions. Historically, in most countries, these institutions are not only older but also much larger in numbers and, therefore, it is much easier for them to deploy their considerable physical and intellectual resources in the design, development and delivery of distance education offerings.

What we have said so far is not enough to understand the variety of dual mode distance education institutions. It is not within the scope of this unit to talkabout each and every variety. However, we shall try to give some depth to the understanding of this type of institutions by focussing our discussion on three distinct examples of dual mode institutions.

The Indian Example: In India, the University of Delhi was the first to introduce correspondence education in 1962 through the mechanism of what came to be known as the School of Correspondence Courses and Continuing Education (SOCCE). Established in 1922, the University of Delhi is one of the largest universities in India, Today, it has some 70+ Departments, 80 colleges and over 220,000 students on rolls in regular full-time education. The SOCCE, started with some 900 students in 1962, has grown steadily and had reached an enrolment level of over 150,000 by the end of the century. Around this time, the university started thinking about reorganising the SOCCE and improving the delivery of its services. Almost four decades after it started its correspondence education programmes, the university has completely restructured its distance education wing. The University has now a Campus of Open Learning as an umbrella structure that oversees and coordinates all its open learning and distance education initiatives. The SOCCE, now known as the School of Open Learning (SOL) offers undergraduate and post graduate programmes in the humanities and social sciences and has an enrolment of over 200,000 students.

To meet the increasing demand for higher education, the Government of India,as a matter of policy, decided in 1967 to support and encourage universities in the country to offer facilities for part-time and correspondence education. Several Universities seized this opportunity and initiated correspondence education. Over 200 universities today offer correspondence education. During the last two decades, most of these universities have restructured and modernised their correspondence education offerings into good quality distance education programmes. Most of these universities are also in the process of establishing effective learner support systems using modern technologies.

It does not follow that all is well with this experiment, at least in India. The traditional universities are preoccupied with their mainstream face-to-face programmes. Most of them set up separate Directorates (Institutes, in some cases) to run their correspondence programmes. These Units of organisation have no autonomy; the academic programmes, course content, assessment procedures, and all other operational matters are handled by the decision-making bodies of the parent university. Preparation of course materials, in most cases, is a part-time responsibility of the regular faculty; often, these materials are indifferently produced. Most universities generate large revenues (some of them in fact took this initiative only to augment their income) from their correspondence offerings (the demand for university degrees from the adult population is indeed very high); the resource allocation pattern does not reflect this reality. In several cases, the Correspondence (Distance) Education Directorates do not have independent academic staff; if they do, they are mostly on secondment from their parent Departments. If any staff is recruited exclusively for these programmes, they are mainly to perform the administrative functions (University of Delhi was an exception to this rule and had its own academic and administrative staff).

There are signs of change in the last decade or so. As we noted, the University of Delhi has made significant changes in its approach to, and

organisation of, its distance education programmes. Several other universities are moving in similar directions. There is now a greater awareness among universities that they can ill-afford to ignore their distance education programmes and leave them as a peripheral concern.

The Malaysian Example: A major distance education provider in Malaysia is the University Sains Malaysia (USM) that is the University of Science (in English). Established in 1969, the USM offers courses in Engineering, Science, Technology, Management, the Arts, the Humanities and Social Sciences. It started its distance education operations under the auspices of its Centre for Off-Campus Education that got reorganised into a School of Distance Education. The School has its own academic and administrative staff, and is not very different from the Indian model from the organisational and structural points of view.

What makes the Malaysian pattern different, and perhaps unique, is its approach to university education. The USM believes that participation in the community life of the university is a mandatory requirement for all its graduates. Accordingly, its distance learners were obliged to spend one year on campus to qualify for the degree. While regular students study full-time on campus throughout the duration of their programmes, distance education students did so only in the last year and studied the remaining parts at a distance. The insistence on full-time campus-based study for one year at a stretch robed the programme of its usefulness to working people. Apparently to remedy this situation, the university has now done away with the requirement of full-time one-year residency for distance learners. Instead, it has now made provision for a 2-3 week annual residential course supported by an e-learning portal, live video conferencing/web conferencing and CD-based video lectures. Surely, distance learners are not comfortable with mandatory full-time attendance of long durations.

The Australian Example: The Deakin University experiment, evolved over a period of time, typifies the Australian pattern of distance education. Till 1982, Deakin University had a separate administrative unit to take care of its off-campus students. Later, this unit was abolished and its activities were integrated with those of the main university campus. The strength of this patternl is the use of the same academic staff to serve both on-campus and off-campus students. In other words, the significant feature of the Australian pattern is that both on-campus students as well as distance learners have the same faculty teaching the same course to the same standard.

We are not suggesting that these patterns are the authentic types of distance education organisation in these three countries. We have used these examples only for the sake of convenience. As, for example, what we have termed the Indian pattern is very much in evidence at the University of Queensland in Australia, and the earlier Deakin model is hardly different from what is followed at the University of New England or New South Wales in Australia or the University of Zambia in Africa. What is important, however, is to note that the pattern of organisation and the structures associated with the distance education systems run by the dual mode institutions reflect wide variations in details depending upon several factors like the academic strength of the universities, the strength or weakness of the client groups for distance education, the availability of adequate technology infrastructure, and more importantly, the ease with which the distance learners can access the available technologies.

For quite some time, especially in the 1970s and 1980s, distance education experts and scholars have strongly held the view that the dual mode systems could not do full justice to the distance education system. It was not surprising. Most universities considered and continued to think that distance education cannot assume or substitute the role of face-to-face education in fostering scholarship and understanding or deepening the intellectual curiosity in young minds as constant interaction with teachers with established scholarship and equally strong peer groups do. These fundamental differences in views have influenced the general perception about distance education and its parity of esteem. It was generally considered to be a poor cousin of mainstream formal education. Prejudiced though this perception was, there were significant issues of organisation and structure that critical scholarship often raised in discussing the effectiveness of distance education. For example, in most dual mode institutions, distance education has to be content with less than adequate attention and it always suffered from inadequacies in resource allocation, lack of autonomy in governance, general unwillingness on the part of authorities to innovate and experiment, and not the least, less than challenging demands from learner groups.

This pessimism was further reinforced by the phenomenal success of the single mode open universities during that period. We shall come to this issue a little later. For over two decades, the open universities seemed to have offered the answer, making comparisons of relative merits of the two types of institutional frameworks leading to a judgement more in favour of the open universities.

Professional development of distance educators is often mentioned as a serious deficiency. The poor quality of distance education teachers has been a souce of great concern. Teachers engaged in classroom teaching are not adequately equipped to meet the demands of distance learners. A major academic function in distance teaching is preparation of self-instructional materials and multimedia packages that require specialised professional competence; there were no programmes of training to develop the required skills in this area.

It was not as though these inadequacies and shortcomings are not addressed. Most developing distance education systems continuously endeavour to evaluate their performance, identify their strengths and weaknesses and make efforts to improve their performance, enhance the quality of their programmes and services and generally improve their effectiveness. In the last tewo decades or so, several dual mode insitutions have taken a series of measures to convert correspondence education programmes into mainstream distance education offerings. They have reviewed and redifined their programme development strategies, enhanced their learner support systems, harnessed the available technologies to strengthen their delivery systems, and have made conscious efforts to adopt distance education methods and practices to widen access and extend educational opportunities. As we have noted earlier, the increasing acceptance of convergence of campus-based and distance education systems have provided a further phillip to the efforts of traditional institutions engaging in distance education initiatives in a big way.

It has to be remembered that much of the success of distance education is due to its ability to reap the benefits of economies of scale. Together with its ability in cutting costs by drawing on existing resources rather than

establishing its own infrastructure, a distance education system tends to be more efficient and cost-effective. In order to sustain this success, a system also needs a constantly increasing client base. Since all countries in the world cannot afford to sustain traditional institutions as well as dedicated open universities, there is a strong view now that it would be preferable to support dual mode institutions rather than creating dedicated distance education institutions in environments that cannot support both. The improvements that we noted earlier which are constantly taking place in such countries as Australia, India, and those in Africa hold great promise. We shall return to this issue later.

It would be appropriate at this stage to mention some examples of what dual mode institutions can do to enhance the quality and credibility of their distance education offerings if their freedom of governance, recruitment of staff and autonomy in operations to design and develop study materials and organise the delivery systems are assured. The Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages at Hyderabad in India is a good case to show what a dual mode institution can do. Such dual mode institutions are also operating in the USA and other countries.Wherever they are, they are part of mainstream universities, enjoy considerable autonomy in preparing courses and materials, recruiting qualified staff and training them and getting their programmes accredited by nationally recognised accrediting agencies. Quite naturally, they enjoy high levels of credibility

Let us now turn to a critical analysis of the dual mode system on the basis of the issues and concerns so far discussed. There is no denying the fact that the richness of experiences and traditions of a university would endow its endeavours with great values and acceptability. It should be expected that, in general, universities would not risk their reputation and credibility by involving themselves in half-hearted measures, and would endow all initiatives they take with their most serious attention and consideration. They take distance education seriously, and do everything in their power to ensure that the quality and standards of their distance education programmes are as good as their regular offerings. Examples of New England, Deakin and other Australian universities reinforce this view. They bring to bear on their distance education programmes the authenticity, credibility and value that their regular programmes have by involving the same faculty, applying the same standards of teaching and learning and the same rigours of assessment. There are additional advantages too; these universities can use their infrastructure and save substantial investment costs, reduce the recurring costs by using the existing services and facilities with marginal additions, and operate at optimum efficiency.

On the other hand, there have been cases, as in India, for example, where the traditional universities have not always been too enthusiastic about taking the trouble of enriching their distance education initiatives with the richness of their resources and experience. Consequently, several distance education programmes of dual mode universities in the 1970s and 1980s were of poor quality leading to considerable scepticism about theirusefulness. Research studies conducted in early 1990s have established this perception. In the last decade and a half, however, there have been efforts at remedying the situation and many dual mode universities in India and elsewhere have consolidated their distance education initiatives. The creation of a national level mechanism for the promotion and coordinated development of the distance education offerings of conventional universities has gone a long way in strengthening their distance education offerings. We shall look at

these efforts in greater detail later in this Block. In conclusion, it could be said that conventional models of academic practices cannot be wholly imposed on the distance mode of education and that conversely, an innovative system like distance education cannot thrive under the traditional mode. Having said this, we must admit that, in the ultimate analysis, a lot depends upon the dedication and the commitment of the people who run the dual mode institutions as well as the institution's own philosophy and approach as clearly evidenced by the examples of New England and Deakin.

Let us now turn to the second category o insitutions that we called the multimedia model of distance education run by the single mode open universities.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i) Space is given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answer with the one given at the end of the unit.

What is the major difference between the Indian and Malaysian models of the dual mode systems? (Answer in about 30 words).

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3.3.2 Single Mode Institutions

This model evolved with the establishment of the British Open University in 1969. In many ways, this event marked a decisive movement forward in the evolution of distance education that was soon emulated across the world. Otto Peters (2003) calls it the "multiple mass media model" as it was the British Open University that led the movement for open learning systems in a big way. The core of this model is basically a combination of the earlier two models, namely, "independent self-study" and "correspondence education" supplemented with the use of radio and television and the provision of learner support at the study centres. Though radio and television were pressed into service for expanding education much before the British Open University was established (in China, for example, as we have seen in a previous unit), it was the British Open University that developed the multiple mass media model of distance education as an enduring innovation. In developing this model, the university recruited not just the faculty for subject specialisations, but many specialists too in instructional design, mediapedagogy and testing. Further, it designed its institutional structures to support student learning across the country (regional academic centres) and secured close cooperation and collaboration of BBC for preparation and broadcast of radio and television programmes on a sustained basis. It was not surprising then that this model became worthy of emulation and within three or four decades,more than 40 open universities across the world came to be influenced by the British Open Univetrsity model. We shall return to this model and take a closer look at it later in this unit.

But first, we also need to appreciate the environment in which the British Open University was launched.The second half of the twentieth century

witnessed a significant change in the approach to, and provision for, higher education. The highly selective approach of the past for entry into higher education came under serious scrutiny.Economic development, changing needs of a technology - dominated world and the emergence of new nation states committed to democracy and development, saw the social demand for higher education grow exponentially. The single digit enrolment ratio of the relevant age group in higher education (17-23) was found to be totally inadequate to meet the increasing demand. Denial of entry to universities for aspiring new social groups turned out to be a major political issue. Democratisation and mass higher education became the catchwords.

Almost at the same time, questions also began to be raised about the content of university education and its relevance. The traditional notions about liberal education emphasised study for the sake of study; this attitude inhibited the development of vocational courses almost everywhere. The focus of higher education was the school leavers, and the places available in the universities were never adequate to respond to all those who sought opportunities for education. The many who were denied entry remained outside with no opportunity to return to education and improve their lives and work. Do they remain deprived for ever? Do they come to universities just for the sake of study? How to give them opportunities to study what they want to study? There was no way the conventional universities were going to accept this responsibility. Then, who will do so? Existing universities were not equipped to respond to this situation. Rigidities in academic practices strenuously built over centuries of restrictive practices were not easy to break away from. Nor were enough resources available for establishment of large numbers of new universities. The new Labour government that came to power in 1964 gave expression to the idea of a University of the Air to absorb a large part of the increasing social demand for higher education. We shall come back to the founding of the UKOU shortly.

Exclusive distance teaching institutions are referred to as the single mode or dedicated distance education institutions.Unlike the distance teaching Departments/units in the mixed/dual mode universities, the single mode institutions have complete freedom in determining what to teach, how to teach and whom. Their academics, administrators and production personnel, all work for distance education. Also, unlike the consortium model of distance education institutions, the open/distance mode models of institutions do not have to accommodate differing educational philosophies, different organisational patterns and differing ideologies about using the media and their uses, or the indifference of certain departments or schools within one or more institutions. In other words, this model is relatively free from the constraints of the other two models that have to depend on existing structures and processes as well as established institutional cultures and traditions.

On pragmatic considerations too, a system of education that operates on a quasi-industrial model, has its learners separated from teachers, peer groups and the institution itself, as well as one that uses electronic media to compensate for the lack of inter-personal interaction, and a system that on the whole differs from all crucial operational aspects of the conventional system, cannot and should not be subjected to the conventional constraints in terms of administrative procedures and academic practices. Quite obviously, conventional management systems and administrative practices have to give way to more innovative and imaginative organisational and

managerial systems and processes. Only a dedicated institutional structure can do justice to these demands. The success of the UKOU was its ability in developing structures and processes that responded adequately to the needs of remotely located students. It would be worthwhile to look at the ways in which UKOU managed its operations.We would like to present to you a brief account of the functional aspects of UKOU.

UKOU: A Study

We mentioned a little while ago that UKOU emerged as a model for a very large number of open universities that came up across the world in the 1970s and later. It would be interesting to study this model in some detail to appreciate the finer aspects of organisation and management of an effective distance learning system. We do not claim that this presentation is an exhaustive case study of the UKOU as it evolved during the last four decades; it is just a brief survey of where it started and what made it reach where it is today.

Origins of the UKOU

In 1963, the Robbins Report on Higher Education in the UK stated that there was an untapped pool of adults in the United Kingdom who were in need of university education but had 'missed out' the opportunity earlier in their lives for various reasons. In the same year Harold Wilson, then the leader of the opposition, who, after a visit to the then Soviet Union, was impressed by the use of "media technology" there in the field of education and floated the idea of a 'University of the Air'. When the Labour Party came to power in 1964, Harold Wilson, the new Prime Minister entrusted Jennie Lee, a junior minister in the Department of Education and Science, with the special responsibility for the University of the Air project. Subsequently a white paper was brought out and a Planning Committee was established to work out a comprehensive plan for an Open University, as outlined in the white paper and to prepare a draft charter and statutes. After the Planning Committee report was published in 1969. Royal Charter was granted in June the same year, establishing the Open University as an independent and autonomous institution authorised to offer its own courses and confer its own degrees. Walter Perry was appointed the first Vice-Chancellor of the British Open University. Over the years, the British Open University has emerged as one of the most celebrated distance teaching institutions of the world. One of the key factors that contributed to the success of the UKOU was the organisation and management of the various functions of the university.

Organisational Structure

Organisationally, the British Open University is structured on the principle of division of labour: it has its Academic Schools (Faculties) and Centres that identify, design and develop programmes and courses; it has its own Media Preparation and Production Centres for developing and producing electronic madia materials, the Regional Academic Services that provide learning support to its distributed student body; and specialised structures engaged in the operations of Course Production and Distribution. And all these areas of operations are effectively coordinated and administered by a General Admininsration wing. Detailed structure of UKOU is depicted in Fig.3.1.

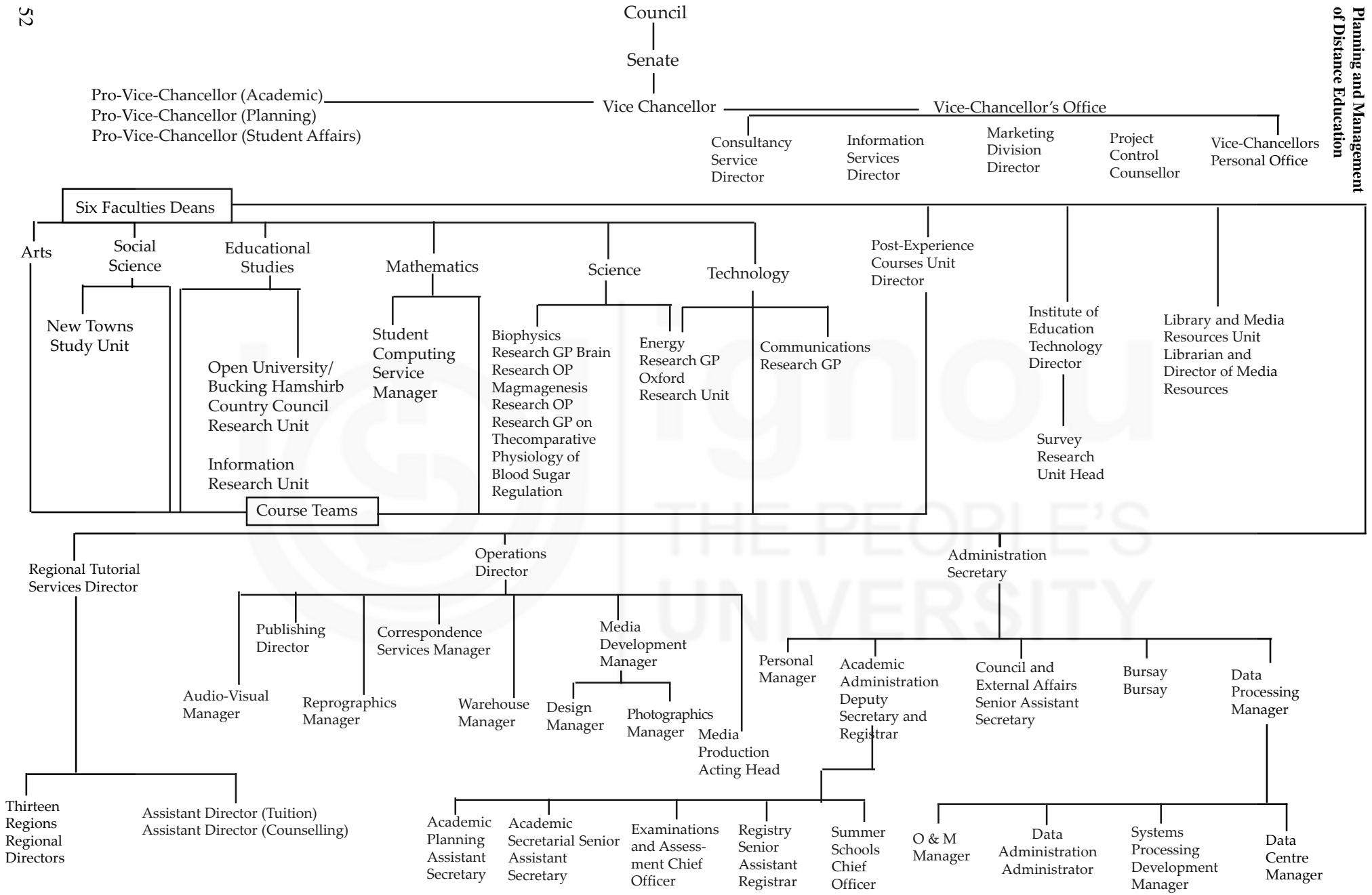

Fig. 3.1: Organisational Chart: UKOU, Lodnon

The executive head of the university is the Vice-Chancellor. There are Pro-Vice-Chancellors with individual responsibilities for specific policy areas. The bi-cameral governance structure of the university consists of two power-sharing bodies, the Senate and the Council. The senate comprises all members of the academic staff, the elected representatives of non-academic staff, part-time tutorial staff and some students and is chaired by the Vice-Chancellor (it has a large membership, over 800). The Senate determines the academic policies. The Council is the executive governing body , a more compact body of about 40 members, a majority of whom are drawn from outside the university and is chaired by the Pro-Chancellor. Besides, there are three bodies, (i) the Academic Board, (ii) the Student Affairs and Awards Board and (iii) the Planning Board. The first two report to the Senate and the third reports both to the Senate and the Council.

Let us now take a look at some of the critical areas of the OU's organisation to understand how a single mode *open university* performs its functions.

How Does The Open University Function?

The Instructional System: The British Open University runs teaching programmes for undergraduates, post graduates and associate students. In addition, the university has a research programme, an institutional research and development programme, a programme of international activities and a programme related to the marketing of the university's teaching materials.

Offering a wide range of academic programmes at the undergraduate level has been the major activity of the British Open University. Perhaps, its biggest contribution is the promotion of the open university principle. Students who want to register for undergraduate programmes need not have any formal academic qualifications, but must be 21 years of age. The OU students get their degrees by gaining credits, 6 for a B.A degree and 8 for a B.A. Honours degree. A full credit course is based on 32 weekly units of work. Each unit requires 12-15 hours of study of print materials, and the programmes broadcast through the Radio and the Television (course mterial broadcast by BBC stopped from 2005 and the University now provides DVDs for watching programmes). With the popularity of personal computers and Internet, most Open University programmes can now be pursued through web-based education. The minimum period of study is 3 years for B.A. and 4 years for a B.A (Hons). The students sit for a 3-hour final examination after completing assignments and summer school requirements where necessary for some programmes, summer schools or residential requirements are compulsory). The Associate Student Programmes (ASP) offer courses in the areas of community education, in-service teacher training, health and social welfare, technological updating, management, history, politics, culture etc. Teachers, professionals, housewives, technical personnel and clerical and office staff etc. register for these courses. Students who complete the course work and pass a final examination and get a course certificate. Those who complete just the course and do not sit for or do not pass the examination receive a letter of course completion.Although the British Open University has adopted the multi-media approach to its instructional methods, the main component of the OU teaching materials has been the printed text. Most OU courses are now available on DVDs and through the Internet. Science students get, in addition to the materials in print and electronic media, the home kits to conduct scientific experiments: Students are required to buy certain books (called set books) for further study. The set books are low-priced books printed by private publishers under agreement with the Open

University. Planning and management of the numerous operations related to the above mentioned tasks require specialised skills and resources.

Course design or course creation: The Faculty Board or what we call "Expert Committee" initiates proposals for starting new courses or programmes. The proposal must get the approval of the course-committee 24-36 months (i.e. 2-3 years) before the year of presentation of the course. The OU insists on this lead-time for completion of all preparations for the launch of the courses. Courses are written by course teams. The number of members on each course team may vary but it must have (a) the academics, (b) the educational technologists, and (c) multimedia production staff. The course team will have a chairman who is an academic experienced in developing distance-teaching materials. The academics who write the courses are mostly from the internal staff; sometimes, outside writers are also appointed on contract as consultants. The multimedia producers who are themselves highly qualified academics in the disciplines concerned interact with academics/course writers throughout the creation of the courses. However, the producers are responsible for the quality and production schedule of the programmes.

Library facilities are arranged for the course writers before they start writing the units or courses. A member of the course team works on the first draft and the draft is circulated among the other members of the team for their criticism, comments and suggestions. In the cases of the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities a course usually goes in the name of one member of the team and the science course go in the names of the respective teams. Where differences of opinion or ideological disputes are involved, a consensus is sought to finalise the draft and send the manuscript is then sent for printing.

Though deadlines are usually met, they are not insisted upon if the academics have genuine problems in getting the courses written. As Peny puts it: "There is no sanction that can be applied to creativity. You cannot make academics write good courses, you can only provide encouragement and facilities and an ambience in which they can indulge their creative impulses" (Perry, 1987). The standard and the quality of the course materials are, however strictly to be adhered to by academics. Questions related to academic freedom of the team or the individuals are some of the toughest areas to be tackled by the management and usually it takes recourse to striking a balance between the contenders disputing various issues.However, it is accepted that an academic working in an open university will not enjoy the same degree of individual freedom in choosing the contents and teaching them as is enjoyed by academics in conventional universities. The very act of asking a team of individuals with differing perceptions and ideological persuasions to work together rules out absolute individual freedom that may be possible in the case of an academic in a traditional university. Nevertheless, academics have the freedom to express all shades of opinion on global issues, though the universityas an institution does not take any position on these issues.

Course production and distribution: Once the final draft of a course is sent by the course team to the faculty editor; he/she makes the necessary editorial corrections and sends it to the printer. The OU uses private printers to print the course materials, and it uses its own press to print supplementary reading materials. The printed materials are stored in the OU Warehouse and periodically mailed to the students. The OU graphic unit takes care of illustrations to be printed in texts and the copyright office sorts out the copyright issues.

The production of elecronic media packages is now done by the professional staff appointed by the university who are also highly qualified academics in various disciplines. They are part of the course team and work together with the academics (in the initial stages, the BBC was doing the media preparation and production and had stationed a unit on the OU campus; this arrangement has been terminated recently).

Check Your Progress 2

Note: i) Space is given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answer with the one given at the end of the unit.

Describe briefly how the UKOU courses are created? (Answer in about 50 words).

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Management of Student Support Services: Management of student support services poses perhaps the most challenging problems to an Open University. Much of the success of the university would depend on how carefully the services are planned and how efficiently and effectively they are managed and implemented. The UKOU's student support services could provide a useful model for any open university in planning and managing its student affairs. Of course there will be variations in focus and priorities regarding the kinds of services that are to be given to students of a given distance teaching institution. But the systematic approach to the student support services as seen at the OU could help any open university. The basic issues that have enormous significance for the success of the support services are the commitment of the institution towards its students and its correct assessment of their needs. The UKOU has generally succeeded in both. From its inception, the academic bodies of the OU have been anxious to evolve an effective student support system. The salient features of the management of student support services at the OU are:

- Establishment and maintenance of an effective network of Regional Academic Centres and Study centres
- Coordination and supervision of tutorial services (summer schools included)
- Counselling services at different stages and provision for effective feedback; and
- Management of admissions, evaluation and examinations.

Management of Regional Academic Services and Study Centres: The UK is divided into 13 regions, and each Regional Centre is staffed with Academic supervisors, tutrial and counselling staff, admissions officers and supporing staff. Staff tutors organise day schools, field trips and other activities for students including supervision of tutorials at study centres. A group of Regional Academic staff (senior counsellors) supervise the progress of students (usually one senior counsellor for every 50 students). The study centres bring the university in to the heart of the local community and assure

students that a member of its staff is always available for personal and academic guidance. These centres are indeed the face of the university for a large distributed and remote student body; all student transactions from admission, fee payment, accessing learning materials, assignments and practicals, academic counselling and tutorial support to the final examinations, the Regional Centres and study centres perform them all.

Personal contact between tutor-counsellors and students is maintained throughout the period students remain active. Attendance at the tutorial sessions is optional, but submission of assignments is comppulsory for all students. Most undergraduate and many associate students have to do two types of assignments: tutor-marked assignments (TMAs) and computer marked assignments (CMAs). The performance of students on these assignments is made available to them through a well-equipped feedback system. Summer schools are part of the support services offered for the MA students with a view to giving them an opportunity to have the feeling of face-to-face students. Intensive work and a happy mood work best on such occasions. Arrangements are made with various educational institutions to provide accommodation, and laboratory facilities to students who attend summer schools.

While the conventional universities almost universally looked down upon distance education and conventional academics nearly always had a negative attitude to distance teaching and learning, the British Open University took on board this challenge right from the start, in setting about to prove that its teaching was second to none in higher education, and its degrees as good as that of any other. The Open University went on to establish several milestones; ranked among the top few in quality of education and research. An enviable record indeed!

What then is the future or open universities? During the two decades after the establishment of the first Open University (1969 to 1989), the world witnessed the creation of some 33 open universities. Of these, China accounted for 13 and India 5. In the next decade (1990 to 2000), there were 13 more (of which 4 were in India). Since 2000, the number has come down drastically, just three. Does this indicate a trend? Perhaps, yes. For one, dual mode institutions promise quality and cost-effectiveness if they can widen access.For another, the emergence of convergence of face-to-face and distance education tends to shed the biasagainst distance education decisively. And not the least, single mode universities need numbers that all environments cannot promise all the time. Not all countries in the world have the kind of population that most countries that have established open universities have. Do all these set any trends?

We shall now turn to the third category of our models list, namely, network-based distance education model.

Check Your Progress 3

Note: i) Space is given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answer with the one given at the end of the unit.

What are the major components of the system of student support services in the UKOU? (Answer in about 30 words).

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3.3.3 Consortium or Networked Systems

This model is essentially a consequence of the digital transformation of our world. A combination and integration of several advanced information and communication technologies, the most important among them being computer technology, multimedia technology, network technology and telecommunication technologies, made it possible to work in a 'digitised learning environment'. Students work offline or online; use DVDs or CD-ROMs with distance education courses in hypertext form, data-file courses or just databases, and take part in virtual seminars, workshops, tutorial and counselling meetings, tuition or project groups, and chat with their fellow students (Otto Peters, 2003). According to Peters, the greatest pedagogical advantage of this model is that students are challenged to develop new forms of learning by 'searching for, finding, acquiring, evaluating, judging, changing, storing, managing and retrieving information' when needed. They have the chance to learn by discovery and to be introduced to learning by doing research and becoming autonomous and self-regulated learners. Learning models of this kind have already been established by the UK Open University, Maryland University, SUNY Empire State College, Fern Universitat and the University of Oberta de Catalunya (Spain) (Peters, ibid).

The consortium approach is essentially an inter-institutional cooperative effort aimed at resolving financial, operational and academic-service related difficulties. Consortia are of different types and new types are being established increasingly, so there does not seem to be any sense in classifying them. However, it would be interesting to see how this model developed over time.

To begin with, the basis of a consortium was a resource pooling arrangement, which ,by itself or through an agency, developed and produced study materials and made them available to the participating agencies/institutions for use by their students. For example, the Universita a Distanza of Italy had a course/programme development and materials production mechanism, which received funds from various sources- private and public, including conventional universities, for developing materials. Students who used these study materials were enrolled by conventional universities, which conducted examinations and awarded degrees and diplomas. Tutorial and other support services are provided at local study centres, which are funded mainly by local bodies like municipalities. Another example of a similar arrangement is the Flexi Study system of the UK. It raises its funds by selling the material it produces, grants and donations from various private as well as public bodies. The pivot of this collaborative effort is the National Extension College (NEC). Itentersinto agreements with various colleges, which provide some courses with the help of materials developed and produced by NEC. The NEC enrolls its own students too, and uses materials available with them. This system is more open as it allows students to work entirely on their own, use correspondence or telephone tuition or face-to-face tuition.

An interesting example of academic collaboration and economical operation is the consortium involving Massey University along with a few other universities of New Zealand and the University of the South Pacific with headquarters at Fiji. In this case, Massey University is the central material developing and producing agency. The university itself is a dual mode institution which admits and teaches both on-campus and off-campus students with the help of its study centers spread across the country. The other universities of New Zealand also admit on-campus and off-campus

students, but they teach only the on-campus students. The off-campus students of these universities remain the responsibility of Massey University. Wherever there are Massey university arrangements for off campus instruction, students of other universities are to register for and attend Massey courses complete them according to Massey norms, and sit and clear Massey examinations. Grades obtained in such courses are transferred in the name of the student concerned to his/her home university. The same way, students of the South Pacific University can register for and gain credits on off-campus courses of Massey University to be counted toward their South Pacific degrees. One of the major reasons for the stability and success of this consortium is the central funding policy outlined and enforced by the Universities Grants Committee of New Zealand. What is of interest to us, as students of distance education, is the success of this operation.

An altogether different kind of consortium is exemplified by the Norsk Fernundervisning (NFU) of Norway. It is an institution with very small full-time staff of its own, and which neither develops any study materials nor admits/teaches any students. It has funds for promoting distance education in Norway. At the operational level, it initiates, approves, coordinates and enables efforts made by various collaborating institutions, like the Norwegian State Broadcasting Corporation, the National Film Board (Statens Films central) which publishes and commissions private film and video producers to produce study materials. The distribution of materials is effected through market mechanisms such as booksellers and public mechanisms such as public libraries (for print materials) and the National Film Board (for audio and video materials). Registeredwith correspondence institutes, students are provided with support services at local centres, arranged by these correspondence institutes or other non-governmental organizations.

It was not unusual for these early models of consortia and networks to collapse, inspite of the realisation that, given the global economic situation, networks are beneficial for all the participating institutions. The basic cause, again is the rigidity, which has shackled the conventional institutions as well as the psyche of the academics involved. Different institutes claim to have differing philosophical bases, and they remain keen to perpetuate their character, as it is manifest in their educational processes as well as the content of their course.The levels of commitment to distance education differ from institute to institute, and within a single institute from department to department, and within departments from one academic to another; different organisational structures and operational models; different levels of technological development and ability to use technology; differing objectives with which the participants may enter a collaborative project; differences on technical issues like copyright, jurisdiction, sharing of the cost of collaboration, distribution of roles and inhibiting bureaucracies; and finally, among the academics involved, the pride in creativity coupled in many cases with a superiority complex.

The newer technology network models that we briefly discussed in unit 1 are certainly an improvement on these early models. The National Technological University of the USA and such other networks that bring together resource-rich institutions on a common platform in sharing their courses and programmes with a larger number of institutions and their students are here to stay.

Check Your Progress 4

Note: i) Space is given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answer with the one given at the end of the unit.

Bring out the charactersitic differences between the three models/systems of distance education discussed above. (Answer in about 30 words).

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3.3.4 Virtual Distance Teaching Universities

Information and communication technologies have made it posible to combine digital learning and teaching techniques with one another, and to integrate them. As we noted in the previous section, this combination and integration provide students with the opportunities to engage in a variety of forms of learning in a digital environment. They use interactive multimedia distance teaching courses on CD-ROMs, DVDs, on the Internet, chat with fellow students and participate in virtual seminars and practical courses through teleconferencing or videoconferencing; they benefit also from the facilities offered by universities on real campuses.

As we entered the 21st century, we are seeing more and more hybrid distance learning environments that combine in one virtual classroom the elements of all the distance learning technologies that we have described so far, including the Internet, and the World Wide Web. They include digital TV, multitasking systems, software, TV network collaboration, multimedia CBT/ CD-Rom/laser disc, the Internet, www and online video. Till recently, high technology distance education programmes relied mainly on point-to-point and limited-point videoconferencing. As the world moved towards evolving standards for video over the Internet, distance education systems began webcasting (simultaneously broadcasting a videoconference locally and over the Internet). Although PCs were not designed to be a broadcast medium, advances in communication software, high-speed modems, and global transmission networks are providing the framework that allows Internet to function more like interactive television in tomorrow's virtual classroom (Paul,1998).

According to Peters (2003), the virtual distance teaching university would probably become the most flexible institution of higher learning ever seen in the history of education. This would be true not just for administrative and academic structures alone, but to pedagogocal structures as well. Innovative forms of teaching that combines and integrates several activities in the teaching spaces, namely, the virtual space for collaboration,exploration, documentation, multimedia, digitised wordprocessing, simulation and virtual reality would transform learning into a completely new experience through easy and rapid access to information, teaching programmes with diverse origins, simple and easy access to joint talks and group discussions.

African Virtual University (AVU)was one of the early examples of a virtual distance teaching institution. It was a World Bank project aimed at delivering advanced professional and technical education programmes of American

universities in Africa. The experiment was not a success mainly because there was little or no local involvement in the project, and eventually, the World Bank transferred the project to Africa. Now located in Nairobi, the AVU is making significant progress. Another instance of a virtual distance teaching university is the COL project for a Virtual University for Small States in the Commonwealth (VUSSC).

3.4 ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE OF OPEN UNIVERSITIES

As we have noted earlier, universities are generally autonomous, self - governing institutions.This fundamental feature is common to all universities, both conventional and open. However, there are several features that are unique to open and distance education universities that are not the case with the conventional universities. In our attempt to understand the organisational nature of distance teaching universities, we tend to turn to the structure of familiar conventional universities. It is not unusual to find that the organisational nature of autonomous distance education institutions is quite similar to that of conventional universities but different from that of the dual-mode or networked systems of distance education. What makes a critical difference in the organisational pattern are the instrumentalities for bridging the distance between the teachers and the learners. When we looked at the structure of the British Open University, we noted the more important among the distinguishing structural features. But first, the more common among both.

3.4.1 Decision-making Bodies

The organisational structure of distance teaching universities sometimes tends to be more hierarchical than that of conventional universities. Nevertheless, with varying nomenclatures, the following bodies are found in almost all the distance teaching universities.

Planning Board

A group of planners for the university is constituted at the very beginning to provide the necessary guidance to various operations of the university. This Board plays a key role both in academic, developmental and monitoring activities.The Board consists of outstanding academics and educational administrators. The chief function of this Board is to take a holistic view of the University as a system and plan for its effective functioning and proper development. Such Boards exist in the open universities of UK, Pakistan, Japan and India.

Executive Council

The Executive Council is the principal governing body of the university. It consists of people of eminence from different disciplines, such as education, industry, science, technology and other sectors. Sometimes government representatives are also the members of the Executive Council. Generally, the Council has representatives of the media as it is an important component of distance education systems.

Academic Council

It is the principal academic body exercising general supervision over academic policies. It consists of outstanding academics from both inside and outside the university. It monitors and regulates the academic standards and the quality of course development mechanisms.

Finance Committee

This committee looks after various financial matters such as resource mobilisation and utilization, grants from the Government, expenditure control, fee structure, loans, grants etc.

These decision-making organs are present in nearly all universities though their names and composition might vary from country to country.

Structures Unique to Open Universities

The organisational design borrowed from their conventional counterparts cannot meet the unique demands made on open universities, which have to plan, produce and deliver the academic material to students; audio-video components also need to be planned, produced and made available to students through telecast or study centres. Hence there is the requirement of coordinating the production and distribution of material, arrangements of counselling and audio-video sessions for a large population of learners who are spread over a large area. For performing these functions, new structures, which are not part of the conventional universities, are included in the organisational design of distance education universities. For example, in the University of Air, Japan Divisions of Academic Production and General Affairs have been included in the organisational network to look after specific' functions of the university. In the organisational chart of STOU, Thailand, besides Schools, we can see Educational Services, Academic Affairs, Registration, Records and Evaluation, Documentation and Information, and the University Press. In spite of the seemingly more corporate nature of the organisational structure, the work culture of Open Universities is more relaxed. The open education system nurtures a high degree of creativity because formal rules, impersonal, narrowly defined jobs and relationships of clear authority are not characteristic of Open Universities as they are in conventional education systems.

3.4.2 Regional Network

As the open (distance education) universities normally cover vast areas, sometimes the whole country and beyond, there is a need for establishing regional and local centres to provide strong support to students.

Most of the world's open universities have developed regional networks to support their students enrolled in various academic programmes. Regional offices are established to provide local, personalised services, represent local presence and help to instill a stronger sense of identity in students and part-time counsellors. These Regional Centres also try to coordinate between central bodies' and study centres. This decentralized pattern of administration helps the institution in recruitment of tutors and counsellors and in the admission of students, maintenance of records, maintenance of liaison with local educational bodies and in monitoring the progress of work. Regional centres also keep close and constant supervision over the implementation of various operations. For example, UKOU has 13 Regional offices to provide information and such services as counselling, on-site seminars and summer schools. These centres have extensive networks of tutors and tutor- counsellors for academic support, advice and counselling in almost every region of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. In India, the National Open University has 62 Regional Centres. Athabasca university of Canada has three major Regional Offices which offer almost all the services in the local community- information, counselling on time, admission and registrations, course material stock, examination supervision, seminars and teleconferencing.

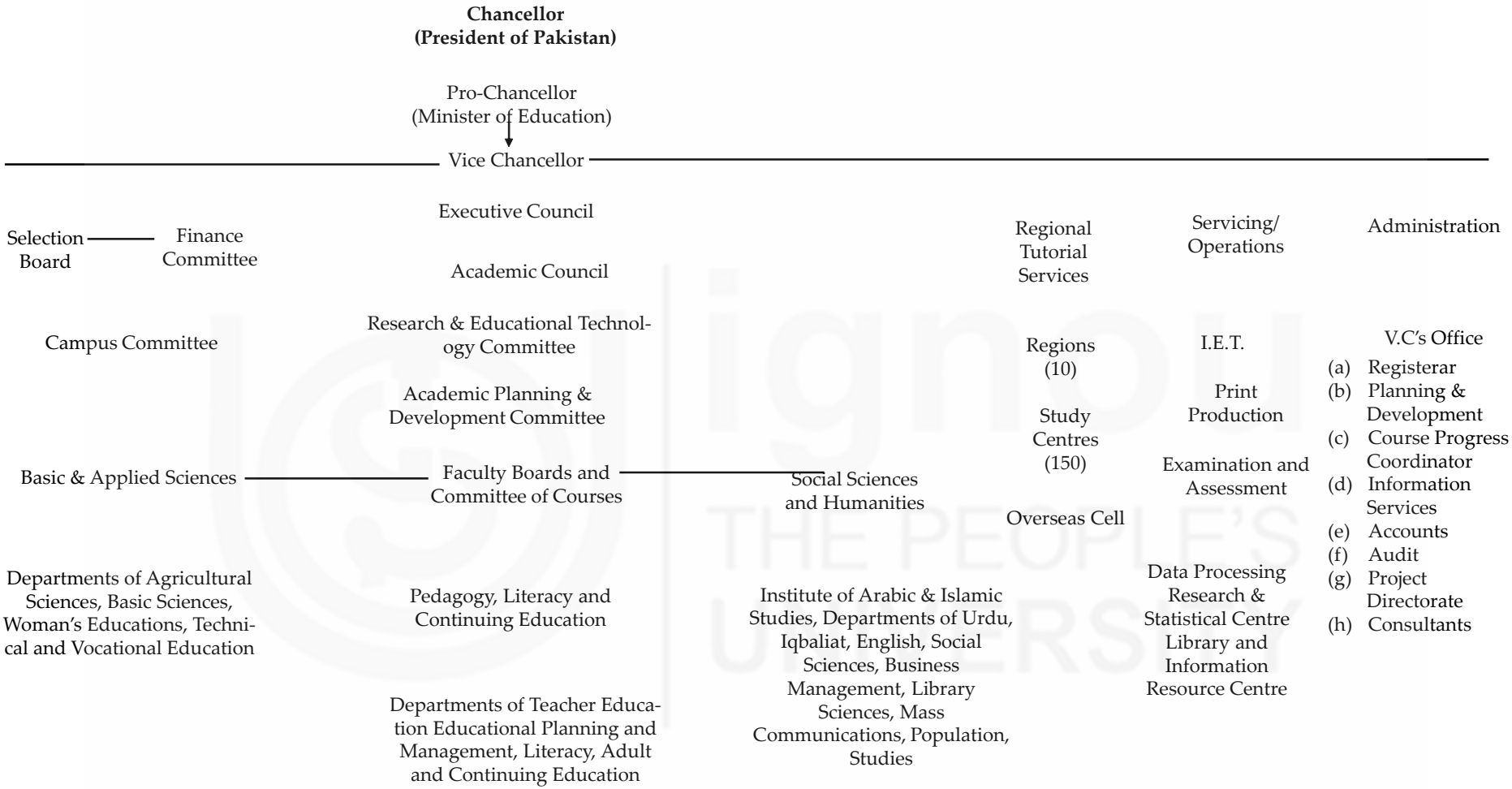

Fig. 3.2: Organisational Chart: AIOU, Islamabad

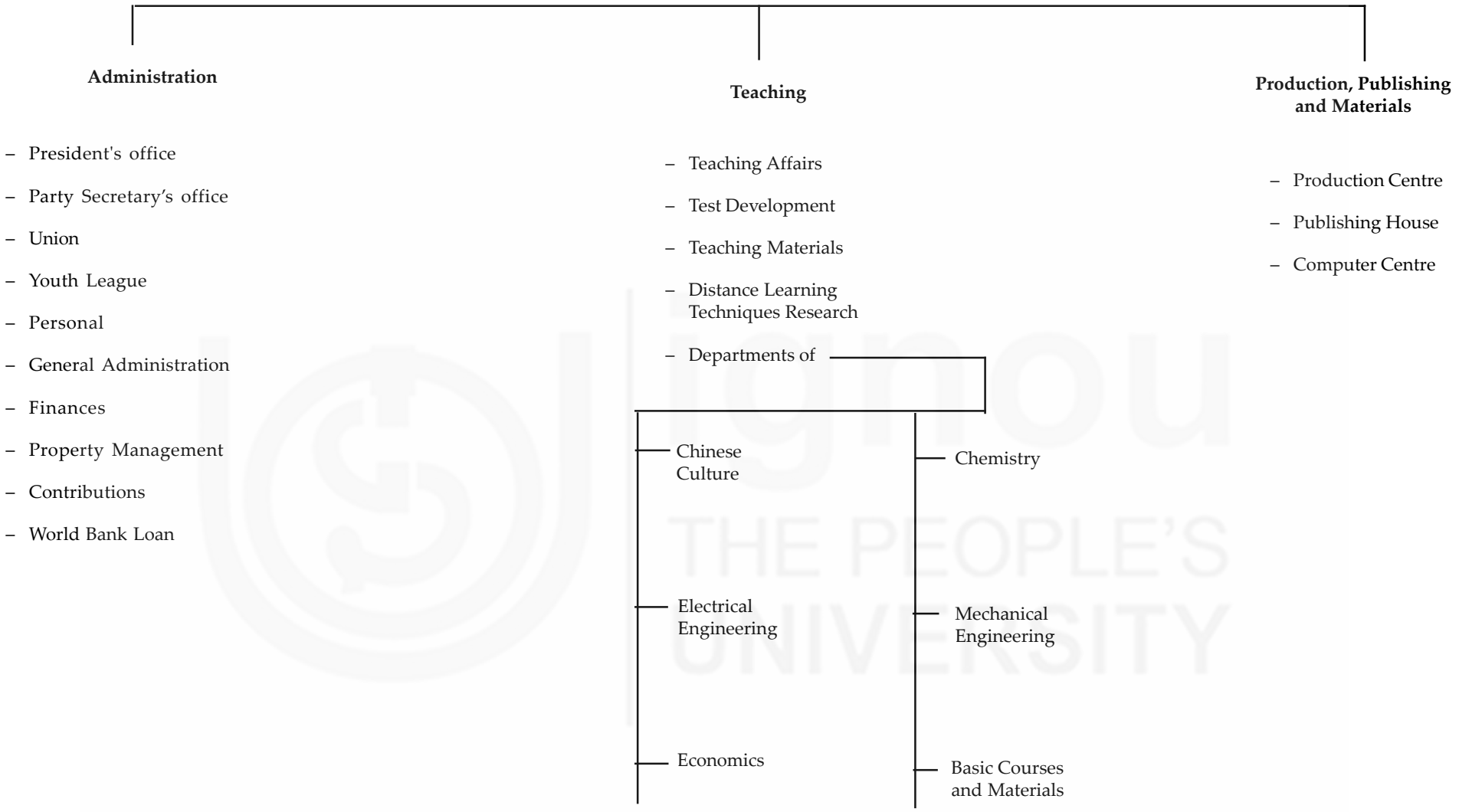

Fig. 3.3: Organisational Chart: CRTVU, China

Provision for study centres is an important feature of the distance education system. There are more than 3100 study centres in India to provide counselling and tutorial services to the students' of IGNOU. Library and Laboratory facilities are also available here.As the study centres are generallyestablished in the existing academic institutions their academic and infrastructural resources are put to use maximally.

In an attempt to further consolidate the facts presented in this unit, we have incorporated the organisational structures of single mode institutions i.e., AIOU in Fig. 3.2 and CRTU, China in Fig.3.3 to give you a global perspective.

3.4.3 The Organisation and its People: Division of Work

The Head of the Institution

The Head of an open university is generally an eminent person exercising certain formal powers. He/she can be (i) the head of state ex-officio as in the case of IGNOU, India and AIOU, Pakistan, or (ii) elected as in UK Open University, or (iii) appointed by the Head of State as in Thailand. In India, the President of India is the head, called "Visitor", of IGNOU. The President of Pakistan is the" Chancellor" and the Minister of Education is the 'Pro-Chancellor', of AIOU. They are titular heads of institutions and lend the prestige and credibility of the offices they hold or their personal standing in society to enhance the institution's image and acceptability. They do not exercise any executive responsibility though they do function in an appellate capacity in cases of disputes within the institution, between two bodies or between members and the institution. Their advice and counsel guide the institutions in their performance and their quest for excellence.

Executive Head

The nomenclature of the executive head or of the Chief Executive of the distance teaching universities conforms to the existing pattern in the conventional universities. The academic and administrative head of the university is called the Vice-Chancellor, the Rector or the President. The Chief Executive's role in a distance teaching university demands more than the traditional administrative functions of his /her counterparts. Due to its complex nature, broad area of jurisdiction, scattered administrative units, multiple systems, it becomes necessary for the chief of the institution to play an effective role in coordination and a vital role in decision making. The Head of an open university should ideally combine academic standing with strong managerial competence.

Pro-Vice Chancellors

The Executive Head of an open distance teaching university is assisted by, depending upon its size and scale of operations, one or more Pro Vice-Chancellors. Each Pro- Vice-Chancellor looks after a major sub-system of the university or a set of activities i.e., student services, course development, evaluation, planning and development etc.

Directors

Then there are divisions to provide services or schools to take up academic activities. The heads of these divisions and schools are called Deans or Directors. They have considerable room to exercise their executive powers unlike those of the heads of faculty or Departments in conventional universities.

3.5 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, we have tried to take you through the wide range and variety of forms in which distance education systems have evolved during the last four decades and the impact of ICTs on their structues and processes as well as the ways in which they are organised across the world. While looking at these systems, we also tried to generalise their features into 'types' so that our understanding of organisational models can be deepened. It is important to remember that our purpose is not to sit in judgement over the good-and-bad of any particular model; our concern is to discuss objectively the strengths and weaknesses that have been identified through critical study and analysis over a long period of time.

From organisational modeling, we moved in this unit to the more practical aspects of designing and structuring distance education institutions. In this discussion, we have freely drawn upon the experience of successful institutions like the-UKOU to focus on issues that are crucial to the planning and management of distance education. We hope that this presentation would have sharpened your understanding of the system and its complexities.

3.6 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: POSSIBLE ANSWERS

Check Your Progress 1

Spending some stipulated time on campus by a diatance learner is an essential component of the Malaysian model of dual mode distance education system. This feature is not found in the Indian one. This feature introduces a certain rigour into the operational aspets of the programmes.

Check Your Progress 2

The UKOU courses are written by Course Teams which comprise academics, educational technologists, and radio and TV producers. The academics write the course while the educational technologists and the media production staff develop the instructional system and produce the media packages in consultation with the academics. The processes of creating the courses go through several stages of review and revision.

Check Your Progress 3

The major elements that constitute the student support services system in the UKOU are: management of regional centres, management of study centres, coordination and supervision of tutorial and counselling services, provision of feedback and management of admissions, examinations and student assessment.

Check Your Progress 4

The dual mode system can be placed at the earlier stages of evolution of the open university system. At its best, the former is characterized by the distribution of the academic and other resources between on-campus and distance learners. Its weaknesses are limited scope for innovation, lack of sttatus for personnel and inadequate finances etc. The single mode system is more commited to distance teaching and learning; it has demonstrated initiative and enterprise in innovations and experiments; and it has successfully adopted modern management methods and styles in its operations for improving efficiency and cost effectiveness.

UNIT 4 MANAGEMENT OF DISTANCE EDUCATION SYSTEMS

Structure

4.1 INTRODUCTION

We have looked at the distance education systems at the higher level and their organisation and structures in some detail. Unit 1 in this block has taken you through the growth and development of open and distance education systems across the world focusing on concepts, methods and practices with a view to deepen your understanding of the system. In Unit 2, while further elaborating the methods, we have also looked at the distinguishing features in the organisational structure of distance education institutions in several parts of the world to provide you with an overview of different models and a synoptic view of their management styles and practices as well as the general issues associated with the problems of their management. We have carried this discussion further into Unit 3 to look at the typology of institutions as well as their organisational structures.

In this Unit, we turn our attention to a more detailed look at the ways in which distance education systems are structured, their specific components,

and the ways in which they can be planned, designed and organised. Generally, the initiative for introducing distance education within the existing educational system in a country is taken by its national government. Political power is thus not merely an external variable in the management of distance education; it is the key determinant of the environment in which the system succeeds or fails. Government policies directly influence the ways in which distance education can function in the national context; the funding pattern settled by the government will ordain the sustainability of the system. Decisions on the national objectives of education, the strategies for achieving those objectives, concerns about access and equity, regulation of technology induction, broadcasting/telecasting policies as well as the status and recognition of distance education degrees are all influenced by ideological and political positions taken by the governments in power.

We will discuss these larger issues and their influence on shaping and conditioning the distance education system in greater detail in the context of the establishment of the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) in India in Block 4. We shall confine ourselves in this Unit to a discussion of the broader issues and problems in the management of distance education as a system (as distinct from an institution) with special reference to its styles and practices. Our attention will thus be narrowed down to the issues involved in the management of distance education programmes, their delivery systems and the integration of distance education with the existing educational provision. This discussion, in some ways, will also prepare you to appreciate critically the problems involved in the management of large distance education systems.

4.2 OBJECTIVES

After studying this Unit, you would be able to:

- identify the major issues and concerns involved in the management of distance education systems;
- discuss the roles and functions of the management in the selection of programmes as well as their development and delivery;
- critically assess the various strategic options available to the management in the selection of media, technology and resource networking; and
- evaluate the economic aspects of the system in terms of costs, benefits, efficiency and effectiveness.

4.3 DISTANCE EDUCATION AND ITS MANAGEMENT

Distance education is a rapidly growing area today. Developments in information and communication technologies have accelerated the pace of its growth in recent times. Freedom from the constraints of time and space has provided the added advantage to people, vastly heterogeneous in character and attitudes, to pursue different programmes of their choice to meet a variety of needs.

The last few years have witnessed certain major trends in the provision of education and training across the world. These include significant reforms in

educational theory and practice, diversification of the resource base for education including privatisation, progressive globalisation of education leading to increasing collaboration and networking, and above all, the emergence of distance learning as an instrument for meeting the aspirations of large numbers of people in a knowledge-driven economy.

The management of a dynamic distance education system has to grapple with a wide variety of issues and concerns. These include the mission and purpose of the system in the context in which it operates, the programmes and their curricula, the strategies for teaching and learning, in organising the infrastructure for communication and interaction with students, the choice of technology, policies regarding staff and students, preparation, production and distribution of learning materials, funding and the establishment of the credibility of the system itself. We shall address some of these issues in the following sections of this Unit.

4.4 THE MANAGEMENT'S PERSPECTIVE

The study of the previous three units will have given you an idea of the variety and styles of the systems functioning in different parts of the world. They vary in their purpose, size, technologies used and patterns of management. They also vary in structure and organisation. The managers of distance education systems have to grapple with the implementation of several integral components of a complex system. The ways in which decisions are taken and implemented in any one of these components have a direct impact on all other components. For instance, the choice of programmes will affect the systems of their delivery and student assessment procedures; the enrolment size will depend upon the management's assessment of the market needs that influenced the choice of programmes; the recruitment of staff and allocation of other resources will have to be consistent with the objectives, structures and levels of each programme; the choice of media and technology support will have to be relevant both to the environment and the needs of the programme; and reliable and efficient support systems will have to be in place for the implementation of all programmes.

But first, let us look at the major objectives that a system seeks to achieve and how those objectives impact the issues of its organisation and management.

4.4.1 Varying Learner Needs

During the last half century, education has become a mass enterprise. The numbers seeking higher education and training are constantly growing. Most developed countries have reached at enrolment ratios of 50% or more of the relevant age groups. But the pressure on the system is not just from school leavers only. Large numbers of adult and mature learners are also looking for opportunities for education and training. Why?

Knowledge is the key to all enterprises in the world of today. At the rate knowledge is expanding today, human beings are finding it impossible to cope with its assimilation even in selected fields that are of immediate concern to them. The traditional approach to education as a onetime effort early in life can no longer equip people to meet the challenges of work and life in today's world. Continuing lifelong education is the only answer. But most people would not find it easy and affordable to take time away from their family or work to join institutions of education and training to update

their knowledge or skills. They need to learn at their workplace or at their homes, free from the constraints of time and space. Continuing education through the distance mode effectively responds to this need.

The motivation for learning is increasingly becoming diverse. The traditional forms and methods of work are changing. Applications of technology have changed the ways in which most jobs are performed today. People are left with no choice but to acquire the relevant skills and competence even for survival, not to speak of growth and development in their own professions. Employers would also want their workers trained in newer technologies that are being inducted for improving productivity and efficiency. Many working people would like to be trained in new technologies or would be keen to acquire special skills and knowledge in new areas for improving their career prospects at their own workplaces or to change jobs or organisations. These motivational variations determine the size and quality of the potential clients for distance education as well as their heterogeneity. We need to remind ourselves that no more do students want to learn for the sake of learning; they are students because they want qualifications that would get them jobs.

There are in addition groups suffering from several disadvantages or disabilities: very vast indeed is the constituency of the disadvantaged groups, economically, educationally, geographically and socially, in most developing societies. Add to that the large number of women who had little or no education and are, therefore, in no position to join the workforce. There are then those who are differently abled and require special education and training to overcome their disabilities. That all of them need opportunities for education and training to live fuller lives needs no emphasis.

Distance education can also be used to support vocational education and training. A major contribution made by distance education for many years in most developing countries is the training of unqualified or under qualified teachers in their schools. Some forty countries all over the world had established teacher education programmes through the distance mode by the 1980s. And the shortage of trained teachers continues to be a major area of concern for most developing countries in attaining the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015. International development agencies attach the highest importance to the training of as large a number of teachers as possible in the shortest possible time in their efforts to support the pursuit of these goals. Most recent reports suggest that the attainment of the objective of Education for All (EFA) is still too distant a goal.

In-company training is an area in which distance education systems have made a useful contribution. You will have noticed from Unit 2 that the National Technological University in the USA exists primarily because large companies in the USA buy their programmes that include graduate engineering courses contributed by 29 US universities, and services delivered by satellite broadcasts/telecasts, to train their personnel at their workplaces.

It is this multiplicity of learner needs and learner groups that constitute the potential market for distance education. Most distance education systems would naturally aim at serving these needs.

4.4.2 Responding to Emerging Needs

After having identified the wide range of needs that can be met by the distance education system, the management has to find ways by which these

needs can be converted in to demands. After all, it is demand that creates markets, and a market is created only when there are products (goods and services) that can be bought by people to satisfy their needs.

We have looked at the diversity of the learner groups and the variations in their motivations to pursue programmes of education and training. If educational providers have to respond meaningfully to these variations in motivation, a certain degree of customising the education and training programmes becomes inevitable. This would mean segmenting the market (client groups) into broad categories to provide for programmes in the same field at different levels (certificate, diploma and degree); learner groups by the differences in the level of their previous educational attainments (literate, school drop-out, secondary, post-secondary); working people by their professional fields; and so on.

A distance education system is not dynamic if it is not flexible. This flexibility is as much a function of its structure as its methods. You would already be familiar with the evolution of the distance education through different stages or generations, beginning with printed learning materials to begin with (first generation) and now running into the fifth generation of flexible learning systems. We shall look at the organisational aspects of this flexibility when we discuss the issues in system development later in this Unit.

Varying learner demands can be met substantially by providing flexibility to the structure of the programmes. For instance, acquiring a degree might require completion of a programme that takes four years or more. Those who are seeking this degree might come with different backgrounds; some might already have a degree in one field and would require only to add specialised knowledge in a specific area to convert that degree into his/her chosen field; another might have studied for some time and dropped out; yet another might not have gone beyond school. If a programme is structured into modules, each module comprising a combination of courses that together offer a certain number of credits, and acquisition of a prescribed number of credits qualifies for obtaining a specified qualification, those belonging to each of the groups mentioned above have a choice, and will need only to pursue those modules they need. This flexibility also implies that the system offers credits for the prior learning in one way or another.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i) Space is given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answers with the ones given at the end of the unit.

Identify whether the following statements are 'True' or 'False':

i) The motivational variations determine the size and quality, as well as the heterogeneity of the learner groups of distance education system. ( )

ii) Continuing and life long education is 'NOT' the answer to the challenges of life and work in today's world. ( )

iii) A distance education system can be dynamic if it is flexible. ( )

4.4.3 The Student Profile and Size

Distance education managers need to have a clear perception about who their students are, and what their special characteristics and needs would be. They could be a large number of employees of a single firm, for example, or a large number of students scattered over vast distances. This is important as many vital decisions on the delivery of services will depend upon this crucial knowledge input. For example, the kind of learner support system to be established, the kind of technologies to be used, the fees to be charged, etc. will depend upon the special characteristics of the learner groups to whom particular programmes are addressed.

It is clearly not feasible to design and develop a programme, launch it and enrol students, and then look at their profiles to develop a delivery system. The distance education management has to anticipate the broad characteristics of different learner groups and design and develop the delivery and support systems that will match their needs. For example, a programme addressed to the needs of a group that had no previous educational attainment has to have a greater face-to-face component in the delivery system to provide interactive guided learning while a graduate professional education programme could be offered through satellite delivered communication packages with no face-to-face component at all.

That also brings us to the choice of technology. The critical factor in the selection of technology is its accessibility. An expensive technology medium will not make for an effective delivery mechanism if large number of learners cannot easily access it at an affordable cost. To the distance education managers, learner locations and their environment are important considerations in designing the delivery systems. For example, for widely dispersed learner groups, many of whom are in remote locations and rural areas, video cassettes played on TV sets would be a low-cost, but effective, technology medium compared to satellite-delivered synchronised teleconferencing models using one-way video and two-way audio communication systems.

The size of the student group is an important factor. A unique feature of the distance education system is its ability to reap the benefits of economies of scale. The learning packages once produced can be used for limitless number of students, and for reasonably long periods of time. For every additional student enrolled, the marginal cost is only the additional production and distribution cost of the material. In other words, the initial investments made in the development and preparation of the learning materials get spread over a larger number of students and over long periods of time, thus offering substantial gains though economies of scale. If, on the other hand, the number of students is too low, there will be no economy of scale, and the unit cost will be very high. It is important that the management is alive to the issue of the size of the learner groups before making any significant investments in new programmes.

4.4.4 Media Choice: Reaching the Students

We have noted earlier that new technologies have transformed distance education in the last four decades; in fact, technology has emerged as a defining feature of education. In Unit 3, we discussed four organisational models of distance education institutions identified by Otto Peters, based mainly on the technological innovations in their organisation. In the discourse on distance education, generally five generations have been

identified, each of which corresponding to a stage (generation) of technology application. Taylor (1999) identifies them as (i) correspondence education, (ii) integration of multiple, one-way media such as print and broadcasting or recorded media such as video-cassettes, (iii) two-way synchronous tele-learning using audio- or video-conferencing, (iv) flexible learning based on asynchronous online learning combined with online interactive media and (v) intelligent flexible learning that adds a high degree of automation and student control to asynchronous online learning and interactive multimedia. This progression of technology application from the early stages of development to the present has come about with the continuing advances in technology. It did not happen all of a sudden; nor did it come about universally at the same time. While technologies advanced, each environment adopted them according to its needs and capacity.

We had occasion to refer to the media choices in distance education programmes in a limited context in the previous Unit. In this Section, we look at the wide range of options that distance education management has to choose from. It is not our intention here to discuss the detailed technical arguments in determining the choice of any one media over another, but we wish only to draw your attention to the broad considerations that should influence the choice of any medium.

It would be useful to define the two concepts, namely, media and technology before we move on to discuss how they are chosen in particular environments. Media are means of communication that involve a source of information, a means of transmitting that information and a receiver who is interested in, has access to, and knows how to interpret the communication. Technologies on the other hand are physical things that do not, by themselves, communicate. These include books, radio sets, transmitters, cables, satellites, television monitors, computers, and so on. While media will always use some technology as a means of transmission and communication, it is not necessary that media may be related to any specific technology. For example, a television programme can use different kinds of technologies such as digital or analogue equipment, terrestrial broadcast, cable or satellite transmission, video cassettes, or digital video discs. Similarly, computer signals can be sent by telephone lines, wireless, co-axial or fibre optic cable, satellite or any combination of these. Everyday use of the term 'media' usually includes the whole organisation of a communication industry, such as television, newspapers, publishing, and the Internet, encompassing far more than just technology (Tony Bates, 2008).

This understanding of the terms media and technology will help us discuss the media choices in distance education in the right perspective. Distance education is essentially a form of mediated teaching and learning in which teachers and learners are physically separated. Over a period of time, this system began to harness such technologies as were becoming available like radio and TV in the early stages, and audio and video recordings later. With the emergence of new technologies, distance learning environments are evolving into virtual classrooms where instruction is delivered from a host site to distant sites using a combination of live, two-way audio and video communication systems. Computer-based interaction through Local Area Network (LAN) and Wide Area Network (WAN) as well as the Internet have added a new dimension to the currently available distance education technologies.

In this process of evolution, there were several stages of intermediate technologies; the choice of a particular technology was based on considerations of easy availability, accessibility, affordability and the responsiveness of the environment to its use. Thus, while satellite-delivered communication technologies and computer-based communication networks characterise the delivery of distance education programmes in the developed countries, distance education delivery in the developing countries rely heavily on printed materials supplemented with, on a limited scale, radio and television broadcasts and audio and video recordings.

This is not, however, to suggest that the divide is not being bridged or that the developing nations are for ever going to live with the technology deficits that once were the order of the day. In the last decade or so, most modern communication technologies like mobile phones, Internet and Internet-based social networks have deeply penetrated even the remotest areas of most developing countries. For example, in India, the national television network has now 24-hour education channels beaming programmes across the country through a dedicated education satellite. What is important to note is that with these developments, the technology choices before distance education planners and managers have vastly improved.

The major considerations for distance education managers while choosing the media are:

- Use only those media that learners can access. It is not the availability of a particular medium that is important, but the chosen medium should be one that is or likely to be most used by learners;

- The affordability of access to a particular medium both for the provider and the learners. For instance, it might be possible in many cases to obtain the equipment and meet the other hardware needs through imports, but the competence to produce the software may not be locally available. Also, the priorities of television channel owners or distributors may not match the priorities of the educational providers.

- Even as the Internet is making deep inroads, issues of connectivity are assuming great significance. Government policies and tariff systems play a crucial role in making access to Internet-based communication systems accessible and affordable to many in the developing countries;

- The pedagogical significance of particular media is a relevant factor. It is not essential that all learning should be technology-mediated. In most cases, printed texts may serve the purpose. Where teaching needs demonstration, video tapes that could be replayed at will could be a better substitute for face-to-face interaction than video programmes delivered through the broadcast mode.

- In the developing countries, education providers are mainly the governments; most of them also have national television networks. Distance education programmes generally use television for delivery, but it can prove to be a costly experiment where those who access television and use it for education are limited.

The choice of media should ultimately come from the judgement of the management about its suitability and appropriateness in specific situations.

4.4.5 Technology and Efficiency

Distance education systems can be of varying sizes. There are close to 50 open universities in the world, some of which have come to be called Mega Universities, each with an enrolment of over 100,000 students; some of them have even touched the three-million mark. There are also very small systems catering to the needs of a few students, often a hundred or even less. Whatever its size, distance education enables a small number of teachers to reach a very large number of learners. It is possible mainly because in distance education, the media and the materials substitute the efforts of the teacher in the classroom. For the distance education management, the trade-off is between the labour-intensive conventional classroom teaching and the media-driven diffusion of materials trough which economies of scale can be achieved. The investments made on the materials, as we have noted earlier, get spread across long periods and large numbers of learners offering economies of scale. It is the cost-effectiveness of distance education that makes it an attractive option for education policy makers and planners.

It is not the diffusion technologies alone that makes for the efficiency of distance education. It employs a variety of technologies in its administration and management as well. Most distance education institutions that rely on printed materials use Desk Top Publishing techniques for their course development and production; depending upon the enrolment, it can use the just-in-time production methods for low enrolment programmes and bulk production, storage and distribution systems for high enrolment programmes. Electronic transfer of materials, production of CD-ROMS, online access to information and materials, walk-in admissions, on-demand examinations, online student assessment and grading, and so on are making integral parts of the management culture of distance education systems that make them both efficient and effective.

4.4.6 Choice of Institutional Models

In the precious Unit, we discussed four broad categories of distance education institutions, namely, dual mode institutions, single mode (multiple mass media) institutions, network-based institutions and virtual distance teaching universities. While there could be some variations to this broad typology in specific country contexts, it is essential for planners engaged in setting up distance education systems to choose a model that is appropriate to their context. What are the factors that weigh in this choice? We shall now turn to this issue.

The first consideration, of course, is whether or not there is a clear need to go for distance education. We discussed the needs and demands earlier in this Unit. Policy makers and planners will have to satisfy themselves that there is a sustainable demand for more and better provision of educational facilities in their jurisdiction. In today' world, provision for educational opportunities can never be too high. The demand for life long and continuing professional education programmes can seldom be met fully. If the assessment is that a sizable proportion of a country's population is outside the reach of current provision, and needs a wide range of programmes to meet their demands, it would be unrealistic to assume that any existing institution can easily multiply its programmes and facilities to respond to this demand. As we have seen, there are already more than fifty open universities in the world that have enrolments ranging from 100,000 to 3,000,000 in different parts of the world.

If, in the assessment of the planners in most high-population developing countries, there is a large accumulation of unmet demand for education from its young population, there is sufficient and strong justification for setting up a dedicated open university as was done in countries like India, Bangladesh or Tanzania. If, on the other hand, the assessment leads to the conclusion that the additional demands can effectively be met by existing institutional providers by equipping them with the necessary facilities and infrastructure to launch distance education programmes, there would be no justification to set up separate single mode universities. In fact, most countries now prefer dual mode institutions to open universities. The fact that during the last decade, only three single mode open universities were established, confirms this view.

This view is further strengthened by the argument among educators and policy makers that the distinction between face-to-face and distance education is progressively blurring as all educational institutions are now adopting some form of technology-enhanced provision even in their formal programmes. The discourse on education now sets out that all educational provision is a continuum that ranges from exclusive face-to-face teaching at one end of the spectrum to exclusive distance learning at the other. In reality, there is no more exclusiveness for either form and that all systems are a mix of both forms in varying degrees. This convergence has brought distance education centre stage as it finds greater acceptability and relevance everywhere.

Another major consideration in the choice of a model is the specific purpose(s) for which the system is about to be launched. If the objective is the development of a purpose-built specialised system, say, providing for the continuous upgrading of teacher competence at the school level, all the models can be regarded as appropriate. A dedicated distance teaching institution for teacher training will be a useful instrument for this purpose. A Teacher Training institution or a Department of Education engaged in traditional mode of teacher training could also be an effective proposition. Similarly, a group of teacher training institutions can be brought together with each assigned a specific responsibility on the basis of an agreed division of labour among them. And clearly, a virtual distance teaching institution could offer good teacher education programmes as well.

The final choice will depend upon the judgement of the decision-makers on the basis of their understanding of the suitability and efficiency of each model. It should however be noted that the specific mandate of the existing institutions is also a relevant factor as they may not be able to offer programmes beyond the levels of their mandate. For example, a Junior Basic Training Institute for primary school teachers may not be able to offer programmes at the degree level for the training of secondary school teachers.

Availability of resources is another important consideration. The extent of physical and financial resources as well as the competence and quality of human resources are also significant factors as well. Small countries with only one or two institutions of higher education will find it extremely difficult to assemble all the physical and intellectual resources needed to establish and maintain a dedicated open university. If the size of the population is small, and consequently, the number of potential learners is limited, there could be serious constraints in establishing and running distance education institutions and programmes. On the other hand, these very factors may force the choice on distance education in collaboration with

an institution from another country, with the local effort limited only to providing specified services. We mentioned the initiative taken by the Commonwealth of Learning to establish a virtual university for the smaller states of the Commonwealth in the previous Unit. This initiative was apparently a response to the request from several small countries (The Gambia, Seychelles, Fiji, and so on) that found establishment of their own distance education systems unsustainable.

It is generally assumed, and sometimes even strongly advocated, that dual mode institutions are much more efficient and effective in running distance education programmes. This argument is based on the assumption that all the resources and expertise available with institutions offering traditional programmes can also be deployed for distance education programmes with relatively low additional inputs. This argument is valid as an economic proposition. However, it can work only if within the institutional values and culture, distance education has parity of esteem with the regular programmes. If the experience of several universities in India is any indication, distance education programmes always get a lower priority in the allocation of resources and even in the care and attention from the faculty and management. It is for this reason that Distance Education Directorates of most Indian Universities are asking for structural reforms in their organisation to provide greater autonomy and independent resource allocation patterns. This aspect of the matter also needs to be taken into account while deciding the choice of the model.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: i) Space is given below for your answers.

ii) Check your answers with the ones given at the end of the unit.

i) What are the main considerations that distance educators have to keep in view while choosing the media? (Answer in about 40 words).

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ii) Which are the important factors to be kept in mind while choosing the model of a DE institution? (Answer in about 30 words).

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4.5 STRATEGIC PLANNING

Planning entered the scheme of education management only recently. The constantly increasing demand for educational provision, rising enrolments, increasing costs and the dwindling resources demanded that education systems manage their affairs within the means available with them. What began as fiscal and resource planning in the 1970s soon led to more comprehensive planning as a managerial initiative to define the short- and long-term objectives, the ways to achieve those objectives, needs assessment, the choice of programmes, informed decision-making, and such other market-driven approaches to managing institutions. The processes involved in planning include anticipating the future developments, the changes likely to take place in the environment, controlling the impact of the turn of future events with informed decisions, determining actions, resources and the best alternatives in advance and so on.

It has now become a norm for higher education institutions to revisit their mission and vision at regular intervals and redefine their goals. Having defined their goals, institutions need to identify and elaborate the ways they propose to get there. It is this exercise that has come to be known as strategic planning. Strategic planning is the elaboration of the grand design for accomplishing any mission. It is a major management tool that helps organisations achieve their goals. In other words, strategies outline how given objectives are translated into specific plans of action.

4.5.1 Strategic Planning in Distance Education

Typically, when a distance education system is set up by the government, by a university, or even by a private provider, there is usually a mission statement, often in very general and broad terms. This statement would, for example, define the mission of the system in such terms as augmenting educational provision, widening access, providing second chance to those who missed out on relevant education, continuing professional development of people at work, reaching out to those who are economically, educationally and socially disadvantaged sections of the community, and so on.

In order to meet these objectives, it is necessary for the management of the system to draw up a plan of action which would spell out, in some detail, what should be done, how it should be done, with what results and at what cost. This detailed exercise can be done as a long-term plan covering a period of five to ten years, or as a short-term plan for a period of two or three years. From the management's perspective, these will be that are set in the context of the environment in which the system has to operate. It is important that the planners take into account the strengths and weaknesses of the environment as well as the opportunities it provides while setting the goals. These may include the support or indifference of the government, significant unmet demand for education, critical gaps in the availability of educational provision, availability of, and access to, new technologies, the pace of induction of new technologies in to the economic life of the society requiring the training or retraining of personnel and so on. This process is intended to identify the key factors that would contribute to the success of the initiative and provide the management of the system with several options to choose from while going ahead.

A critical appraisal of these factors would yield information about the type and nature of the academic offerings to be developed, their levels and

duration, size of the potential learner groups, the technologies that would be available for delivering the programmes and also the resource support that can be expected through sponsorship, collaborative efforts and other networking arrangements.

On the basis of the strategic plan so determined, a financial plan is then developed to indicate the investments that need to be made on course development and preparation, infrastructure including staff, the revenues that can be expected, the resource gaps, if any, and the sources for funding them. The processes of strategic planning are such that would help the management at regular intervals to review the plans already prepared, make necessary changes in them depending upon the environmental changes, and also, more importantly, review the actual achievements against the goals set to ensure that efficiency is not impaired.

4.5.2 Some Examples of Strategic Thinking in Distance Education

We mentioned elsewhere in this Block that the University of South Africa (UNISA) is the oldest distance teaching university in the world. From a predominantly correspondence education institution for several decades, UNISA has emerged as a strong and powerful distance education institution after the merger of Technikon Southern Africa and the distance education centre of Vista University with UNISA in 2004. UNISA has developed a comprehensive Strategic Plan 2015 that elaborates its strategy. Some excerpts from its strategies for quality distance education would be very relevant.

Objective:

6.2 Position UNISA as a leading provider of quality distance education programmes through an academic product range that expands on its comprehensive character.

Strategies:

- Establish a common understanding of the nature and role of UNISA as a comprehensive open and distance education university; internally, among all staff; and externally, among our students, market and stakeholders.
- Strive to make distance education a method of choice for South African and African students and position UNISA as a university of first choice....
- Develop an appropriate and relevant programme and qualification mix (PQM) aligned with the comprehensive nature of the institution, its vision to become "the African University in the service of humanity....
- Ensure the relevance of UNISA's PQM and research by regularly conducting needs analyses of ourmarkets, our students and our stakeholders.....
- Manage access by providing students with the necessary competencies
- Maintain and improve UNISA's position as a quality provider of distance education through committing to continuous quality improvement in internal systems, liaison with professional bodies, liaison and partnerships with business, industry and public services, and peer institutions.

- Ensure that the curriculum for each module is up-to-date and well-researched, with aims and learning outcomes appropriate for the level of study, and with teaching, learning and assessment methods that are consistent with those aims and objectives.
- Increase headcount enrolments in line with national parameters to a plateau of 250,000 students by 2015. (Panda. S., 2008)

We shall have occasion to look into some detail at UNISA's transformation efforts in Block 4.

4.6 MANAGEMENT OF THE PROGRAMMES

All through this Unit and elsewhere in this course, we have been talking about distance education as a system. By definition, a system is the aggregation of several inter-related components, each of which impacts on the performance of the other. What are these components and how are they organised and managed? We shall look at this issue in this section.

A great deal of preparatory work needs to be done before any distance education programme can really get organised. Normally, this responsibility is assigned to a Planning Group which advises the management on the designing and detailing of all the components that constitute the system. Depending mainly on the strategies already settled, this Group elaborates each major function along with the tasks and sub-tasks involved in the performance of that function so that a proper operating system is in place while launching the programme. We have discussed at some length earlier in this Unit the processes involved in deciding the programmes to be offered and the potential learner groups for specific programmes. Important though this component is, we are not repeating here the manner in which it should get organised and made functional.

We shall, therefore, proceed to look at those tasks involved in the development of learning packages, their delivery and the management of the infrastructure for operating the system. These functions could broadly be classified into four groups:

- Material design and development
- Material production and distribution;
- Student support system; and
- Technology management.

We shall, in the following sub-sections, take a close look at the ways in which these groups of functions (also called sub-systems) get organised, and the more detailed components of each of these groups of functions.

4.6.1 Material Design and Development

Once the academic programmes are identified, the next stage is the development of courses for those programmes. This is essentially the job of the academic staff recruited for their subject-matter specialisation. The tasks include curriculum planning, finalisation of the instructional design and materials development. Often, an integrated approach is taken in the execution of these jobs.

Course development and preparation of materials is substantially a team effort (we have briefly outlined the processes followed by the UKOU in the

previous unit). Typically, a course team will consist of discipline specialists, instructional designers, media personnel, graphic designers and editors. Once the curricular content is settled, the process of material development begins. Material is prepared in the self-instructional format by building the teacher into the text. What is a good instructional design? It is about understanding, improving and applying methods of instruction to enhance the learning outcomes.

This is not the place to discuss different instructional theories and models. Suffice it to say that the academic team will have addressed this issue and settled on the approaches to instruction in respect of each course before the development phase begins. It is during the development phase that the professional expertise of the instructional designer becomes significant and several management issues are likely to surface. While determining the performance objectives (learning outcomes), it would also be necessary to specify the learning strategies and embed them in the development of the learning materials. These strategies might include self-study, guided interactive learning, tutorials, group activities, learning at work, and so on.

When the materials are developed, they are tested for their effectiveness and feedback. This phase is known as formative evaluation. A representative group of potential users will assess the materials in a variety of patterns and formats to test their suitability. On the basis of the results so obtained, the materials will be revised before their production begins.

A major issue that will arise at this stage is the question of media mix of the learning packages. We have briefly discussed the print material development processes followed by the UKOU in Unit 3. We shall therefore focus attention here on the development of non-print media like audio, video, radio, television, interactive television, videoconferencing, Internet-based and networked learning, etc. The selection and use of one or more of these components is one of the major decisions to be taken at this stage. As we have said earlier, there are several factors that will influence this choice. The important among them are:

- Accessibility;
- Appropriateness of the technology to the environment and the needs of the programme;
- Pedagogic utility and sustainability of the medium in enhancing the learning process;
- User-friendliness of the technology; and
- Costs

We shall come back to the management aspects of technology induction later in this unit.

Management of the design processes for material development, both print and non-print, can be a complex issue. It is unlikely that all the members of the team are in-house staff. Many of them could be part-timers, or casual associates performing a specified function, namely, attending meetings, giving advice, writing a lesson, preparing charts and graphs, or editing the content, format or language. Coordinating the work of such a group with different levels of commitment to the task at hand can be a daunting responsibility. Not the least is the tension that can surface from the differing perceptions of the academics and the professionals about the effectiveness of the product. What the academics feel pedagogically effective might not

appeal to the media professional who would be more concerned with the technology rather than learning.

It needs to be noted here that it is not always necessary that all new distance education systems have to go through this process and get its own learning materials prepared. One of the options that the Planning Groups could consider is to go for acquisition of materials from other distance teaching institutions. There are several institutions across the world that would be prepared to sell ready-to-use materials that any new system can acquire and use by adoption, adaptation and/or translation. Materials so acquired from two or more institutions could be mixed to make tailor-made programmes relevant to the needs of the new institution till it can start developing its own materials.

The Open Learning Institute (now Open University) of Hong Kong started with learning packages acquired from UK and Canada. The Open Learning Agency in British Columbia, Canada had course sharing arrangements with Laurentian University and Athabasca University (OLA is now part of the newly created Thomson Rivers University). Australian Universities (Deakin and South Australia, for example) have jointly produced distance education programmes at the post-graduate level. In India, the learning packages of the Indira Gandhi National Open University is acquired and used by a number of state universities in the country; some of these packages are adopted, some are adapted to suit local needs and some are translated into one or another regional language(s).

There are several advantages that flow from these collaborative arrangements. Some of these are;

- No single institution can meet all the varying needs of distance learners in today's world. More and more of them will be looking to a number of institutions to satisfy their specific needs;
- A networked and collaborative system can respond effectively to these needs and learners will have the freedom to choose from a wide range of courses and programmes;
- The programme development costs can be shared by a number of institutions;
- Institutions that do not have the resources, especially those in the developing countries, can acquire the learning packages and use them by adoption/adaptation/translation.

The roles devolving on the academics in a distance education system have significant management content. Traditionally, teaching is an individual effort, but it is not so in distance education. Adaptation to the new role of managing a team or working as one of its members requires a new orientation; good interpersonal relationship, commitment to shared responsibility, openness, flexibility, willingness to submit oneself to the discipline of start and finish deadlines are the major qualities of academic life in a distance education system.

4.6.2 Production and Distribution

Distance education systems will have to deal with production and distribution of learning packages on a massive scale. Remember that we are talking about hundreds of thousands of students enrolled in a single institution, each of whom should be supplied with the relevant learning

packages, ad in time. Remember also that the promptness and efficiency in the supply of the learning packages is the first experience of a student after enrolment in a distance education institution. No institution can afford to lose the goodwill of its students.

How does a distance education institution build this sub-system? The basic needs are professional support and adequate infrastructure. The personnel component of this sub-system consists of qualified professionals in the areas of printing, audio-visual programme production, broadcasts and telecasts and computer-assisted learning. Technological advances have made it possible to combine the development efforts with he production function. For example, Desk top Publishing helps integration of texts and illustrations and formatting them in a single page as it appears in print. Nevertheless, the management will have to take several aspects of these processes in to consideration before putting in place a workable sub-system. These are:

- *Matching Production with Demand:* Large distance education systems will require bulk production of several items, each tailored to the specific needs of particular courses. Production runs will therefore be very large even as a single item produced can serve the needs over a period of time. Each item has to be identified and specifications settled much in advance, the numbers required will have to be estimated with reasonable accuracy and production schedules drawn up depending upon the production capacity at the disposal of the management. In case there is no in-house printing facility with sufficient capacity, print orders can be placed with private presses. In practice, this is a complex area in which adherence to time lines and schedules are of utmost importance. Remember that course writing is a creative work that often tends to run out of rigid timeframes; even if the manuscripts are ready, there could be unforeseen interruptions that could upset the schedules. There are other factors like shortage of printing paper, industrial unrest in the printing industry, transportation problems, all of which could dislocate the most meticulously prepared plans.

- Production of electronic media packages requires not just the professional staff, but the necessary infrastructure as well. These packages for most distance teaching programmes in the developing countries still rely heavily on audio/video cassettes and CD-ROMs. The production facilities consist of studios for shooting and recording images and sound, editing suits, multiplication facilities fully equipped with all instruments and personnel. Here again, outsourcing can help overcome the initial constraints due to lack of in-house production facilities. Once the contents are settled, external production houses can be entrusted with the task of producing the packages and making multiple copies.

- Settling the transmission medium is another issue. While audio/video tapes and cassettes can be distributed or played at study centres equipped with playback facilities, arrangements for broadcast will require involvement of radio and television broadcasting organisations. Usually, the public radio and television broadcasters (in most cases, they are under the government control) could be persuaded to incorporate educational programmes also in their transmission schedules. Network-based systems require high technologies that comprise reliable connectivity, webcasting, and such other modern technology applications and facilities.

- *Fluctuations in Demand:* Production runs of materials are determined on the basis of the number of students expected to enrol in each course on

offer. These forecasts may or may not turn out to be true. If there is a substantial shortfall in enrolment, the management will be saddled with the responsibility of overstocked warehouses; if, on the other hand, the enrolment far exceeds expectations, the management has to resort to emergency production of more materials. Both the situations can impact the production and distribution schedules and cause embarrassment to management.

- *Management of Distribution:* One of the first tasks that has to be performed by a distance education institution soon after the enrolment process is completed, is to distribute the learning packages to each student for the courses in which he/she has enrolled. Any delay in getting the materials across to the students will lead to serious consequences; it could shatter student confidence; the management might lose credibility; and the system itself might fall in to disrepute. It is therefore absolutely essential to settle all matters relating to the logistics associated with distribution much in advance of the enrolment. These include:

  - o Appropriate and adequate warehousing of the materials;
  - o The pattern of distribution. If the postal system is efficient, the materials could be mailed to each student at his/her address (residence or workplace), alternately, students could be asked to collect their materials from the nearest study centre during specified periods; despatch of materials by courier service, or a combination of any of these methods.
  - o Ensuring the appropriateness of the contents of the packets. We have noted earlier that distance learners often choose courses and programmes according to their own perceptions of their needs. This means that the packets despatched to every student contain the materials for the courses of his/her choice and other relevant materials like assignments, etc. It means that the personnel involved in the preparation of packets for despatch should have the skills required for matching the materials with each student choice.

Check Your Progress 3

Note: i) Space is given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answer with the one given at the end of the unit.

What is the role of distance teacher as coordinator of a course/programme in a course team and what qualities are required in him/her to perform this role? (Answer in about 40 words).

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4.6.3 Student Support Services

Students are the primary concern of any educational institution. In distance education, with little or no personal contact between the institution and its students, the management has to ensure that their needs are adequately met. Meeting student needs involves the performance of a whole range of functions: registration as students; enrolment in courses and programmes of their choice; assignment to the chosen/nearest study centre or counsellor; acquainting them with what is expected of them during their stay as a student (payment of fees, adherence to regulations), and what they can expect from the institution (provision of study materials, arrangements for counselling and tutorials, holding examinations), etc. Organising these support systems is crucial to the effectiveness of distance education.

In the formal system, almost everyone knows how to get there. In the face of stiff competition, even traditional institutions have to do a bit of marketing; to attract better students. A distance education institution must necessarily do a lot of pre-admission publicity, including counselling that might include;

- Informing the public about what it offers, its courses and programmes, their levels, duration, prior requirements for admission, educational qualification required, etc.
- Advice on career opportunities, further education;
- Methods of study and the regulations concerning them, for instance, flexibilities provided for choice of courses, pacing of studies, determining the course loads, allocation of time for studies, arrangements for tutorials, practical work and assignments;
- Advice on how to study and advice on the methods and practices of the system and generally helping students get through them.

There is no single method for organising an effective student support system for distance education. Managers have a wide range of alternatives to choose from. The final choice of the design will depend upon a number of factors:

- The dispersal of students. If the geographical limits within which a system operates is relatively small, and most of the students have access to the institution or its teachers, it will be easier to design a support system that provides more face-to-face interaction during evenings or weekends. However, large systems catering to hundreds of thousands of students in large countries like China and India, for example, have to design more complex systems of interaction using multiple avenues of communication;
- The range of services to be delivered. Distance learners will require a wide range of services to help them through the system. This will include specialist support to grapple with the subject matter of the courses on the one hand, and availability of reliable and authentic information about when and how to submit assignments or where and when to sit for the examination, on the other. While much of the routine information needs can be met by a process of preparing standardised materials like handbooks on student assignment and assessment or newsletters incorporating schedules of events, etc., arrangements for specialist support will require more careful and well-planned initiatives.
- Large systems with substantial enrolments will require effectively decentralised student support services. It will not be possible to

supervise the work of hundreds of thousands of students from a single location. Depending on the size of an institution, a number of centres will have to be established at suitable locations and systems established to help students access information, materials and other facilities as well as for any other business to be transacted with the institution. If there are a significant number of such centres, normally known as study centres, then arrangements will be needed for coordination and supervision of their work as well. Large institutions like IGNOU and the UKOU do this through a number of Regional Centres.

4.6.4 Technology Applications Management

Technology has a major impact on distance education systems and their organisation. As we have seen, every new development in information and communication technologies has had a significant role in taking distance education to a new level (they call it generation). Thus, from the first generation correspondence education (printing technology) to the most recent virtual university (interactive multimedia based online teaching), technologies have helped establish new models of organisation of distance education during the last four decades. And, we have still not seen the last of it.

This is not to suggest that distance education is all about the latest technologies. Though the trend is towards more online courses, the digital divide is a major hurdle to cross before online education becomes the universal norm. For students in the developing countries with poor access to the Internet, print- and broadcast-based programmes will continue to remain important. According to Bates (2005), print and broadcast based distance education accounted for about 5 million students in 2002-03 while fully online programmes had only about 600,000 students.

Distance teaching public universities that have moved rapidly in to online learning or e-learning are grappling with problems of quality, access and sustainability (OECD, 2005). On the other hand, several private distance education organisations have managed to ensure quality, increased access and sustainability from the use of technology for teaching. The lesson to be learnt is that technology is not the end; it is only the means to reach out, and more modest and affordable technologies will continue to dominate the distance education horizon for a while longer.

Meanwhile, distance education systems are progressively becoming collaborative and networking arrangements in several countries. These arrangements vary in scope and purpose. At a very simple level, they could involve the sharing and exchange of information; they could then extend to areas like engagement in staff development, sharing of materials, joint development of programmes and finally the creation of an open learning system involving a number of institutions.

Networking in the technological sense is not just about cooperation and sharing. It is about the number of applications requiring high-speed data networking that need higher data transmission rates. Interconnections for telecommunication networks take many forms: telephone lines, Integrated Services Digital Network (ISDN), coaxial cable, fibre optics, microwave links, VSAT (very small aperture terminal) links, Broadband Integrated Services Digital Network (BISDN), Asynchronous Transfer Mode (ATM) and so on. Another service application that is emerging is Internet Protocol (IP)-based videoconferencing.

The choice really is how to put it all together. Before implementation of any telecommunication plan, distance education planners and managers would be well advised to:

- Undertake an environmental scan to determine which telecommunication plan is right for the institution
- Make an assessment of the types of programmes that fit the institution's mission, resources and goals
- Develop an understanding of learner attributes and needs; and
- Ensure the development of instructional design processes that integrate the attributes of the technology with those of the institution and its needs as well as those of its learners.

We had mentioned in unit 1 that among the lessons to be learnt from the explosive use of ICTs in education around the world is one of expensive failures. Technologies have to remain tools; they cannot take precedence over the basic needs of teaching and learning.

4.7 RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Distance education systems in most countries were initiated at the instance of their governments, or at least with their support. Education almost universally is a continuing concern for governments who provide funds for this sector. Exceptions to this practice are the establishment of educational institutions by private agencies (schools, colleges and universities, for example) or the arrangements for education and training made by employers for the benefit of their personnel. This does not mean that there is no private sector in education. In fact, in countries like the USA, for example, there is a strong private sector in education that establishes and runs universities and colleges. In Europe and nearly all the developing countries in the world, it is the Governments that lay down the education policy, provide the funding for education and generally oversee that policies are implemented and regulations are followed.

Government policies generally provide for the structure and pattern of education, resource allocations for the education sector and the broad guidelines or regulations within which institutions and their managements function. These regulations may specify the types and levels of institutions that private agencies can establish, the programmes they can offer, the fees that can be levied and the extent of facilities that each type of institution must provide. In several cases, the guidelines may also include the provisions to be made for reservation of seats for the socially and economically weaker sections (affirmative action) and related issues. In short, government policies and regulations are very crucial to the organisation and management of education in most countries.

Provision of educational opportunities through the system of distance education as part of government policies has several advantages. It ensures legitimacy for the system, validation of the qualifications awarded by institutions on completion of studies through the distance mode and not the least, a share in government funding earmarked for education. In this section, we shall focus our attention on the management of resources in distance education systems.

4.7.1 Institutions by Source of Funding

There are broadly three types of distance education institutions according to sources of their funding:

- Institutions fully funded by the governments;
- Institutions sponsored by the government on the understanding that they become self-supporting within a specified period;
- Private institutions not dependent on governments for funding.

The high costs involved in the creation of the infrastructure and also in the development of learning materials make it necessary that large distance education systems are funded by governments. Depending upon the media chosen, the technology support structure would also involve moderate to heavy investments. Besides, course development processes are always time-consuming, and it will take quite some time for the revenues to flow in. In the initial stages, a distance education system will require large outlays to set itself up with no returns on the investment till students are enrolled and begin to pay their fees.

As and when the operations begin, the situation could change significantly. Unlike in the traditional system, the recurrent expenditure does not vary proportionately with the student number. In distance education, the marginal cost with the addition of every student is less than the average per student cost. This happens because of economies of scale. This is because, as we noted earlier, the fixed costs on course development get spread over large numbers and also over long periods of time. In the traditional system, the strength of the faculty is determined by the number of students, as the requirements of quality in teaching demands a specified teacher-student ratio. In distance education, the permanent faculty at the institution has no direct relationship with the student body; it is this lower variable cost that makes distance education relatively cost-efficient.

Though the initial investments are high, the prospect of continued high returns makes distance education a viable economic proposition for private providers. This has led to the emergence of a strong commercial sector in distance education, but it confines itself to a few areas in which there is a known market that can pay the price that meets the cost. The emerging areas of studies in business, media and computer based design and other applications find many private providers willing to make the investments. But in several areas like teaching and other socially useful programmes of education and training aimed at the rural population, for example, private investments would never be adequate, or forthcoming.

4.7.2 Budgeting

Every institution needs to prepare its budget and control its expenditure. The budget provides a realistic estimate of what an institution intends to achieve within a given environment; it is a target or goal that people believe in and try to achieve. It is also a useful standard against which performance can be assessed. The attributes of credibility, motivation and realism make budget a dynamic instrument for the organisation and its people. The budget is dynamic because at any time it can be reviewed and revised, depending upon market conditions and also the new opportunities and challenges that those conditions might offer.

Preparing the budget is normally an exercise taken up annually well before the commencement of the financial year. In order to prepare the budget, the management would need to have comprehensive data on all new programmes and activities to be launched during the year for which the budget is being prepared, the targets to be achieved, past performance, etc., besides the current levels of revenue and expenses.

The sources of revenue of a distance education institution are generally:

- Government grants – this could generally be a fixed annual grant suitably adjusted to neutralise inflation, or determined on the basis of enrolment every year. To determine the actual quantum of grants, the average per student cost for each programme is settled in advance and all enrolments are converted into full-time equivalents. This formula could be very complex for distance education institutions.
- Tuition fees – these are prescribed by the institutions themselves after taking into account a number of complex and often incompatible factors that include the prevailing government policies, institutional objectives, economic conditions in society, the need to recover costs and the comparability with fees charged by other institutions for similar programmes;
- Other factors – distance education institutions are also large publishing houses that bring out a large volume of authentic learning materials. These include textbooks, reading materials, audio tapes, video programmes, CD-ROMs, and so on. These materials have a vast market; students and teachers in the formal system find them very useful. These can generate substantial revenues if they are properly marketed. Similarly, the institution can hire its audio/video production facilities to other institutions/agencies and can take up consultancy assignments for external organisations and charge them fees.
- Interests on investments, donations, etc.

Full fees are received from students at the time of their enrolment. Education is one area in which the per student cost is recovered even before any expenditure is incurred on him/her. Expenditure on students gets staggered on students throughout their stay with the institution. This expenditure is a firm commitment made by the institution that can run over long periods. A judicious policy of investing part of the fee income would ensure that future liabilities are adequately taken care of. Donations, endowments, etc., could also be significant sources of income though they cannot be predicted with any degree of certainty.

Expenditure is always predicated by levels of income. If income goes up, so does the expenditure. Conversely, if there is a fall in income, expenditure will also come down often leading to putting off new initiatives or acquisition of new facilities.

Budgeting exercise generally follows the pattern of organisation of activities. The major components of the distance education system, as we have seen earlier, are course design and development, material production and distribution, student support services, technology applications and institutional management. Each of these sub-systems will have to prepare its own estimates of expenditure keeping the existing level of activities, and the proposed additions during the year, in view. It would be useful for preparing these estimates if costs are standardised through a system of activity costing to which we shall return later in this unit.

Expenditure on course development is independent of the current enrolment. This is a fixed expenditure and is the capital of the institution on which it earns its revenue. Much of an institution's reputation will depend on the quality of these materials. Therefore, they need to be produced with great care, and will require constant review and revision to ensure currency of its content. The single largest component of the expenditure on this account is the salary of the faculty and the ancillary staff

The production and distribution budget would largely depend on the forecasts of enrolment on each course and programme, current costs of production of materials, the salaries of staff engaged on these operations and the mode of distribution and its costs.

Similarly, the budget for the student support services will depend upon the methods of delivery of various services, study centre costs, tutor costs, assignment evaluation costs, examination costs and the like.

The costs of technology applications are determined by the types and nature of technologies used, the ways in which technologies are applied and the costs of equipment and its maintenance.

Institutional management costs consist of the salary of staff associated with general administration, finance and accounts, estate management and maintenance, supplies and stationery, and all other common services.

Most institutions will also have a capital budget that makes provision for additions to infrastructure (building, equipment, furniture and other durable assets).

Check Your Progress 5

Note: i) Space is given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answers with the ones given at the end of the unit.

Identify whether the following statements are 'True' or 'False':

i) Unlike in the conventional system, the recurrent expenditure does not vary proportionately with the student number in DE. ( )

ii) The prospect of continued high returns makes DE a viable economic proposition for private providers. ( )

iii) The attributes namely, credibility, motivation and realism do not make the budget a dynamic instrument for the organisation. ( )

4.7.3 Activity Costing

As you have noticed, the preparation of the budget is a process that involves several steps. It is not enough to identify the items of expenditure (there will be too many for each activity), but it is just as important to know what each activity costs. The management will have to establish systems that will continuously monitor the expenditure and analyse it to establish realistic unit costs for each activity and each product and service. In order to work out reliable costs, it is necessary, in the first place, to standardise each product and service. For example, the print cost of materials will have to be standardised in terms of a volume of output (cost per page or for a volume of specified number of pages), or an audio tape or video cassette of a specified length of time (say, 30 minutes), etc. Each of these outputs will have a

standard cost that can then be broken down into various components, namely, salary of staff, cost of materials, cost of reviewing and editing and other overheads.

Similar efforts need to be made to analyse the costs involved in the delivery of various services to students. These will include the costs of pre-admission processes (advertisements, printing forms and programme guides), admission processing, etc. The cost of distribution of material will depend upon the volume of material despatched to each student. Counselling and tutorial costs will vary according to the instructional design of each course as does the cost of assignment and evaluation. At any rate, by a careful analysis of the past expenditure, historical costs of each of these components can be worked out fairly accurately, and these could be used as a guide for the future. This analysis will help identify the programme-specific costs for each programme separately. It will also assist in determining the levels of fees to be charged for each programme.

Having discussed the significance of cost analysis, it will be useful at this stage to look at some of the concepts associated with it:

- Direct costs are those associated with a particular product or service and are specific to it. Cost of materials used for a particular product and the salary of employees working on its production fall in this category;
- Indirect costs are those that cannot be identified exclusively with a particular product or service and are shared with other products and services;
- Overhead costs are those aggregate indirect costs of a cost centre or cost unit. Examples of this category are the costs of a central computing system or an internal telephone exchange;
- Apportionment of costs is the process of assigning the total costs to different products and services on the basis of their share in the aggregate cost;
- Fixed costs are those which do not vary with the volume of output. Buildings, equipment and most of the development costs fall in this category;
- Variable costs are those which vary with the volumes of output;
- Marginal costs are the additional costs incurred for increasing the output by one unit;
- Cost efficiency denotes the ratio of input to output. An institution is said to be more cost-efficient than another if it can produce more output with the same level of input or the same output with less input;
- Cost-effectiveness signifies the quality of the output relative to the demands that institution seeks to meet, the quality of the graduates, for example. It also involves the values and principles that an institution stands for, which contribute to the satisfaction of students and the public as well as the morale and loyalty of its staff.

4.7.4 Managing the Resources

The most important assets of educational institutions are their intellectual and physical resources. The intellectual output in the form of course materials, in print and electronic form, are a potential source of significant revenue. The same is the case with their premises and electronic media production facilities. Often, institutions themselves engage in projects, consultancies and other professional activities that can add substantially to their revenue from student fees. Imaginative management of these resources can free most institutions from financial dependence.

Traditionally, educational institutions have shied away from the concepts and practices associated with the management of finances in handling their funding. Most of their income came from government sources and fees constituted only a minor fraction of their total income. In this context, the major responsibility of the management is confined to ensuing accountability in the use of public funds. Thus managements are more concerned with judicious utilisation of available funds, monitoring expenditure and ensuring that the funds are indeed used for the purposes for which they were provided. This approach means that the major concern of the Finance Departments of educational institutions is keeping accounts and auditing expenditure, and not on managing the finances through increase in productivity, performance monitoring, controlling costs or mobilising new resources.

In the recent decades, the traditional approach to educational finance has been changing noticeably. With the increasing emphasis on market in all economic activity and, the view that provision of services like health and education should also be guided by the market, there is increasing pressure on educational institutions to recover the cost of the services they provide. However, the view that education is a major investment in people, and the governments should not shy away from this responsibility, if only to develop and sustain economic competitiveness among nations, is also gaining currency across the world. Though there is no finality in this debate, the trend is that higher education institutions, in general, are getting more concerned about ensuring their financial health.

What is evident, however, is that government funding of higher education institutions is progressively declining. Most traditional universities are looking for alternate sources of funding. In this quest, many have found that distance education programmes, addressed to non-traditional learner groups who are willing to pay more, can generate significant additional revenue with no major capital investment. In the process, many universities also found that there is a big market for their programmes across borders, leading eventually to globalisation of education.

A meaningful system of financial control will have the following elements:

- Periodic reviews of strategic plans to make adjustments in the size and level of activities to match the expected levels of funding;
- Reliable systems to forecast the enrolment size to make realistic assumptions about income;
- Preparation of separate budgets for each cost centre and assessment of the performance of each centre to determine its productivity and efficiency levels;

- Regular and even flow of activities to ensure that outputs match funding and that there are no accumulated shortages in outcomes that might need additional funding later;
- Evaluation of every proposal for delivery of any service in terms of possible alternatives, identifying the benefits relative to he costs proposed;
- Enforcement of the principle of value for money for every proposal to incur expenses;
- Ensuring that all activities contribute to the fulfilment of the objectives of the institution.

4.8 SYSTEM EVALUATION

Research and evaluation play a key role in the management of the distance education system. Typically, the main functions associated with the management of distance education system are planning, deciding, leading, implementing and evaluating. The performance of these tasks requires information that helps to take the best decisions possible, and developing good practices that make implementation of decisions effective.

Evaluation research in distance education can be designed and undertaken at the system level and also at the level of courses and programmes.

4.8.1 System Level Evaluation

System level evaluation involves:

- Basic measures of activity – collection and compilation of such basic management information as the programmes and courses on offer, the number of students enrolled on each course and programme, revenue earned by each course and programme, unit costs, etc.,
- Efficiency parameters – completion ratios indicating the number of students successfully completing every programme relative to the enrolment numbers, drop-out levels, average time taken to complete a programme, student loads in terms of course options and preferences, etc.;
- Outcomes – Student performance (examination results), sale proceeds from materials, extent of use of materials by non-students (materials market size);
- Realising programme objectives – provision of opportunities, widening access, enhancing equity and responding to the needs of the market by analysing the student profiles;
- Policy and practices – market surveys for needs assessment, acceptability of graduates in the market, diversification of approaches to delivery of services, impact of costs on students as well as the system;
- Organisational performance – structure of the organisation and its performance, personnel policy, work ethos, financial management.

4.8.2 Course and Programme Evaluation

Generally, there are two types of evaluations done for assessing the objectives of a course or programme. These are:

- Formative Evaluation – Assessment of the materials by trying them out on students to obtain feedback and also for securing views, comments and suggestions from internal as well as external experts before they are finalised;
- This process is also known as developmental testing (more on this in MDE-412);
- Summative evaluation – obtaining information about the end-use of a course or programme through feedback from past students, evaluation of the teaching-learning strategies followed and their impact on outcomes; styles of presentation, currency of content, etc.

Check Your Progress 6

Note: i) Space is given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answers with the ones given at the end of the unit.

i) What changes have taken place in educational financing in the recent decades? (Answer in about 50 words).

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ii) Define direct and indirect costs. (Answer in about 30 words).

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4.9 LET US SUM UP

From models and types, and methods and styles that we considered in the previous unit, we have taken a close look in this unit at the bread and butter issues that managers of distance education systems have to grapple with. In discussing these issues, our attempt has been to explore the ways in which managers address them and find solutions, rather than merely analysing situations and identifying issues.

We hope that this treatment would have given you a deeper understanding of the ways in which the management of a distance education system goes about articulating its goals, setting its strategies, designing its structure, organising its activities, managing its finances and finally assessing whether or not the purpose for which it all started has been served.

We believe that as a potential distance education manger, you will have found this unit exciting.

4.10 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: POSSIBLE ANSWERS

Check Your Progress 1

i) True, ii) False, iii) True

Check Your Progress 2

i) The main considerations while choosing the media are: accessibility, affordability of the medium both for the provider and the student; pedagogical significance, appropriateness of the medium in relation to the environment and costs.

ii) Established needs for education and training (number of programme and size of learners), the specific purpose (s) for which institution is to be launched, and availability of resources – physical and financial as well as competent personnel are the important factors which ultimately determine the model of the DE institution to be set up.

Check Your Progress 3

A course/programme coordinator plays the role of an academic manager, coordinating the work of the course team consisting of subject experts, producers, editors and instructional designers at the development stage and ensuring the preparation of assignments and their evaluation as well as the provision of tutorial support at the delivery stage. In order to be successful in this role a distance teacher should develop skills in interpersonal relationship, should be open and flexible, and willing to learn and change oneself where necessary.

Check Your Progress 4

The factors which will influence the organisational design of support services are: (a) the spread of students across the country; (b) the range of services/components to be delivered to students; (c) number of students to be catered to by the institution; (d) nature of programmes – like practical based courses or only theory based etc.; (e) extent of application of technology in support services by the institution and (f) assessment and examination system.

Check Your Progress 5

i) True, ii) True, iii) False

Check Your Progress 6

i) In recent decades, government funding for education has gradually declined which made universities look for alternate sources of funding and to concentrate on financial management with emphasis on better productivity, greater resource mobilisation, cost control etc. This is a radical change from the traditional approach of finance branches of educational institutions which was largely concerned with accounting and auditing only.

ii) Direct costs are those associated with a particular product or service and which are specific to it. Indirect costs are those which cannot be identified exclusively with a product or service, but are shared with other products and services.

UNIT 5 ISSUES IN PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT OF DISTANCE EDUCATION INSTITUTION

Structure

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous three units of this block dealt with the macro-management of distance education systems in the broad perspective of their evolution over a long period of time. We had a broad overview of the pattern and structure of distance education systems across the world in the previous units. While looking at the global situation, we have also noticed the presence of several organisational models. These are not peculiar to any one country or situation. We also looked at the essential components of a dynamic distance education system, its organisation and management, and what it takes to develop an effectively functioning system with relevant technology support. What this Unit tries to look at is the micro-management of a distance education institution. Most of you when you enter the profession are most likely to encounter the problems and issues concerned with an institution rather than the system as a whole. What it takes to set up an institution, where does one begin and where does one go from there? These are the issues that we shall try to deal with in this unit.

From the previous discussions, you will have noticed that there is no simple or single answer to the question of what institutional models and structures can be adopted or adapted for a distance education institution in the future. There is no doubt that conventional universities will continue to adapt and integrate open and distance learning initiatives in their programme profiles,

possibly at all levels, and also in all sectors. This is not to suggest that there will be no room for other institutional types; open universities and open schools, distance teaching networks and virtual universities are all bound to come up, and perhaps at a faster rate. What is more, new technologies and new markets will impose changes on these institutional models as well, and who knows how many new types of institutions and services will also get established to meet the needs of society in more effective ways than most of them do today. May be, existing institutions will need to develop and establish new types of partnerships and alliances. The wealth of experience and competence that distance education institutions have created over the last four decades or so needs to be capitalised in developing new alliances and structures. This is a challenge not just to institutional leadership but also to political leadership, policy development and institution building.

It is this experience of the last three or four decades that has contributed to a vast body of literature both on the theoretical framework of distance education pedagogy and the good practices adopted by different institutions in different environments. It is a brief summary of these principles and practices that we have presented in the previous units. In designing the presentation in this Block, we have proceeded on the assumption that most theories are a structured view of practices and that management science is all about good practices.

Having studied the general principles and practices followed in the management of distance education systems, we shall now turn to certain specific issues in the planning and management of distance education institutions.

5.2 OBJECTIVES

After studying this unit, you should be able to:

- identify the critical issues to be addressed while planning the establishment of a distance education institution, relative to its environment;
- examine the strategic options available to the management, assess their relative merits and demerits, and help make choices;
- design the systems, including the structures and processes, for development of programmes and delivery of services;
- analyse the nature of the staff development issues and problems of a new distance education institution; and
- establish systems and procedures for the evaluation of the performance of an institution.

5.3 THE INSTITUTION AND ITS ENVIRONMENT

Education is an area that generally falls within the domain of governments. In most countries, governments decide educational policies and priorities, allocate resources, establish institutions and maintain them. Where there is a significant private sector in education, governments regulate their functioning, set the standards and norms, and where appropriate, also provide financial support.

Besides government, there are several sectors in society that have either stakes in, or at least have influence over, educational provision. The academics working in the system, various professions and their organisations, parents and of course the students have all a major say in the nature and quality of the educational provision available to them.

In many countries, especially in the less developed and the developing ones, there are acute shortages in the provision for education, particularly at the higher levels. In some cases, there is shortage in resources for investment in education, in some others, even if some resources are available, there is lack of qualified personnel for teaching and management, while in other cases, all the needs of specialisation cannot be met from within the countries. There are also instances where the number of students seeking higher education is too small to set up specialised facilities in several disciplines (many of the island nations, for example), or their number is too large to cope with the demand for setting up facilities of an acceptable quality (several countries in sub-Saharan Africa, for example).

5.3.1 Why a Distance Education Institution/Facility?

We asked the question "why distance education" at the beginning of this Block and gave the answers in terms of the broad purposes distance education can serve. For example, we noted that distance education can widen access, augment educational provision, respond to the needs of mature learners who may or may not be working, meet specific employer needs of training in special skills and promote globalisation of education. We need not go in to any further discussion of these issues here. But, in the context of planning the establishment of a distance education institution, we need to examine whether any of these issues justify the creation of an institution or facility in particular environments, in some detail. We propose to do that now.

First, who are the potential learners? The planning exercise for setting up a new distance education facility has to begin with asking who its beneficiaries are likely to be, in the first place. To examine this issue, planners must have data relating to the current demand and supply, that is, the number of admission seekers and the number of places available. If the number of places available is far less than the number seeking admission, there is an unmet demand that gets accumulated over a period of time. With the lapse of time, this group will turn adults either working or looking for work. They may have also become ineligible for entry in to colleges or universities because of their age. The existing employment data should indicate the extent of unqualified or under qualified people in the workforce (we have noted that there are sizable proportions of such people among teachers in many developing countries). If the numbers are sizable, there would be a case for creating some facilities for their education and training outside the formal institutional structures.

The current workforce is a major constituency that would be looking for opportunities to improve their knowledge and skills through continuing education for professional development. Many of them would not be able to take time off from work; many among them would not also like to be away from their families. If opportunities are available to them to pursue their professional development programmes at their workplaces or homes, they can look forward to improve their career prospects, if necessary, even by switching jobs. Similar is the case with unemployed youth who have had no formal education or are drop-outs from schools. If facilities are available for

technical and vocational training through short programmes, it could help them earn their livelihood. Distance education offers them a solution; but the planners have to satisfy that this constituency can provide the numbers.

Women constitute a significant client group for distance education. Many of them would like to acquire knowledge and skills that would empower them to become productive members of the society and earning members of their families. Those who are engaged in the planning of distance education facilities could count on women as a potential and stable constituency.

What do the employers want? From the employers' point of view, distance education methods offer several advantages. Participation in distance education does not require employees to be absent from their workplace; it reduces the cost both to the employers and their employees; the employer does not have to bear the cost of sending workers away for training (travel to, and residence at, the place of training); distance education can help get over the reluctance of employees in joining training programmes; and employers can train more employees, more quickly and with fewer trainers. More importantly, as technologies change, newer skill sets are needed for their applications. Employers would certainly prefer someone from outside taking this responsibility of training their workforce to investing their own time and effort in on-the-job training. Distance education methods can achieve this objective.

What do Governments think? For governments, distance education offers several advantages. It enables educationists and trainers to meet a variety of needs most of which cannot be met, fully or even partially, by the traditional methods of education and training. Another attraction for governments is the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of the distance education system. It can meet the growing demand for higher education; with the expansion of the school system, there will be growing pressure for entry into colleges and universities; establishment of more of the traditional institutions is no longer an economic option; and it gives them the means to serve the needs of people living in the rural and remote areas in many countries.

5.3.2 Other Strategic Issues

As we had mentioned elsewhere in this Block, distance education has had a mixed reception in terms of both legitimacy and acceptability. In the best of cases, it was considered the second best, and never the best form of educational provision. What gives them legitimacy? We have said earlier that in most countries it is the governments that play the key role in education. They direct, regulate and develop their own education systems through the instruments of policy, legislation and resource support. To create an environment supportive of distance education, Governments have to play a crucial part; they have to accept distance education as an integral part of their national education system through appropriate provisions in their national policies; make laws where necessary and allocate adequate resources to establish and develop institutions and systems to sustain distance education provision.

Policy pronouncements by governments would support the planning work in many ways. They will provide the argument in support of distance education, the groups it will serve and its relationship with the formal system as well as address the issues concerning the recognition of the qualifications awarded by institutions offering distance education programmes. They will also help answer questions like the scale of

operations, the institutional structures that need to be put in place and a realistic assessment of the resource needs as well as the role of the traditional system and its academics in supporting and strengthening distance education.

In most developing countries, support of the political system, especially from the top levels of government, would be a major source of strength. We have seen how in an advanced country like the UK, the Prime Minister and his ministerial colleague, Jennie Lee, successfully piloted the UKOU project. If political backing was decisive in the UK, it was even more so in India. We shall have occasion to come back to this later. It was this support that set the planning machinery in motion. The Planning committee for the UKOU and the Project Committee for IGNOU were both set up by the respective governments who also set the terms of reference for these Committees. Surely, these were big confidence building measures for the planners and the general public, and government underwriting ensured the successful launch of the projects in both cases.

There are several factors that planners have to take into account at this stage. These are:

- What should the institution do? or what should its mission be?
- What should be its specific objectives?
- What types of needs it will meet?
- What programmes and curricula it will develop and how?
- What strategies it will follow in making the teaching-learning transaction effective?
- What would be its personnel policy?
- What resources would be available and can be mobilised?
- What monitoring and evaluation system should be in place?

We shall take up each of these issues for more detailed discussion in this unit.

5.3.3 Management of the Institution

We have noted from the preceding discussions that the many distinctive features of distance education management require managerial styles and practices that are very different from those associated with the management of traditional institutions of higher education, especially universities. Many universities across the world were established and are maintained in the liberal traditions of self-governing institutions, appropriately 'buffered' from direct control and intervention from the governments that legislated for their establishment. Their styles of management are collegial and participatory. Distance education institutions, on the other hand, combine in themselves, besides the traditional functions of universities, those assembly line processes associated with a modern industrial enterprise. Large scale production and distribution of learning materials both in print and the electronic form, organising and running broadcast/telecast programmes for diffusion of media packages, and coordinating and managing a widely distributed network of learning centres are some of the tasks that traditional universities are not called upon to perform. The management styles of distance teaching institutions therefore require an approach that is more techno-managerial than the collegial-liberal traditions of the conventional

university. There would be greater emphasis on productivity and efficiency in a distance education system than in a traditional university.

Efficiency indeed is the key to the management of a distance education system. The separation of its students from the institution demands application of modern technologies and practices to build bridges, the assembly line operations have to be closely watched and monitored to ensure execution in a sequence with no breaks, and in nearly all cases, it has to be ensured that the turn-around time is reduced to the minimum. The institution has therefore of necessity to adopt and implement modern management practices and methods to improve efficiency, ensure the quality of products and services, and also keep up the morale of the students and employees.

If such an orientation has to be given to the management of a distance education institution, it has to be reflected in the instrument that created the institution, the structures envisaged for the performance of its functions and the rules and regulations that govern its processes and methods of operations.

In many countries, at least in most developing countries, it is the Government that takes the initiative in setting up new universities and other institutions of higher education. The instrument by which this is done is legislation, or executive decisions. In either case, there would be a set of provisions that postulate the functions and powers and the composition of various bodies that comprise the institution.

Planners and decision-makers associated with the establishment of new distance education institutions will have to address the following issues:

- *The pattern of governance:* Conventional universities function through bodies like the Senate and the Executive Council. Senates are generally large bodies comprising nearly all the academics (or a large number of their representatives if the strength of academics is indeed very high) and representative of other employees. Although they make for participatory management, often they tend to be caught up in endless debates leading to delays in decisions and inefficiencies in performance. The Executive Councils, on the other hand, are smaller and compact bodies, comprising members drawn mostly from within the university. Though functionally they appear to be effective, constituted as they are with mostly internal members, decisions tend to get influenced by purely internal compulsions, and in any case, tend to be inadequate in depth and range in dealing with issues different from purely academic. The provisions relating to the powers, functions and composition of the governing bodies of a distance education institution are thus crucial to its efficiency and effectiveness.

- *Constitution of Management Bodies:* Traditional universities have always resisted any external influence on their academic policy-making and implementation processes. While it is important to protect and preserve the autonomy of educational institutions in deciding their academic policies and programmes, it is equally important that they do not suffer isolation from their environment. For a distance education institution, constant interaction with the environment is very essential not just to remove isolation, but more importantly, to inform their policy-making and programme-deciding processes. Provision of adequate

representation for a variety of interests on the decision-making bodies of a distance education institution will be very useful. Planners will have to consider and decide what balance should be maintained between internal and external members on these bodies, keeping in view the institutional structures currently existing in the environment, and the support and strength that can be secured from external sources.

- *The needs of cooperation and collaboration:* It is necessary for distance education institutions to function in close cooperation and collaboration with a wide variety of institutions and also drawing upon their physical facilities and personnel. While the constitution of various bodies, in some measure, can reflect this concern, it will be useful to secure the involvement of a cross section of stakeholders in the working of the institution itself. This could be done through appropriate consultative mechanisms, both formal and informal, as collaboration and networking are integral to the successful functioning of a distance education system.

- *Working with legacy systems:* You will recall that we mentioned in Unit 2 that open learning and distance education systems are a strategic option for expanding educational opportunities and that they need to be introduced with due consideration of the impact they can make on what already exists. In other words, planners should have a comprehensive understanding of the system that is currently functioning, its strengths and weaknesses and also the opportunities it offers not just to expand the existing educational provision but to bring about improvements in the existing system itself for its enrichment.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i) Space is given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answer with the one given at the end of the unit.

Which are the three major perspectives that influence the planning stage of a distance education institution? (Answer in about 40 words).

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5.4 PLANNING IN DISTANCE EDUCATION

Planning is at the core of management functions. It enables an institution to survive and adapt itself to the changing environment. Forward planning does not seem to have captured the imagination of educational administrators in the conventional system as it has an assured market and is under no serious threat from competitors. Distance education system, on the other hand, has to create a market, gain credibility and attract public support. Its processes are much more complex, combining as they do several operations that have elements of business processes, production and distribution, for example, built in to them. Unlike teaching and research which are seemingly leisurely pursuits on most campuses, distance education processes require a greater degree of efficiency and a sense of urgency in organising and scheduling various operations and meeting deadlines. Planning is the established management tool to achieve this purpose.

Planning is essentially the preparation of a blueprint for action for achieving a mission. A plan sets out systematically a series of activities to be undertaken, the resources needed for each, the outcomes expected and the timelines within which the objectives are to be achieved. In distance education, the planning stage also helps evolve the system since at this point itself, considerable thought will have gone into articulating the various components that constitute the system as well as the tasks associated with each of those components (we have listed these components in the previous unit).

5.4.1 The Institutional Objectives

As we discussed earlier, national policy documents or other appropriate instruments like legislation will have set out the mission of a distance education system in very broad and general terms. But when an institution is established, the planners will have to indicate what goals it will achieve to fulfil its mission. Again, these goals may appear to be general statements reflecting the philosophy of the institution, and its approach to fulfilling its own goals. Within this approach, care has to be taken to specify, in clear and explicit terms, what these goals are and how they are proposed to be achieved.

In practical terms, these are stated as the objectives of the institution. In formulating these objectives, care has to be taken to ensure that they are:

- Consistent with the goal/mission of the system;
- Explicitly stated and clearly defined;
- Expressed in measurable terms;
- Sufficiently flexible to make reviews and modifications possible depending upon changes in the environment.

Distance education institutions produce not just graduates alone; it also produces course material involving financial, operational and personnel implications. These functions demand a more explicit statement of the academic objectives and their inferences in quantitative terms. Explicit statements of specific objectives are crucial at an early stage; otherwise it

may be difficult to cut back on plans once course development work has begun. The extent of specificity of objectives or precise goal setting is very useful when there are severe resource and time constraints, or within a relatively stable environment; whereas broader, directional goal setting is more appropriate in the formative years of an institution, in conditions of uncertainty or when there is no consensus among stakeholders.

The framing of objectives depends on two factors:

- Agreed goals of the institution; and
- Assessment of the resources available.

The resource needs which concern planners include fixed assets (land, buildings and equipment), personnel (academic, professional, managerial and administrative), funds and time.

5.4.2 Programmes and Curricula

The statement of objectives, even in general terms, will give you an idea of the specific needs that the new institution will endeavour to meet. These could be, as we have mentioned earlier in this unit, providing educational opportunities to different learner groups (adult learners, working people, housewives, disadvantaged groups), or to meet specific education and training needs like training of teachers, developing skills for technology upgrading, or provision of more technical and vocational education and training. In whatever terms the objectives are formulated, the next task will be to identify what programmes should be developed to fulfil the stated objectives and what curricula should be designed and developed for the purpose.

Curriculum planning and development are essentially the task of the academics. To begin with, an idea has to be concretised. It may originate from an individual academic, a discipline group or a faculty/school of the institution (we are assuming here that the staff have been recruited and are in position; we shall discuss this later in this unit). This idea or concept of a programme or course is then accepted in principle by the relevant bodies of the university. Thereafter, the major tasks are to:

- Formulate the course specifications – these may include the aims and objectives of the course, its nature (professional, vocational, technical, awareness), levels (certificate, diploma, degree),
- Specify the content and structure,
- Determine the mix of learning packages (print, electronic media),
- Settle the instructional design (support systems required, tutorials and counselling, recruitment of tutors and counsellors, student assignments and their evaluation),
- Select the course writers and editors,
- Prepare texts for production.

All these tasks will have to be performed if the institution has to start its operations with learning packages produced in-house well before admissions are announced. However, as we had mentioned in the previous

unit, it is always open to a new institution to acquire the learning packages from any other institution and start with those materials in the early stages. This will save time (it will take a lead time of at least two to three years for in-house development of course materials), and will help gain valuable first-hand experience and insight in the delivery of distance education programmes and testing the adequacy and appropriateness of available delivery technologies.

In the initial phase, the issues involved in planning new programmes are:

- Search for material that are available and can be used for the purposes of the institution;
- The ways in which available materials can be used, for example, straight adoption, adaptation by making minor modifications or translation into local language;
- Writing of materials if the institution wants to use only in-house materials;
- Conducting development testing where necessary;
- Finalising the production arrangements.

5.4.3 Staffing

The most important asset of an organisation is its people. The principles and values of the organisation are evolved around them. They determine the work culture; their levels of commitment and concern inspire public confidence in the institution.

Personnel policy of a distance education institution is critical to its success. Although education generally is a labour-intensive enterprise, distance education can reduce this intensity. There is generally an established ratio between teachers and students in the conventional system; you have to increase the number of teachers as enrolment rises. This is primarily because a teacher can effectively interact with only a certain number of students; and depending upon the subjects taught and their levels, this interaction demands different levels of intensity. These criteria determine the class size in the conventional system.

In distance education, the situation is very different. Students depend largely on self-instructional learning packages for home-based study. Face-to-face contacts take place to a limited extent, but at different places and at different times. These flexibilities permit a distance education institution to develop personnel policies that are very different from those of traditional institutions. Distance education institutions have therefore an unusual mix of personnel; a relatively small core of permanent full-time staff consisting of academic, professional, technical and administrative personnel, supplemented by a much larger number of part-time staff engaged at different locations for specified periods and specific tasks.

The categories of personnel required for a distance education institution and the nature of tasks to be performed by them are indicated in the following Table:

Categories of Personnel	Tasks
Academic Staff: • Subject specialists • Media Experts • Instructional Designers	• Curriculum planning • Preparation of learning packages and their production • Specifying the instructional System • Tutoring/counselling students
Professional staff • Tutors/Counsellors • Printing technologists • Copy Editors • Graphic Designers • Media Producers • Cameramen • Technicians • Computer professionals • Engineers	• Production of learning packages • Preparation of charts, illustrations and Graphics • Production of audio and video tapes • Desktop publishing • Technology applications • Maintenance of equipment and production studios
Administrative staff • Managers • Administrators • Financial staff • Office staff • Warehousing staff	Operations management • Monitoring • Personnel administration • Financial management and accounting • Office management and maintenance • Storekeeping

The categories of personnel and the tasks mentioned in the Table above are by no means exhaustive, but only indicative.

The mix of staff according to the terms of their engagement (full-time, part-time, short-term, permanent, etc.) has to be settled depending upon the workload for every activity and the frequency at which every task has to be performed. For example, many of the tasks associated with the material development function (course writing and editing, preparation of graphics, video production, etc.) need to be performed only once. When once they are prepared, all that needs to be done is to ensure that they are revised and updated at appropriate intervals, where necessary. Most of the tasks associated with the initial preparation of materials can, therefore, be done by persons engaged on short-term basis or on short-term contract. Distance education institutions can therefore function effectively with a small core of full-time academic staff who could be assigned the responsibilities for course coordination, maintenance, revision, etc.

A similar approach could be followed in the recruitment of staff associated with the delivery of various services to students. For example, tutorials and academic counselling for distance learners are nearly always the functions of part-time staff; so is the case with the managerial and administrative staff at the local study centres. Appointment of full-time staff for the performance of these functions can be extremely costly. Much of the cost-efficiency of the distance education system depends on its ability to contain staff costs by pursuing a flexible personnel policy.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: i) Space is given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answers with the ones given at the end of the unit.

i) What care has to be taken while formulating institutional objectives for DEIs and why such care is needed? (Answer in about 40 words).

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ii) Identify the following statements as 'True' of 'False'

a) Framing for objectives does not depend on goals of the institution and availability of resources. ( )

b) Search for materials already available is not necessary in the initial phase of programme planning. ( )

c) Flexible personnel policy is one of the factors for cost-efficiency of the system. ( )

5.4.4 Staff Development and Training

Staff development and training is just as important to a new distance education institution as its personnel policy. As the teaching-learning methodologies are different and the competence required is highly specialised, it is necessary to consider recruitment and training of personnel at all levels at the initial stage itself.

The core competencies that are essential for distance educators are:

- Programme design and development
- Instructional system design
- Needs analysis and assessment
- Identification of job-related training
- Understanding of learning styles and preferences of adult learners
- Determination of appropriate training methods
- Management of programmes
- Communication technology and media
- Evaluation
- Planning and research
- Computer skills

We mentioned in the previous unit that most of the functions to be performed by the distance education system, ranging from course development to evaluation, require the involvement of several people working together as teams. Michael Moore (1993) describes open and distance learning environments as settings in which "instruction is no longer is an individual's work, but is the work of teams of specialists – media specialists, knowledge specialists, instructional design specialists, and learning specialists". If such a team approach has to be fostered among the staff of a distance education institution, it is essential that the staff is put through appropriate programmes of training and orientation after

recruitment. The focus of these programmes should be to develop in each specialist category the skills and competence that can contribute to the creation of the distance learning environment in the institution. An illustrative list of the areas for training and orientation is given below:

Categories of Personnel	Areas in which Skills and Competencies have to be developed
Academics	Instructional system design including: • Education theories • Distance learning styles and practices • Adult education theories • Teaching strategies • Communication skills • Presentation techniques
	• Self-instructional material development • Instructional design for interactive learning • Writing skills • Editing skills
Professionals/Technologists	Information and communication technology and management skills including: • Knowledge of technology and hardware • Knowledge of multi-media • Software and its applications • Computer networking • Knowledge of accessing technologies • Knowledge of interactive technology • Educational software development
Organisational and Management personnel	• Organising and controlling • Management Information System • Team Management • Collaboration and networking • Negotiating skills • Public Relations • Group Working • Strategic planning skills • Project management skills
Administrative and Financial Services	• Personnel administration • Knowledge of support systems • Policy making skills • Budget making skills • Cost analysis and activity costing skills

In the initial stages, planners and managers of any new institution will have to look for facilities to get their staff trained in these skills to begin the operations. Such training can be arranged by deputing groups of staff in different categories to well known institutions within the country or abroad,

or by getting experts from those institutions as advisors or consultants for short periods to set up the systems and orienting the staff to start the operations of the institution. The initial start-up period is very critical as it will set the environment in which the work culture will be evolved during the formative stages of the institution.

5.4.5 Designing the Delivery System

Delivery of learning materials and the provision of services that support the learners in getting through their programmes of study are critical elements in distance learning provision. Unlike in the conventional system, distance learners are physically separated from their teachers/institution and, therefore, there should be adequate arrangements in place to reach out to them. Most distance education systems, as we have seen in the previous unit, establish a network of local centres that remain the contact points for the learners. Such centres are located wherever there is a concentration of learners to ensure that they have easy access to advice, tuition, materials and information. The number of such centres will depend upon the vastness of the area to be covered, the size of the enrolment in each area (district, county, town or city). The major considerations in setting up the study centres should be:

- The centre should be capable of providing a learning environment;
- It should be accessible to learners within a reasonable time and distance;
- Tutors/counsellors should be available to help learners at the centre or its neighbourhood;
- It should have facilities to support a sufficiently large number of learners outside the normal working hours of the host institution where the centre is located;
- The host institution should be able to provide preferably its own staff on a part-time basis for managing the centre, helping students and maintaining their records;
- The compensation packages for providing these services should be drawn up either on a normative basis or through negotiations;
- Arrangements should be made to orient the staff about their roles and responsibilities.

These study centres may have to be provided with some resource inputs depending upon the instructional system to be developed. For instance, if the instructional system requires the use of electronic media, the centre should have the facilities to access those media. If video technology is part of the delivery system, the study centre should have the hardware (VCR and monitor) and the software (video cassettes). Today, Television sets, DVD players and DVD are ubiquitous and are extensively in use. In several cases, designated study centres may also have video conferencing facilities. These will include reception facilities for satellite transmission and talk-back systems for two-way audio. Similarly, if the support system involves face-to-face interaction, arrangements should be in place for a group of learners to interact with tutors/counsellors according to predetermined schedules.

There could be programmes that require different kinds of support services. If programmes of science education are on offer, learners should need access to laboratories to do their experiments. Similarly, for computer education

and training, hands-on experience is essential and the centre should have an adequate number of computers. Today, with computers becoming widely used at homes and workplaces, Internet-based learning has become very common and the emphasis gradually moving away from designated study centres to home-based study. However, these benefits are not yet universally available; the digital divide is so sharp that many developing countries do not still have easy access to these technologies.

As the institution grows, so does the enrolment, and with it, the network. There could be large numbers of study centres, and that would demand arrangements for coordination, supervision and monitoring of their work. An intermediate level mechanism would become necessary, and in many cases, these functions are performed by Regional Centres set up by the institution itself. The UKOU and IGNOU have set up large numbers of Regional Centres. Once the Regional Centres are set up, they would also be able to undertake resource mapping of the area under their jurisdiction for any possible expansion of the study centre network in the future.

If the early planning stage itself visualises a large institution covering a very large geographical area, and also high enrolments, a different approach to the establishment of the study centre network could be attempted. In such cases, it would be useful to set up the Regional Centres in the first place, which could then begin the process of resource mapping, selection of study centres, negotiations with existing institutions and finalisation of the terms of contract for hiring accommodation, personnel including tutors and counsellors and other facilities. The Regional Centres could also function as the focal points for organising training and orientation programmes for the study centre staff as well as tutors and counsellors. This approach would also help quicker expansion of the network and more effective response to rising enrolment.

A major function of the study centre network is the management of the logistics involved in delivering all the support services required by the learners. The specific responsibilities are:

- Providing a local face to an institution that is remote for most students;
- Offering personalised and often localised services to the learners attached to the centre;
- Significantly reducing the response time for information, material and assignment feedback;
- Serve as a forum where a group of learners could interact among themselves and reduce their feeling of isolation;

Establishment and development of such networks could also raise several issues for the management. More often, they tend to be resource-driven; the scale of resource inputs and personnel compensation packages will determine their behavioural responses and willingness to help students with whom they have no formal relationship. The levels of enrolment may not always match the investment made in a study centre; and, in the performance of certain functions like the distribution of materials, for example, it can only add one more layer between the institution and the student that may impact on efficiency.

In planning the student support network, planners will need to take the functionality of the system into account, For example, they will have to

consider whether it would be possible and desirable to structure the network as a centralised system, or whether it would be worthwhile to organise it as a decentralised structure. While a wholly centralised structure will not work, it would be more convenient and expeditious if the study centres are allowed a degree of freedom in organising its day-to-day work. For example, scheduling the tutorials at the study centre need not be done centrally; but, teleconferencing schedules cannot be operated on a decentralised basis.

It would be useful if the following concerns are addressed while deciding the structure of the student support service network:

- Define the roles, responsibilities and jurisdiction of the central office and the Regional Centres and Study Centres very clearly;
- Establish well defined reporting lines;
- Specify the areas in which the regional staff will have flexibility in decision-making in operational matters;
- Establish systems that help field staff participate in decision-making and execution through two-way feedback and monitoring mechanisms.

What we have detailed above reflects the practices followed by most institutions in the latter half of the 20th century. The 21st century distance education institutions will need to adjust to the realities of the contemporary world. The new order involves greater complexities in the provision of programmes and support to students. It would be worthwhile to look at some key trends and influences that would shape student support services in the 21st century:

- Widening participation and growing diversity of the student body will influence the range and nature of the support services;
- The digital divide that restricts access to modern technologies and the inability of students to use them, if made available, will require bridges to be built to meet needs and overcome skill deficiencies;
- Changing learner expectations about the provision and delivery of student services in an increasingly customer-focused and learner-centric system will make demands on the cost and quality as well as high levels of service;
- High levels of enthusiasm for new technologies that could override an understanding about what students want or require;
- Increasing costs.

5.4.6 Resources and Costs

As we have noted in the previous unit, governments play a major role in education all over the world. They determine the national policies, and these policies influence decisions on the allocation of resources for education. While governments could be the largest single source of educational finances in most countries, there could be a substantial private sector as well that provides for education and functions within the regulatory framework set by the governments.

Irrespective of the source that finances an educational institution, at the level of micro-management, planners will have to address the following issues:

- The extent of initial investment available at least for a period of the first five years;
- The broad break-up of the expenditure on capital and recurrent items;
- Preparation of a time frame with time-bound activities and their costs during the initial phase.

The main components of the capital items (fixed costs) are:

- Land and buildings;
- Furniture, office equipment and fittings;
- Computer hardware and software;
- Audio and video production equipment and facilities;
- Media transmission equipment and facilities;
- Vehicles.

The major components of the recurrent items of expenditure are:

- Salary of staff (full-time and part-time);
- Costs of preparation and production of learning packages (these will include paper, printing, audio and video tapes and their production costs);
- Cost of warehousing and distribution of materials;
- Expenditure on delivery of services at the study centres;
- Office supplies, communication, travel, etc.;
- Advertisements;
- General administration costs.

It is important to remember that an institution can hope to collect its revenue only after the first batch of students is admitted. Admissions are possible only after the learning packages are produced. It might take a lead time of at least two years or more to get learning packages prepared and stocked. It follows that the revenue-earning phase may start only after a gap of two or three years from the start of an institution. It is also likely that the size of the first few batches may not be as large as can generate a large volume of revenue. Evidently, a new institution should be well prepared to sustain itself on the funding support from its sponsors at least during the first five years of its operations.

As the operations go in full swing, it should be the endeavour of the management to analyse the costs of every activity continuously and establish the unit costs for each activity and output. This exercise will enable the institution to prepare its budget on a more realistic basis for all incremental additions to its activities, and more importantly, monitor and control expenditure to improve productivity and efficiency.

It would be useful at this stage to identify the major factors that would drive the costs of a distance education institution. While these factors could be easily identified, the ways in which they interact with one another, and impact costs, are often very complex. Let us list some of these:

- Media and technology choice: Technologies always interact with human beings, and the real understanding of the costs of any technology depends on an understanding of the socio-technical context in which it

operates. Choices have to be made keeping the prevailing and/or developing technology-friendly environment in which sustained use of chosen technologies can be assured, to avoid costly and expensive experiments.

- Evolving work practices and organisational structures: There is no denying the fact that the work practices and structures of distance education are rapidly changing. As we entered the 21st century, we saw significant changes through the growing influence of technologies in transforming the structures. For example, computer conferencing and the Internet have changed the format of courses necessitating changes in their design and the roles and skills required of those who produce them.

- The programme mix is an important variable that drives the costs. For instance, a large number of programmes, each of which needs independent courses, would be far more costly than those that can draw upon and utilise at least some of the generic courses that are already on offer.

- Similarly, a large number of programmes, each with small numbers of students, could prove to be too costly to maintain than a small number of large-enrolment programmes that can reap economies of scale.

Check Your Progress 3

Note: i) Space is given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answer with the one given at the end of the unit.

What are the main considerations for setting up of local/study centres? (Answer in about 40 words).

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5.5 MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The flow of accurate and reliable information at all stages of decision-making processes is essential for effective management. In fact, reliable information is a critical input for realistic planning. As we noted elsewhere, a system is the aggregate of several independent, but inter-connected components, each of which impacts the performance of the others. Often, the output from one of these component units is the input for another and the chain moves on in assembly line processes. Any slippage at any point will led to dislocation leading to enterprise wise delays and disruptions in schedules. Those managing each operation need therefore to keep others informed so that resources for each operation are made available in time and in adequate measure.

It is not uncommon in many organisations that information is not routinely shared with all areas that might be reasonably expected to get the relevant information. In a distance education institution in which many operations

are critically dependent on each other, non-availability of information, or its inadequacy or inaccuracy, can lead to severe problems for the management. The tendency to control information, and the reluctance to share it with all concerned, can often be counterproductive in any organisation, and more so in a distance education organisation.

The introduction of modern technologies can be a potent force in changing established attitudes to information collection and use. For instance, if the institution were to implement a multi-user computer system, on which all information on programmes, courses, student records, etc. are held on a single relational database, everyone in the institution can access the relevant information quickly and easily. There could be restrictions on accessing specific types of information, for example, confidential personnel information, or on users modifying or manipulating data. In this system, each operating unit has the responsibility for entering the data relating to their areas of responsibility, working to a data entry schedule set by the organisation, and keeping them current all the time. Each area then becomes accountable for the accuracy and timeliness of its own data, and its performance in achieving the goal set for it will also become open to general scrutiny.

5.5.1 Management Information System

Organising and controlling are major functions of management. The management of a distance education institution should give constant attention to details if it has to control changes in basic input-output flows through the institutional operations. In particular, the following operations need continuous monitoring:

- Processes associated with admission of students (including re-registration)and linking them to those relating to the provision of materials and services;
- Control over various operations including those relating to the production of materials and their distribution, timeliness of delivery of materials and services, ensuring their quality and reliability and engagement of operational staff and their efficient utilisation;
- Control over procurement processes and availability of material (paper, computer stationery, audio and video tapes/cassettes);
- Control over costs (capital and recurrent) and income.

In order to control all these operations, and in order to ensure that they are efficiently managed, institutions generally put in place what is called Management Information System (MIS). In putting such a system in place, the following areas have to be taken into account:

- Programme planning and scheduling;
- Programme development monitoring;
- Progress of print production;
- Progress of audio/visual production;
- Assignment development and preparation;
- Admission schedule;
- Admission data processing schedule;
- Material despatch schedule;

- Staff recruitment and training schedule;
- Equipment purchase schedule;
- Examination schedule.

Since all these are recurring activities, it would be useful to prepare an institution wide calendar for all these activities which should then form the basis of monitoring actual performance vis-a-vis the schedules. In preparing the schedule, care will have to be taken to match the input- output flows so that all interdependencies are taken into account at the MIS design stage itself.

Preparing the schedules and notifying them are not enough. There has to be constant monitoring of performance as well. Each operational area should, at agreed intervals, provide all the relevant activities performed and results achieved till the reporting date, including also the slippages, if any, as well as the reasons for the delays. This would help the Unit in charge of MIS to prepare an institution-wide report on performance on the basis of which the management would be able to take corrective action where necessary.

5.5.2 Maintenance of Database

The discussion in the previous section highlighted the significance of collection and maintenance of data relating to various operations. These data will help the institution to evaluate its internal efficiency. There are, however, several new dimensions to assessing the performance of a distance education institution and the availability of data is just one critical element for that assessment.

A distance education institution exists to serve its actual and potential students. It is important to know who the students are and how the institution responded to their expectations. A quantification of these aspects is possible if data on the following aspects are collected and maintained:

- The number of courses produced;
- Who were they aimed at?
- The number enrolled against set targets;
- The number of students on each course and programme;
- The number of students who withdraw or drop out;
- Student pass rates;
- Persistence rates (students who stay on a course till its completion);
- Demographic profile of students (age, gender, employment, income groups, rural, urban, etc.).

Among the major outputs of a distance education institution are the learning materials produced by it. We have mentioned earlier that while developing materials, institutions also undertake development testing. It is important that the feedback obtained from such testing is systematically documented and maintained. This database would be an invaluable learning resource for the institution and its people.

It would be useful to undertake regular surveys on various aspects of the functioning of the institution and the services provided by it. For example, access to study centre, frequency of use of study centres, access to media and the pattern of its use, promptness in the supply of materials or assignment

feedback, etc., could be the areas for such surveys. Most of these also are concerned with the evaluation of the institution and its performance to which we now turn.

5.5.3 Evaluation Theories and Approaches

Evaluation is a very important management tool. Stakeholders would be interested to know and satisfy themselves how the institution they have helped create and nurtured is performing and whether or not it is meeting their expectations and living up to its commitments. As distance education institutions multiply across the world, and often they are challenged to establish their credentials and parity of esteem with their conventional counterparts, their performance review and evaluation have assumed great significance. With education progressively becoming a mass activity, and the participation ratios growing continuously, the costs are also going up leading to greater stakeholder interests in its performance. In the last few years a variety of tools have been created to assess the performance levels of educational institutions; these include at the system level, quality assurance mechanisms and institutional accreditation. At the institutional level, there are programme reviews, evaluation of student services, institutional capability reviews and accountability audits. It is not surprising, therefore, that in the last few years a vast body of literature has emerged on the theories and practices in evaluation of educational systems and institutions.

It is not our intention to undertake a comprehensive survey and study of all these theories and practices here. What we need to know, from the distance education management perspective, the significance of these evaluation studies and the broad features of some of them.

From its inception, the UKOU has been prolific in its research and analysis of open learning, distance education, its methods and practices. While the broader issues of quality standards and accreditation in distance education will receive in-depth treatment elsewhere in this programme, we shall confine here to the institutional evaluation theories and practices. The following four elements have been chosen from an essay on "Managing for Performance: Quality, Accreditation and Assessment in Distance Education" by Stephen Murgatroyd in "International Handbook of Distance Education" (2008).

Programme Review: Distance education is often treated as a teaching option within the educational process. The assumption here is that there is no significant difference in learning experience and outcome between students taught through distance learning and those taught in classrooms. The focus of programme review is the programme, its students, and the strengths and weaknesses of the approach to learning and student performance. Very often, these reviews go beyond the content and its relevance and include a critical examination of the outcomes as well, that is, the competencies acquired from the studies.

The elements that generally go in to an institutional programme review are:

- A self-study by the concerned academic group that describes its contribution to the institution, the curricula, student profile and performance, faculty, facilities and resources, comparison with other programmes and the group's plans for the future;

- The future plan would suggest the ways to build on the strengths and remedy the weaknesses, the additional resource needs and ways to

mobilise them, and the plans for changes, if any, inthe strategies for technology applications or student support services;

- A review of the self-study report by an institutional committee that consists of representatives of senior academic administration to finalise the report and for selection of a team of reviewers that consists mostly of external experts;

- The review team provides a report that is the basis for the future action plan.

Student Services: Education is not about courses and programmes only. It is also about enabling students to explore career choices, improve their learning skills and competencies, deal with financial concerns and overcome anxieties, distress or feelings of isolation. The specific issues for evaluation that are relevant to distance education include the following:

- The provision of academic and peer support service available to distance learners for learning and problem-solving;

- The programmes structure, its academic design and sequencing that allow timely completion of requirements;

- The parity in qualifications of the academic faculty engaged in distance teaching with those of the regular faculty teaching comparable programmes on campus;

- Provisions for clear understanding of learner responsibilities and expectations of student participation and learning;

- Provision for appropriate and flexible interaction between teachers and students and among students;

- Selection of appropriate technologies for specific distance learning opportunity for the intended learning outcomes, content, nature of learning and the learner and student costs;

- Provision for verification of learners' work.

Institutional Capability Review: Self-study, peer and programme review offer some indication of whether the institution or programme is meeting the expectations and living up to its commitments. Progressively, form relatively "soft" measures of programme reviews, distance education institutions are moving towards more rigorous and often demanding commitment reviews that evaluate the institution's capability to achieve the measurable goals to which they are committed. Such reviews also examine the extent to which the institution is capable of achieving the goals it has set for itself. The common approaches to such capability reviews are:

Focus on understanding the goals and objectives for which capacities are being developed;

A review of the organisational will, resources and managerial capacity for change;

A systematic analysis of the priorities, and the performance of the institution against these priorities;

- An examination of remedial action taken in cases where performance does not match expectations.

Accountability Audit: There are several layers of accountability for institutional effectiveness. These include course objectives, general educational outcomes, programme learning outcomes and institutional effectiveness. The ways in which programmes, learning objectives and institutional capability connect help us to understand the system of accountability and the interrelationship between each level of that system. In more simple terms, accountability is about how an institution holds itself responsible and answerable to its stakeholders. We shall briefly look at the ways in which institutions are held accountable:

- Governments and funding agencies often require periodic reviews of institutional performance and outcomes. In several countries, Governments have established quality assessment frameworks and created mechanisms defining the roles of different agencies in the assessment of quality;

- In Australia, for example, the National Government assesses research plans and capabilities and undertakes "value for money" audit of the system; State Governments accredit institution based on national protocols; Universities are responsible for academic standards and capabilities; and the Australia Qualifications Framework has the role for national qualification registers and guidelines.

- The basic questions Governments ask are:
  - Can our students be assured that they are receiving good quality education?
  - Are they assured that they are securing a good social return on their investments?
  - What are the long-term implications of the Government's decisions for the performance of the education system?

Generally, the purpose of evaluation is to measure the success or failure with reference to the objectives set out, or for comparison of performance with other programmes, or of other institutions, or to correct any deficiency or weakness that may have crept into the management of a programme, or the functioning of an institution.

The complexity of the nature of distance education makes measuring its success more difficult. Even such simple indicators as pass rates and dropout rates are difficult to assess as in distance education, learners have a range of choices to decide the pace of their studies, the number and combinations of courses they wish to do, flexibilities in entry and exit, and accumulation of credits for what they have done and to carry them forward on re-entry. There is, in addition, a multiplicity of objectives in joining a distance education programme: not all learners may be interested in the end-qualifications, and some may be interested only in the materials. Still, some indicators like sustainability of student interest, acceptability of graduates in the job market through tracer studies, popularity of materials among non-student users, etc., can help to establish the measure of success of a distance education institution.

Comparison of performance of distance education programmes and institutions with those of the conventional education can be a useful marketing strategy. Distance education is widely perceived to be cost-effective because it can reap the benefits of economies of scale. To establish

this cost-efficiency, it is necessary to analyse costs continuously and compare them with those of other institutions offering both conventional and distance education programmes. It has, however, to be noted that classical notions about unit costs can sometimes be misleading as the unit cost per graduate in distance education would be relatively high due to the notoriously low percentages compared to institutions of formal education. Unit cost per enrolled student might be more relevant for comparison though standardisation of units (student, course, programme) might present some problems.

Corrective evaluation is essential for all organisations. Distance education institutions are no exception. On the other hand, they tend to be more easily influenced by changes in the environment It would, therefore, be more useful to assess the impact of environmental changes on the institution. For example, changes in the demographic profile of people in a society can have an impact on the learning needs and styles of learning. Providers of distance education may have to reconsider their provisions depending upon the increase or decrease in the adult population looking for educational opportunities, just as they will have to review their programme profiles to incorporate training for the development of new skill sets following induction of new technologies that could change the job content. It is also likely that institutions might drift away from their original objectives due to internal or external pressures. Periodical reviews of performance can be a useful tool for correcting such directional change or departures.

Check Your Progress 4

Note: i) Space is given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answer with the one given at the end of the unit.

Which major areas of DEI require constant attention and monitoring for effective management of the institution? (Answer in about 40 words).

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5.6 LET US SUM UP

In the previous unit, our effort was to take you through the larger issues associated with the management of the distance education system and its major sub-systems. In this unit, we turned our attention away from the totality of the system and examined in details the concerns involved in the management of a distance education institution. Because of this shift in focus, the nature and quality of the issues discussed in this unit are different from those considered in the previous unit. We hope that you would have found the more practical aspects of setting up a distance education institution which include setting out the objectives and methodology, and the choices available for making decisions as well as the planning, recruitment and training of staff, and setting up the delivery system useful and interesting. We have also looked at the budgeting and costing exercise and the assessment of the performance of the institution.

5.7 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

The choice in setting up a distance education institution depends on several variables. To begin with, there is a large demand for education with those looking for educational opportunities constantly increasing. They come from diverse groups – from those who missed out early education to those who are working, from the professionals to the housewives, from job seekers to those who want to change jobs. The rapidly changing technological environment demands continuous updating of skills of large numbers of working people. Employers cannot afford to withdraw them from work for training; they would prefer combining work with learning. Finally, the governments which finance education is generally in favour of more effective and cost efficient methods of expanding educational facilities. Distance education can respond to all these situations forcing its choice on planners.

Check Your Progress 2

i) Institutional objectives have to be carefully formulated to ensure that they are consistent with the mission of the distance education system which has been launched in a given environment. An institution has to define its goals explicitly and clearly; they should be expressed in measureable terms and should be flexible enough to adapt to changes in the environment. In the absence of such clarity of purpose, reviews and modifications become difficult, leading to drifts in objectives which it might turn out to be difficult to correct.

ii) a) False, b) False, c) True

Check Your Progress 3

The Centres should be accessible to students, and are capable of providing a suitable learning environment. They should have academic and managerial staff to maintain the centre. The major functions of these centres are to provide face-to-face interaction and personalized attention to learners who feel isolated from the institution.

Check Your Progress 4

Admission of students including re-registration, schedule of course development, production and delivery of materials on time, and storage of large scale consumable items, tutorials and counselling assignment, evaluation and feedback and income and expenditure are areas where continuous monitoring and supervision and control are needed.

5.8 GLOSSARY

Structure : Formal and established pattern of relationship in an organization. The relationship includes people, tasks and activities.

Environment : The business environment of a firm comprise economic, social, political, cultural, legal and geographic factors which critically affect the working of an organisation.

Centralisation : The concentration of power and authority at one place. This may be concentrated in a person or a group of persons in the organisation.

Delegation : The sharing or handing over of authority and responsibility to a subordinate.

Organisation Chart : The depiction of specific positions in an organisation, their status within the organisation and the reporting relationship between a subordinate and his superior.

Geographical Structure: The organisational structure in which activities and tasks are grouped together on the basis of their location in a geographical zone or territory.

Network Strucutre : A Structure in which one organisation acts as the 'lead' organisation and creates a network of many other external organisations whose services the lead organisation utilises in fulfilment of its objectives.

5.9 REFERENCES AND SUGGESTED READINGS

(Given below are the titles of a few books/journals which have been used to prepare this Block. it is NOT suggested that you should go looking for these books to study them in original. If you can manage, you may look for a few titles, but they are not obligatory for completing the course successfully.)

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Dear Student,

While studying the units of this block, you may have found certain portions of the text difficult to comprehend. We wish to know your difficulties and suggestions, in order to improve the course. Therefore, we request you to fill up and send us the following questionnaire, which pertains to this block. If you find the space provided insufficient, kindly use a separate sheet.

Please mail to:
Course Coordinator (MDE-414)
STRIDE, IGNOU, Maidan Garhi
New Delhi-110 068, India

Questionnaire

Enrolment No. | | | | | | | | | | |

1. How many hours did you spend for studying the units?

Unit no.	1	2	3	4
No. of hours				

2. Please give your reactions (by '√ mark) to the following items based on your reading of the block:

Items	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Poor	Give specific examples if poor
Presentation Quality					
Language and Style					
Illustrations Used (Diagram, tables etc.)					
Conceptual Clarity					
Check Your Progress Questions					
Feedback to CYP Questions					

4) Any other comments: